

LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

[Car door slamming]

Mrs Maloney : Hello, Love

[sighs]

Mrs Maloney : Darling ? Something the matter ? They badger you about that Menotti case again ? Is that what's the trouble?

[Pouring liquid]

[Chuckles]

Mrs Maloney : Well, try not to think about it for a while. I hate to see you get all tired and worried like this. Darling, why don't you take off your coat? And then you can sit yourself down comfortably and-and relax. We certainly don't have to go out to dinner if you don't want to. I'll call Molly and tell her you're much too tired. Would you like me to do that?

She'll understand, I know she will. And I'll cook you some nice supper right here at home.

There's plenty of meat in the freezer. We'll have a nice roast. It'll just take a little longer to cook, that's all. While it's in the oven, I'll-I'll slip out to the corner and get some vegetables.

Oh! Oh, before I forget, I must tell you. Old Mrs Keating gave me the ring test today – You know, where they have a ring on a bit of string... and dangle it over your tummy? And guess what? It's a boy. "There's absolutely no doubt about it," she says.

She's never been wrong yet in her whole life. Isn't that exciting?

Patrick: Where are you going?

Mrs Maloney : Why, out to the garage, to get the meat out of the freezer.

Patrick: Sit down. Sit down a minute.

Mrs Maloney : Patrick? What is all this? What's wrong, darling? Please tell me.

Patrick: This is going to come as a bit of a shock to you. I hope you won't blame me too much.

Mrs Maloney : I'd never blame you for anything, darling. You know that.

Patrick: The truth is, Mary, I want to leave you. You understand me, don't you? I want to leave you.

Mrs Maloney : You don't mean that.

Patrick: Yes, I do mean it. And what's more, I want a divorce. There's someone else I want to marry. That really is all there is to it. I love her and she loves me. Now, we've got to be sensible about it all. Calm and sensible. I'll arrange for the divorce. Naturally, you can have the baby when it comes. You'll have some money. Sorry, I can't give you a lot. But you'll get along all right.

[Panting]

Mrs Maloney : I'll ge—I'll get you your supper.

Patrick: Get what?

Mrs Maloney : Oh, yes. Yes, you must have your supper, darling. I-I wouldn't ever let you go without your supper. You'll feel better when you've had something to eat.

Gasp

Mrs Maloney : What are you doing?

Patrick: I'm leaving.

Mrs Maloney : Patrick, you can't. You can't go, you can't! You can't!

Patrick: No?

Mrs Maloney : Patrick, I won't let you! I won't, I won't, I won't!

Patrick: There's no sense getting hysterical about this whole thing.

Mrs Maloney : Patrick, I mean it!

Patrick: Try and stop me.

Mrs Maloney : Hello, Molly?

Listen, darling, Patrick's just come home, and he's utterly exhausted, poor thing.

Yeah, he had a terribly rough day.

So I was just wondering, would you mind terribly if we didn't come over tonight?

I knew you wouldn't. You're an angel, Molly.

No, no, no. It's nothing like that. He's just been working too hard, that's all.

Well, maybe-maybe we'll see you over the weekend.

Yeah, that would be lovely. Yes, good-bye dear.

Bye.

Mrs Maloney : Hello, operator? Operator, quick. Give me the police. Quickly.

Detective (Jack): You've got to help us, Mrs. Maloney. You think you can pull yourself together now and talk to me a little?

Mrs Maloney : Yes, I'll try. I'll do my best.

Jack: Now, tell me. Is this exactly what the room looked like when you walked in?

Mrs Maloney : Yes.

Jack: You haven't touched a thing?

Mrs Maloney : Well, all except Patrick. I came in the front door, and I saw him lying there like that, and I –

Jack: You did what when you saw him?

Mrs Maloney : Well, I tried to talk to him. Then I saw that he was dead, and-and I ran to the phone.

Jack: I see. Now, what time was it when you went out? Can you tell us that?

Mrs Maloney : Oh, I think it was about 20 minutes ago.

Jack: Well, it's 6:14 now. You think it was around five of 6:00?

Mrs Maloney : Yes, I-I think so.

[Door opens]

- Print man and photographer are coming in now.

- Oh, I want to see them.

- We've got a man out front and one at the back.

Jack: Good. All right, now listen, fellas. Let's have a real thorough job here. Take all the time you need.

- It's the chief! *[Whistles]*

Jack: Mike, tell'em what we want. Get some pictures right away before the doc comes along and starts shoving things about. Okay? Get goin'.

Mrs. Maloney, do you usually go out shopping so late? Excuse me, but I have to ask you these questions.

Mrs Maloney : Oh, I-I understand. Well, no, I don't. As a matter of fact, we were going out for dinner tonight with some friends, but Patrick seemed so terribly tired that I just called up and cancelled.

Jack: Now, who did you call?

Mrs Maloney : Molly. Molly Vandenour. They live on South Street.

[He makes a note]

Jack: And when your husband came in, did it seem to you that there might have been something on his mind? Do you think he was worried about anything?

Mrs Maloney : *[Car Approaching]* No, no. Not especially. *[Car Braking]* Just seemed terribly tired.

Jack: I see. And when he first came in, I—*[Car Door Slams]* Oh, excuse me.

Doc: Who did it?

Jack: No idea. See what you can find out, will ya, Doc?

Doc: Is that his wife?

Jack: Yes.

Doc: You better take her in the next room.

Jack: Okay.

[To Mrs Maloney] Let's go in to another room for a while, shall we? You'll be more comfortable there, and then we can talk easier too.

Mrs Maloney : I-I don't want to. I want to stay here. Please let me stay. I'll be all right.

Jack: You got something cooking in the kitchen here?

Mrs Maloney : Yes. Yes, that was just supper.

Jack: But I thought you didn't have any supper in the house. Wasn't that why you went out?

Mrs Maloney : Well, yes, but I had to get some vegetables. I had plenty of meat. I-I always keep plenty of meat in the freezer.

Jack: *[To Doc]* Well?

Doc: Looks like a severely fractured base to me. Just one blow. Right on the back of the head.

Jack: What with? Can you make a guess?

Doc: Oh, I can up to a point, yes. It's bound to be something heavy. That's obvious. But it isn't sharp. At least I don't think there are any sharp edges on it.

Jack: And why do you say that?

Doc: Well, look for yourself. The skin on the scalp isn't even broken. It isn't a hammer, for instance. More like a large club of some sort.

Jack: A club?

Doc: Yes, something shaped like a club anyway. Smooth and rounded at the end. That's my guess.

Fading on Mrs Maloney's face

Jack: See you later, Doc. Let me know as soon as you're through at the lab.

Doc: I'll do that.

[Car Doors Slamming]

Jack: Is this glass dusted?

Technician: Yeah.

[Car Engine Revving]

[Jack sniffs at the glass of whiskey]

[Car Driving Away]

Jack: Mrs Maloney, you said you didn't notice anything particularly unusual about your husband's behavior when he came in this evening.

Mrs Maloney : N-No, not especially. He just seemed terribly tired.

Jack: I see he had a drink.

Mrs Maloney : Yes, he always had a drink when he came home from work.

Jack: He usually took soda, didn't he?

Mrs Maloney : Yes, I guess so.

Jack: And ice, of course.

Mrs Maloney : Mm-hmm.

Jack: This evening, he took it straight. And with his coat on, right?

Mrs Maloney : Yes, I suppose he did.

Jack: Now, think hard, Mrs. Maloney. Please. He comes in the door—So what's the first thing he does after that?

Mrs Maloney : He kissed me.

Jack: N-Now, wait. Please excuse me for asking these questions, but I'm simply trying to find out whether or not there was something on your husband's mind when he came home. You're quite sure he kissed you? It wasn't you that kissed him?

Mrs Maloney : He kissed me.

Jack: Okay. Now, he walks straight over there, and he pours himself a shot of neat whiskey, am I right?

Mrs Maloney : Mm-hmm. Well—

Jack: He doesn't usually have a drink before he takes his coat off, does he?

Mrs Maloney : No, I guess not.

Jack: You saw all this and you still didn't think he was a worried man?

Mrs Maloney : No, I told you. I just thought that he was – he was very tired.

Jack: You know what I think, Mrs. Maloney? I think he was desperately worried. And if we can only find out why this was, then perhaps we'll get somewhere.

Mrs Maloney : *[Swallows]* Well, I wish I could help you more.

Jack: The other thing I want to find is the weapon.

Hey, Mike! Now, look, I want you to go outside right away and comb every inch of the garden. Have those fellows out there help you. See what you can find. Get some flashlights. I'll check the rest of the house.

Mike: Right.

Jack: Mrs. Maloney?

Mrs Maloney : Yes?

Jack: You know, somehow I don't believe that this was premeditated murder. Nor was it a professional job. I think it was a quarrel. And then, someone lost their temper. And then, well... perhaps this person, whoever it was, simply grabbed hold of some object that happened to be close at hand and swung at your husband. The point is this: if I am right, then the weapon they used was probably something that was already in this house. Now, then, here's where you may be able to help us out. First of all, can you tell me if there's anything missing from this room that could have been used as a weapon? Take your time.

Mrs Maloney : Well, I-I'm not sure what sort of thing you mean.

Jack: Well, uh, something like a club, for instance.

Mrs Maloney : A club? You mean, something like a baseball bat?

Jack: Yes, exactly.

Mrs Maloney : No, th-there isn't any baseball bat in the house.

Jack: All right, how about a, uh, a door stopper, or a heavy metal vase, or – well, anything you like. You understand what I mean, don't you?

Mrs Maloney : Yes, I think so. It's just – Well, it's so hard to remember everything that's in the house.

Jack: Well, perhaps you wouldn't mind coming along with me while I go over the rooms one by one.

Next scene

Jack: Are you nearly through now?

Fingerprint man: Uh-huh. Say, what time have you got?

Jack: It's a quarter past ten.

Fingerprint man: Thanks.

Jack: Mrs. Maloney?

Mrs Maloney : Yes?

Jack: You're quite sure you wouldn't want someone to take you over to Mrs. Vandenour's house tonight?

Mrs Maloney : Oh, no, thank you. I-I couldn't go anywhere at the moment.

Jack: Then you ought to go to bed and lie down. Either Mike or I will be around all night, so you don't have to worry.

Mrs Maloney : It's all right, I – I may do that.

Jack: *[Whispering to Mike]* There's something fishy about this case.

Mike: Go on.

Jack: I don't believe there ever was a fight in this room. I think someone purposely fixed it up afterwards to make it look as though there'd been one.

Mike: You do?

Jack: I'll tell you why. It isn't humanly possible to club a man hard on the back of the head – right here – in the middle of a fight.

Mike: Not unless there were two people.

Jack: Mm, that's right. But I don't think there were two people.

Mike: Or, unless he got knocked out during the fight, and the other fellow hit him while he was lying on the floor.

Jack: Nobody knocked him out first. There isn't a single bruise or scratch on his entire body. Oh – Only where he was hit. And another thing – He was carrying a gun, wasn't he?

Mike: Sure was.

Jack: Then why didn't he draw it? You know why? Because he didn't even realize he was being threatened.

Mike: Well, in that case, the killer was probably someone he knew pretty well.

Jack: Exactly.

Mike: You think it could have been a woman?

Jack: Why do you say that?

Mike: Well, you know as well as I do our “friend” here used to fool around a bit now and again.

Jack: Yeah. I see what you mean. *[Speaking Louder]* Well, uh, anyway, we’ve got to find that weapon. Didn’t anybody think to turn off that oven?

[Footsteps In Kitchen]

- Whatever it is, it’ll sure as heck be ruined by now.

[Tray Sliding Out Of Oven]

Jack: Hey, that looks all right.

Mike: Ah, sure does.

Jack: That’s mighty peculiar, isn’t it? I would have thought it would have been burnt to a crisp by now.

Mike: Yeah, me too.

Jack: Maybe it takes longer, according to jow big it is.

Mike: Well, this is a big one, all right.

Jack: You’re darn right it’s big.

Mrs Maloney : Jack, will you turn that off for me, please? It’s all right. It’s not spoiled.

Jack: I can see that.

Mrs Maloney : What I really came in for was to ask if you’d like to have a cup of coffee. You must be terribly tired by now, both of you. I’m just sorry I didn’t think of it sooner.

Jack: Well, that isn’t necessary, ma’am. You mustn’t bother about us.

Mrs Maloney : *[Chuckles]* Patrick would never forgive me if I didn’t look after you properly. He always used to tell me how grateful he was in the old days wh-when somebody would offer him a cup of coffee and he couldn’t get home for a meal. He said, “That’s the least you can do when somebody’s trying to help you out.” *[Her glance falls on the leg of lamb]*

Mike: Well, it certainly is good of you.

Jack: It sure is.

Mrs Maloney : I tell you what. Why don’t you help yourself to some of this too?

Jack: Well, we couldn’t do that, Mrs. Maloney.

Mike: Wouldn’t dream of it.

Jack: We’ll be sending out for a couple of sandwiches in a little while.

Mrs Maloney : Oh, no, now please. Eat this instead. I’ll only have to throw it out if you don’t.

Mike: What about you, ma’am?

Mrs Maloney : Me? Oh – Oh, no. I couldn’t touch a thing. Believe me. Give some to the others too. They must be absolutely famished by this time. Particularly those two standing out in the cold. Ask them all in, why don’t you? And give them a nice, hot meal. It’s very good meat. I promise you that.

New scene

- Boy, this is great.

- Best piece of meat I’ve had in months.

- She said to finish it, didn’t she, Jack?

Jack: She did.

Mike: I’d like to have a piece of this brown, crispy stuff left on the end here. Suppose it’d be all right to take this bone home to my dog?

Jack: Sure. She said she never wants to see it again.

- Her old man croaked, that’s why.

- He missed a real good meal.

- *[Whispers]* Not so loud, fellas. Take it easy. *[Camera now focuses on Mrs Maloney sitting on a chair. Following conversation is off]*

- Got any dope on this case yet, Jack?

Jack: Not a lot.

Mike: No one’s found a weapon.

Jack: Doc says it’s probably some sort of a club.

Policeman: You mean, like a shillelagh or something?

Jack: Well, something heavy anyway. Must have weighed eight or nine pounds.

Policeman: Whoever did it are not going to carry a thing like that around longer than they need.

Mike: Personally, I think it’s here on the premises.

Jack: Well, for all we know, it might be right under our very noses.

[Mrs Maloney giggles]

Epilogue

Well, that’s the way the old meatball bounces. As for Mary Maloney, she would have gone scot-free if she hadn’t tried to do in her second husband the same way. Unfortunately, he was the forgetful type and had forgotten to plug in the freezer. The meat was as soft as jelly. Speaking of plugs, that is precisely what our sponsor wants to do for his product, after which I’ll wheel back. *[referring to the shopping trolley he’s holding]*