

HANNAY. You should be more careful in choosing your gentlemen friends.

ANNABELLA. No jokes Mr. Hannay, please!

HANNAY. Beautiful mysterious woman pursued by gunmen. Sounds like a spy story.

ANNABELLA. That's exactly what it is. Only I prefer the word 'agent' better.

HANNAY. 'Secret agent' I suppose? For which country?

ANNABELLA. I have no country.

HANNAY. Born in a balloon, eh?

ANNABELLA. Mr. Hannay please! I am being pursued by a very brilliant secret agent of a certain foreign power who is on the point of obtaining highly confidential information VITAL to your air defence. I tracked two of his men to that Music Hall. Unfortunately they recognised me.

HANNAY. Ever heard of a thing called persecution mania?

ANNABELLA. You don't believe me?

HANNAY. Frankly, I don't.

ANNABELLA. They are in the street this moment. Beneath your English lamp-post. Take a look why don't you?
But be careful!

(HANNAY peers through the blind. The two clowns appear. They wear sinister trilbies under the single glare of a street light. HANNAY turns back.)

ANNABELLA. Now do you believe me?

(HANNAY peers through the blind again. The men are still there.)

HANNAY. You win.

ANNABELLA. Mr. Hannay, I'm going to tell you something which is not very healthy. It will mean either life. Or death. But if I tell you, then you are – *(She gazes at him.)*
– involved!

(The sound of a 30s police car in the distance.)

HANNAY. Involved?

ANNABELLA. You wish to be – involved?

(HANNAY marches to the blind again. Peers through. The men are there, but slightly late. HANNAY sighs irritably. He turns back to ANNABELLA.)

HANNAY. Tell me!

ANNABELLA. Very well. Have you ever heard of the –

(She lowers her voice.)

– Thirty-Nine Steps?

HANNAY. What's that a pub?

ANNABELLA. Your English humour will not help Mr. Hannay! These men will stick at nothing. And I am the only person who can stop them. If they are not stopped, it is only a matter days, perhaps hours before the top secret and highly confidential information is out of the country. And when they've got it out of the country God help us all!

HANNAY. What about the police?

ANNABELLA. *(laughs harshly)* The police! They would not believe me any more than you did! With their boots and their whistles! It is up to us, Mr. Hannay! I tell you these men act quickly! You don't know how clever their chief is. I know him very well. He has a dozen names! He can look like a hundred people! But one thing he cannot disguise. This part –

(lifts her little finger)

– of his little finger is missing. So if ever you should meet a man with no top joint there –

(She hooks her little finger into his.)

– be very careful my friend.

HANNAY. I'll remember that.

(She gazes at him. He gazes back.)

ANNABELLA. Mr. Hannay?

HANNAY. Richard.

ANNABELLA. Richard.

HANNAY. Yes?

ANNABELLA. May I stay the night please?

(electricity between them)

HANNAY. Of course. You can – sleep in my bed.

ANNABELLA. Thank you.

HANNAY. I'll get a shakedown on the armchair.

ANNABELLA. *(raises an eyebrow)* As you wish. And one more thing –

HANNAY. Your haddock?

ANNABELLA. Mein haddock?

(She laughs.)

I have rather lost the taste for haddock. No! I need –

HANNAY: Yes?

ANNABELLA. A map of Scotland.

HANNAY. Scotland?

ANNABELLA. There's a man in Scotland who I must visit next if anything is to be done. An Englishman. He lives in a –

(looks around her)

– big house

HANNAY. A big house?

ANNABELLA. At a place called Alt-na-shellach.

HANNAY. I beg your pardon?

ANNABELLA. Alt-na-shell-ach!

HANNAY. Alt-na-shell-ach. And the Thirty Nine –

ANNABELLA. Bring it to my room.

HANNAY. Certainly.

ANNABELLA. Good night Richard.

(Turns seductively away, disappears into the darkness.

HANNAY gazes after her. Confused and mesmerized.

Wishing he could go with her.)

HANNAY. Goodnight Annabella!

Scene Four: Hannay's Flat. Very Late.

(Midnight atmos. Wind. A ticking clock. A 30s police car far away. A distant train whistles.)

(HANNAY tosses and turns restlessly in his cramped arm-chair.)

(Suddenly ANNABELLA appears. Her pale face looming out of the darkness.)

(Haunting music plays.)

(She drifts seductively towards him. In her hand she holds a map.)

ANNABELLA. *(husky)* Richard?

HANNAY. Annabella?

ANNABELLA. *(even huskier)* Oh Richard – Richard –

HANNAY. Now look here, Annabella. You just breeze into my life from nowhere – you get me all – you know – *involved* and – well – actually I've never met anyone quite like you and – and frankly to be – quite frank –

(She leans over him, breathing deeply. He gazes up at her. He thinks they're going to kiss. He closes his eyes in readiness. Suddenly she gasps loudly and collapses over him, a gleaming knife sticking in her back. He recoils in horror. Turns her over.)

ANNABELLA. Oh Richard! Richard!

(She gazes up at him tenderly.)

I am so sorry. So very sorry.

(She clutches his hand.)

Richard!

HANNAY. Yes?

ANNABELLA. These men. They act quickly! They will stop at nothing. Nothing! You hear me? Now there is –

(barely audible)

– no turning back! Oh, my dear Richard!