

Generic Radio Workshop Script Library [\(BACK\)](#)**Series: Suspense****Show: August Heat****Date: May 31 1945**CAST:The Suspense Team:

ANNOUNCER, Truman Bradley

VOICE OF SUSPENSE

ELSA MAXWELL

CBS ANNCR

The Characters:

WITHENCROFT, an artist

BOY (2 lines)

ATKINSON, a mason

MRS. ATKINSON, his wife

ANNOUNCER: Now, the Roma Wine Company of Fresno, California presents
 ...

MUSIC: THEME ... IN AND UNDER

VOICE: Suspense! Tonight, Roma Wines bring you the distinguished
 actor, Mr. Ronald Colman, in one of the great suspense
 stories of our time, "August Heat."

MUSIC: AN ACCENT ... THEN OUT

ANNOUNCER: Suspense, is presented for your enjoyment by Roma Wines.
 That's R-O-M-A, Roma Wines, those excellent California wines
 that can add so much pleasantness to the way you live, to
 your happiness in entertaining guests, to your enjoyment of
 everyday meals. Before we bring you Ronald Colman and our
 "Suspense" play. Here's a brief message from Elsa Maxwell,
 famed for her great charm as a hostess.

ELSA MAXWELL: When food looks appetizing, it almost always lives up to
 expectations. When even so simple a main dish as a steaming,
 fragrant bowl of spaghetti or beans is surrounded by bright
 green salad, golden rolls or muffins and brilliant Roma
 California Burgundy, the food is more enjoyable, more
 delightful.

ANNOUNCER: And, for a summery touch of the outdoors, a vase of flowers
 -- perfect color complement to the deep, rich beauty of Roma

Burgundy. You'll enjoy the fruity, robust taste, the tart piquancy of distinguished Roma Burgundy, served cool. Truly, a masterpiece of fine wine-making. Like all Roma Wines, Roma Burgundy is unvaryingly good -- always high in quality of bouquet, color and taste; the happy reward of selected grapes, brought slowly to perfection, gently pressed, then carefully guided to flavor-fullness by the ancient skill of Roma's noted wineries in California's choicest vineyards. Yet all this goodness is yours for only pennies a glass. Remember, more Americans enjoy Roma than any other wine. R-O-M-A, Roma Wines. Yes, right now, a glassful would be very pleasant as Roma Wines bring you - a remarkable tale of suspense!

MUSIC: THEME ... IN AND UNDER

VOICE: And, with "August Heat," W. F. Harvey's matchless narrative of premonition, and the brooding terror of twilight and the unseen - and with the performance of Ronald Colman - Roma Wines hope indeed to keep you in ...

MUSIC: AN ACCENT

VOICE: ... Suspense!

MUSIC: OUT ... THEN, FOR AN INTRODUCTION ... STATELY, LANGUID ...
FADES

SOUND: PENCIL SCRATCHING AWAY AT PAPER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES, READS ALOUD AS HE WRITES) Phenistone Road, Clapham. August the 20th, 1945. I have had what I believe to be the most remarkable day in my life, and while the events are still fresh in my mind, I wish to put them down on paper as clearly as possible. (FADES)

MUSIC: A BRIDGE ... STATELY, LANGUID ... IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Let me say at the outset that my name is James Clarence Withencroft. You must remember that in order to have the full implication of my story.

James Clarence Withencroft.

I am forty years old, in perfect health, never having known a day's illness.

By profession I am an artist. Not a very successful one, but I earn enough money by my black-and-white work to satisfy my necessary wants.

My only near relative, a sister, died five years ago, so

that there is no one in particular to whom I address this manuscript. Only you, who might by chance read it someday. For, because of the peculiar circumstance about which you will soon hear, I have the strong premonition that I shall never live to tell anyone about it.

MUSIC: AN ACCENT, FILLS A PAUSE ... THEN UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I breakfasted this morning at nine, at the usual time. It was no different from any other morning. And after glancing through the morning paper, I lighted my pipe and I proceeded to let my mind wander - in the hope that I might chance upon some subject for my pencil.

The room, though door and window were open, was oppressively hot, and I had just made up my mind that the coolest and most comfortable place in the neighbourhood would be the deep end of the public swimming bath, when--

MUSIC: DARKENS ... UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) When I was suddenly shaken. A feeling swept over me such as I had never experienced before. I attempted to rise to my feet. But somehow it seemed as though - I had suddenly been fastened to my chair. My hand went out in an effort to brace myself. And then, before I knew what I was doing, my pencil was in my hand ...

SOUND: PENCIL SCRATCHES AT PAPER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) ... and I began to draw. It was as though someone had taken my hand and was moving it across the paper -- swiftly, in bold strokes. And then I seemed to take over. My hand, under its own power, began to draw.

I soon forgot the oppressive heat. Everything was forgotten in this frantic feeling that the sketch must be finished as soon as possible.

SOUND: CLOCK CHIMES FOUR ... PENCIL STOPS

MUSIC: FADES OUT

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I had no idea how long I worked until I heard the clock of St. Jude's in the distance. It was four o'clock. And I had started just after breakfast. Now, for the first time since I'd begun, I actually seemed to see what I had been sketching.

MUSIC: RETURNS AFTER CLOCK STOPS CHIMING ... UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I was surprised. The final result was, I felt

sure, the best thing I had ever done.

It showed a criminal in the dock, immediately after the judge had pronounced sentence. The man was fat, enormously fat. The flesh hung in rolls about his chin; it creased his huge, stumpy neck. He was clean shaven - or perhaps I should say, a few days before, he must have been clean shaven - and he was almost bald. He stood there before the judge, his short, clumsy fingers clasping the rail, looking straight in front of him. The feeling that his expression conveyed was not so much one of horror as of utter, absolute collapse. There seemed nothing in the man strong enough to sustain that mountain of flesh.

And then - and then I saw that the sketch wasn't complete. For the man's other hand seemed to be clutching an instrument of some kind. A weapon, but - but it hadn't been completed.

I had made this sketch and yet I had no recollection of what I'd intended the man to carry in his other hand.

I took up my pencil again and I attempted to fill in the fuzzy outline but - but it was useless. It was as though my fingers had suddenly turned to lead.

I sat down and I felt the moisture slowly forming on my forehead. And, once again, I was conscious of the oppressive heat.

Then I knew that there would be no finishing of the sketch. At any rate, not for the moment. So I rolled it up, and without quite knowing why, I put it in my pocket.

In spite of my peculiar inspiration, I was filled with the rare sense of happiness which the knowledge of a good thing well done gives.

MUSIC: FILLS A PAUSE ... THEN UNDER

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I believe that I set out with the idea of calling upon Trenton, for I remember walking along Lytton Street and turning to the right along Gilchrist Road at the bottom of the hill where the men are at work on the new tram lines.

From there onwards I have only the vaguest recollection of where I went. Through parks, along crowded streets, always conscious of the awful heat that came up from the dusty asphalt pavement in a suffocating wave.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS SLOW

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And I remember, too, the hollow sound of my footsteps as I moved along. Although walking aimlessly, I somehow knew that there was a goal, a something to which I was drawn.

I longed for the thunder promised by the great banks of copper-coloured clouds that hung low over the western sky. I've really no idea how far I walked, when a small boy roused me from my abstraction.

MUSIC: OUT

BOY: Do you got the time, Mister?

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS STOP

WITHENCROFT: Twenty minutes to seven.

BOY: Thanks. Hot enough for ya, sir?

WITHENCROFT: Yes.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) When he left me, I began to take stock of my bearings.

I found myself standing before a gate that led into a yard bordered by a strip of thirsty earth. There were flowers, purple stock and scarlet geranium, and great numbers of bees droned over them. I stood looking down at them for a moment, and then, for some reason, I looked up.

Over the entrance to the place, there was a board with the inscription: "Charles Atkinson, Monumental Mason / Worker in English and Italian Marbles".

MUSIC: AN ACCENT ... THEN FADES OUT

ATKINSON: (WHISTLES)

SOUND: CHISEL BANGS AGAINST MARBLE

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) From the yard itself came a cheery whistle, the noise of hammer blows, and the cold sound of steel meeting stone.

A sudden impulse made me enter. And I went in, in the direction of the noise.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) There was a man, sitting with his back towards me. He was busy at work on a slab of curiously veined marble.

Then, without turning, his hammer stopped in mid-air, as he was about to bring it down on his chisel. He held this position a moment before turning. But I knew that he was aware of my presence. And when he turned, I saw his face.

It was -- although I'd never seen him before -- it was the face of the man I had been drawing.

MUSIC: AN ACCENT ... THEN OUT

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Yes, it was the face of the man whose sketch was in my pocket.

He sat there on his low stool, huge and elephantine, the sweat pouring from his scalp, not speaking.

ATKINSON: (SIGHS)

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Then he took a red silk handkerchief and he mopped his brow.

ATKINSON: Whew.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Although this face that looked up at me was the same as my sketch, the expression was absolutely different. Suddenly, the puzzled expression left his face and he smiled, as if we were old friends. And he walked over and he took my hand.

ATKINSON: Good day, sir.

WITHENCROFT: (PLEASANTLY) Good day. I'm sorry to intrude.

ATKINSON: Not at all.

WITHENCROFT: Everything is so hot and glary outside. This, heh, this is like an oasis in the wilderness.

ATKINSON: (CHUCKLES) I don't know about an oasis, but it certainly is hot. Whew. Take a seat, sir!

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) He pointed to the end of the gravestone on which he was at work, and I sat down.

ATKINSON: Whew. Very hot.

WITHENCROFT: That's a beautiful piece of stone you've got hold of.

ATKINSON: In a way it is. The surface here is as fine as anything you

could wish, but there's a big flaw at the back, though I don't expect you'd notice it.

WITHENCROFT: Oh, I shouldn't think so.

ATKINSON: I could never really do a good job of a bit of marble like that. It would, uh, be all right in the summer like this; it wouldn't mind the blasted heat. But wait until the winter comes.

WITHENCROFT: Winter?

ATKINSON: There's nothing quite like frost to find out the weak points in stone.

WITHENCROFT: Oh.

ATKINSON: A - a gravestone, you see.

WITHENCROFT: Oh, I see.

ATKINSON: Mm.

WITHENCROFT: Then what's this one for?

ATKINSON: Heh. Oh, you'd hardly believe me if I was to tell you, but it's for exhibition. It's the truth. Artists have exhibitions. So do grocers and butchers. Well -- we have 'em, too. All the latest little things in headstones, you know.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) He went on to talk of marbles, which sort of marble best withstood wind and rain, and which were easiest to work; then of his garden and some new sort of carnation he had bought. At the end of every other minute he would drop his tools, wipe his shining head.

ATKINSON: Whew. This heat. This heat's bad. A man's not responsible for what he does in this heat.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I said little, for I felt uneasy. There was something unnatural, uncanny, in all of this. The feeling that I'd experienced it all before -- the oppressive heat, the fragrance of the stocks in the air, the conversation about the marble, the flowers -- everything, as though I - I had experienced it before. And yet I knew that I'd never, ever been in this section of town before.

I tried to persuade myself that at least I'd seen HIM before. That his face, unknown to me, had found a place in

some out-of-the-way corner of my memory. But I knew that I was practicing little more than a plausible piece of self-deception.

As I sat there quietly, watching him, he looked up at me and he said:

MUSIC: OUT

ATKINSON: (SIGHS WITH SATISFACTION) There! What do you think of that?

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) He said it with an air of evident pride, of a job well done. I could sense that he was experiencing the same feeling I had experienced when I'd finished my sketch. Then he got up with a sigh of relief.

ATKINSON: (SIGHS) Hot. Hot, ain't it?

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I was seated in such a position that I was unable to see his work. And, for some reason, I didn't move.

Suddenly, he began to read what he'd carved on the tombstone.

He spoke deliberately, and with a flat voice:

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

ATKINSON: (READS) "In the midst of life we are in death. Born, January 18th, 1905."

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I looked up with a start. This man had read my exact birth date.

MUSIC: AN ACCENT ... THEN UNDER

ATKINSON: (READS) "He passed away very suddenly on August 20th, 1945."

WITHENCROFT: (AFTER A BEAT) That's today.

ATKINSON: We usually use a present date on these exhibition stones.

WITHENCROFT: (HESITANT) Do you - do you - usually put a name on them, too?

ATKINSON: Uh, yes. Yes, uh ... (READS) "Sacred to the memory of ... James Clarence Withencroft.

MUSIC: A STATELY, SOMBER ACCENT ... THEN FADES OUT

SOUND: BIRDS WHISTLE, CRICKETS CHIRP

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) A cold shudder swept over me - and I sat there in silence. The sound of birds and crickets seemed loud in my

ears as we stood there, looking at each other, saying nothing.

ATKINSON: Whew.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And then he mopped his brow again.

ATKINSON: Hot. Hot!

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I was finally able to speak.

(UNEASY, TO ATKINSON) Uh, where - where did you - see that name?

ATKINSON: Hm? Oh, I didn't see it anywhere. I wanted some name, and I put down the first that came into me head.

WITHENCROFT: It's a strange coincidence but - it happens to be mine.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

ATKINSON: Huh? That's - YOUR name? You're, er, James, er, Clarence, er--?

WITHENCROFT: Withencroft. Yes.

ATKINSON: Well! (WHISTLES IN SURPRISE) And, uh, the dates?

WITHENCROFT: I can only answer for the birth date. It's correct.

ATKINSON: Oh. That's a rum go.

WITHENCROFT: I made a sketch this morning. Of you.

ATKINSON: Of - of me? But you've never seen me before.

WITHENCROFT: No.

ATKINSON: Oh... Oh.

SOUND: SKETCH UNROLLED

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I took my sketch from my pocket and I showed it to him. As he looked, the expression on his face altered until it became more and more like that of the man I had drawn.

MUSIC: OUT

ATKINSON: And it was only the other day before that I told Maria there were no such things as ghosts!

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Neither of us had seen a ghost, but I knew what he meant. Then I spoke to him:

(TO ATKINSON) You - oh, you probably heard my name
someplace.

ATKINSON: Yes. And you must have seen me somewhere and then have
forgotten it!

WITHENCROFT: Yes, yes.

ATKINSON: Were you at, er, uh, Clacton-on-Sea, um, last, er, July?

WITHENCROFT: No. No, I've never been to Clacton in my life.

ATKINSON: Oh.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And we were silent for some time again. And we
stood there looking at one another, and at the two dates on
the gravestone, and the birth one was right. And the other
was - today.

ATKINSON: Well ... come inside and have some supper.

MUSIC: A BRIEF BRIDGE ... FADES WITH THE SOUND OF THE CHURCH BELL

SOUND: CLOCK CHIMES TEN TIMES UNDER THE FOLLOWING

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) His wife was a strange little woman, who was
pallid, with the look of those who live their lives indoors.
Her husband introduced me as a friend of his who was an
artist. And he informed her that I was staying for supper. I
spoke, making some comment that I hoped I wouldn't be an
intrusion. And she looked up at me and she said:

MRS. ATKINSON: You have a pleasing voice, Mr. Withencroft. And you're
welcome in my home. I'm sorry Charles has not brought you
here before.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Very little was said during the meal. And, after
the sardines and watercress had been removed, she walked
over to a cupboard and she took down a thin black book. And,
as she handed it to me, she spoke:

MUSIC: OUT

MRS. ATKINSON: Would you read aloud, Mr. Withencroft?

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Puzzled, I - I looked down at the book which
she'd opened and placed before me. It was a very tiny book.
"The Prophet," it was called, by an author, unknown to me,
with a strange Eastern name -- Khalil Gibran. And my eyes

fell across the page, and suddenly, I was reading -- aloud,
as she'd asked me to.

MUSIC:

IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT:

(READS) Then Almitra spoke, saying, "We would ask now of
Death."

And he said...you would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of
life?

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot
unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your
heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea
are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent
knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams
of spring.

Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to
eternity.

Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when
he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him
in honour.

Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he
shall wear the mark of the king?

Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?

For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to
melt into the sun?

And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath
from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and
seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you
indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall
begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

MUSIC: RISES GRANDLY ... A BRIDGE ... THEN UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) When I looked up, Mr. Atkinson had gone. But his wife stood before me and as she took the book, she spoke:

MUSIC: OUT

MRS. ATKINSON: (DEEPLY, KNOWINGLY) Thank you.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Then I went outside, and I found Atkinson sitting on the gravestone and smoking. He looked up at me.

ATKINSON: Whew. Hot. Hot. Whew. Man's not responsible for what he might do in this heat. Hmm. She never asked anyone to read aloud before.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And then we talked about the sketch again. He looked at it.

ATKINSON: Likeness is me, all right. On trial.

WITHENCROFT: Er, you - you must excuse my asking but - uh, do you know of anything you've done for which you could be put on trial?

ATKINSON: No. I've done nothing. Hmph! (WITH A CHUCKLE) Not yet.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) He got up, fetched a can from the porch, and he began to water the flowers.

SOUND: PICKS UP WATERING CAN, WATERS FLOWERS

ATKINSON: Twice a day regular in the hot weather, and then the heat sometimes gets the better of the delicate ones. And ferns, good Lord! they could never stand it. Where do you live?

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I told him my address. It would take an hour's quick walk to get back home. And he stopped watering and he faced me, squarely:

SOUND: SETS DOWN WATERING CAN

ATKINSON: It's like this. We'll look at the matter straight. If you go back home to-night, you take your chance of accidents. A cart may run over you. There's always banana skins and orange peels, to say nothing of falling ladders.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) He spoke of the improbable with an intense seriousness that would have been laughable six hours before.

But I did not laugh.

ATKINSON: The best thing we can do is for you to stay here till twelve o'clock. Then it'll be tomorrow, d'y'see?

WITHENCROFT: Yes.

ATKINSON: We'll go upstairs and smoke. May be cooler inside.

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And, to my surprise, I agreed.

MUSIC: AN ACCENT ... A BRIDGE ... THEN OUT

SOUND: TOOLS SHARPENED

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) We are sitting in a long, low room beneath the eaves. Atkinson has sent his wife to bed. He himself is - is busy sharpening some tools at a little oilstone, smoking one of my cigars the while.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And as I look at my sketch before me, I suddenly see the fuzzy outline of what the man in the picture holds in his hand. For, while I had not been able to sketch it before, I am able to do so now.

It is - a chisel.

MUSIC: FADES OUT

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And it is stained - with dark liquid.

SOUND: DISTANT THUNDER ROLLS OMINOUSLY

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) Ah, the sketch - is completed now.

The air seems charged with thunder.

And I hear it - in the distance.

It is ominous but - but it carries the hope of rain.

MUSIC: IN AND UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) And perhaps this damnable heat will - will be broken soon. And the day will soon be over. It is close to twelve.

SOUND: THUNDER SUBSIDES ... CHISEL SHARPENED ... GROWS LOUDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) I am writing this at a - at a shaky table before the open window. The leg is cracked, and Atkinson, who - who seems a handy man with his tools, is going to mend it as

soon as he has finished putting an edge on his - chisel.

MUSIC: OUT

SOUND: CLOCK STARTS TO CHIME TWELVE ... CHISEL SHARPENED STEADILY
... UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) There. It is twelve.

The day is over.

And I shall be going home.

But the heat! The heat - is stifling.

ATKINSON: (SIGHS, GROANS, GRUNTS)

SOUND: CLOCK CONTINUES TO CHIME ... ATKINSON STOPS SHARPENING,
RISES, FOOTSTEPS ... UNDER

WITHENCROFT: (NARRATES) This heat - is enough to - send a man mad.

ATKINSON: (GRUNTS)

MUSIC: SOMBER ... TO COMMIT MURDER BY ... BLENDS WITH CLOCK CHIMES
... BUILDS TO A CONCLUSION ... THEN OUT

VOICE: And so closes "August Heat," in which Roma Wines have
brought you Ronald Colman as star of tonight's study in ...

MUSIC: AN ACCENT

VOICE: Suspense! "Suspense" is produced, edited and directed by
William Spier. Music for "August Heat" was composed by
Lucien Moraweck and conducted by Lud Gluskin. Dennis Hoey
appeared as Atkinson.

ANNOUNCER: This is Truman Bradley with a word for Roma Wines, the
sponsor of "Suspense." America's famed authority on
hospitality, Elsa Maxwell, recently made this suggestion for
gracious entertainment.

ELSA MAXWELL: Your friends will respect your good taste when you serve
delightful Roma California Tokay, enjoyable at any time.
With coffee or dessert, with nuts and fruit. I suggest
serving Roma Tokay cool.

ANNOUNCER: A most timely suggestion from Miss Maxwell. You'll find
flame-bright Roma Tokay velvety smooth, moderately sweet,
light yet delightfully rich in color. And you'll find Roma
Wines always delicious, of unvarying fine quality and
goodness.

June is the month of weddings and the most distinguished way to fete the June bride is by serving Roma California Champagne. It's golden sparkle and delicious, delightful dryness tell you that here is a truly fine champagne -- Roma Champagne. Next time you plan for a special occasion, add this sparkling touch of perfection -- good Roma Champagne.

VOICE: Next Thursday, you will hear John Payne and Frank McHugh as stars of ...

MUSIC: AN ACCENT

VOICE: Suspense!

MUSIC: OUT

ANNOUNCER: Presented by Roma Wines. R-O-M-A. Made in California for Enjoyment Throughout the World.

MUSIC: THEME

CBS ANNCR: This is CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System.