

SIDE 1 - George Henderson (County Attorney) and Lewis Hale

County Attorney Well, Mr. Hale, tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning.

Hale Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes. We came along the road from my place and as I got here I said, "I'm going to see if I can't get John Wright to go in with me on a party telephone." I spoke to Wright about it once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet—I guess you know about how much he talked himself; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John—

County Attorney Let's talk about that later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about that, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house.

Hale I didn't hear or see anything; I knocked at the door, and still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up, it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, "Come in." I wasn't sure, I'm not sure yet, but I opened the door—this door, and there in that rocker— sat Mrs. Wright.

County Attorney What—was she doing?

Hale She was rockin' back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of—pleating it.

County Attorney And how did she—look?

Hale Well, she looked queer.

County Attorney How do you mean—queer?

Hale Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up.

County Attorney How did she seem to feel about your coming?

Hale

Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, "How do, Mrs. Wright, it's cold, ain't it?" And she said, "Is it?"—and went on kind of pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised; she didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to set down, but just sat there, not even looking at me, so I said, "I want to see John." And then she—laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said a little sharp: "Can't I see John?" "No," she says, kind o' dull like. "Ain't he home?" says I. "Yes," says she, "he's home." "Then why can't I see him?" I asked her, out of patience. "'Cause he's dead," says she. "*Dead?*" says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth. "Why—where is he?" says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs—like that. I got up, with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here—then I says, "Why, what did he die of?" "He died of a rope round his neck," says she, and just went on pleatin' at her apron. Well, I went out and called Harry. I thought I might—need help.

SIDE 2 - County Attorney and Mrs. Hale

- County Attorney Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?
- Mrs. Hale There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm.
- County Attorney To be sure. And yet I know there are some Dickson county farmhouses which do not have such roller towels.
- Mrs. Hale Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be.
- County Attorney Ah, loyal to your sex, I see. But you and Mrs. Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too.
- Mrs. Hale I've not seen much of her of late years. I've not been in this house—it's more than a year.
- County Attorney And why was that? You didn't like her?
- Mrs. Hale I liked her all well enough. Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then—
- County Attorney Yes—?
- Mrs. Hale It never seemed a very cheerful place.
- County Attorney No—it's not cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the homemaking instinct.
- Mrs. Hale Well, I don't know as Wright had, either.
- County Attorney You mean that they didn't get on very well?
- Mrs. Hale No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.
- County Attorney I'd like to talk more of that a little later. I want to get the lay of things upstairs now.

SIDE 3 - Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters

- Mrs. Peters Why, here's a bird-cage. Did she have a bird, Mrs. Hale?
- Mrs. Hale Why, I don't know whether she did or not—I've not been here for so long. There was a man around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't know as she took one; maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself.
- Mrs. Peters Seems funny to think of a bird here. But she must have had one, or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it.
- Mrs. Hale I s'pose maybe the cat got it.
- Mrs. Peters No, she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats—being afraid of them. My cat got in her room and she was real upset and asked me to take it out.
- Mrs. Hale My sister Bessie was like that. Queer, ain't it?
- Mrs. Peters Why, look at this door. It's broke. One hinge is pulled apart.
- Mrs. Hale Looks as if someone must have been rough with it.
- Mrs. Peters Why, yes.
- Mrs. Hale I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it. I don't like this place.
- Mrs. Peters But I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs. Hale. It would be lonesome for me sitting here alone.
- Mrs. Hale It would, wouldn't it? But I tell you what I do wish, Mrs. Peters. I wish I had come over sometimes when *she* was here. I—wish I had.
- Mrs. Peters But of course you were awful busy, Mrs. Hale—your house and your children.
- Mrs. Hale I could've come. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and that's why I ought to have come. I—I've never liked this place. Maybe

because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now—

Mrs. Peters Well, you mustn't reproach yourself, Mrs. Hale. Somehow we just don't see how it is with other folks until—something comes up.

Mrs. Hale Not having children makes less work—but it makes a quiet house, and Wright out to work all day, and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs. Peters?

Mrs. Peters Not to know him; I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man.

Mrs. Hale Yes—good; he didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him—. Like a raw wind that gets to the bone. I should think she would 'a wanted a bird. But what do you suppose went with it?

Mrs. Peters I don't know, unless it got sick and died.

SIDE 4 - Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hales

- Mrs. Peters When I was a girl—my kitten—there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes—and before I could get there— If they hadn't held me back I would have—hurt him.
- Mrs. Hale I wonder how it would seem never to have had any children around. No, Wright wouldn't like the bird—a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too.
- Mrs. Peters We don't know who killed the bird.
- Mrs. Hale I knew John Wright.
- Mrs. Peters It was an awful thing was done in this house that night, Mrs. Hale. Killing a man while he slept, slipping a rope around his neck that choked the life out of him.
- Mrs. Peters We don't know who killed him. We don't *know*.
- Mrs. Hale If there'd been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful—still, after the bird was still.
- Mrs. Peters I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old, and me with no other then—
- Mrs. Hale How soon do you suppose they'll be through, looking for the evidence?
- Mrs. Peters I know what stillness is. The law has got to punish crime, Mrs. Hale.
- Mrs. Hale I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang. Oh, I *wish* I'd come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?
- Mrs. Peters We mustn't—take on.

Mrs. Hale I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be—for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs. Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing. If I was you I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone. Tell her it *ain't*. Tell her it's all right. Take this in to prove it to her. She—she may never know whether it was broke or not.

Mrs. Peters My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they *laugh!*

Mrs. Hale Maybe they would—maybe they wouldn't.