

The Diary of Sophronia Winters

(MUSIC ... BERNARD HERRMANN'S SUSPENSE THEME ... CONTINUES IN BG)

THE MAN IN BLACK: Suspense!

This is The Man in Black, here again to introduce Columbia's program, Suspense.

Our stars tonight are Miss Agnes Moorehead and Mr. Ray Collins. You've seen these two expert and resourceful players in "Citizen Kane" - "The Magnificent Ambersons" in which Miss Moorehead's performance won her the 1942 Film Critics' Award. Mr. Collins will soon be seen in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Technicolor film, "Salute to the Marines."

Miss Moorehead and Mr. Collins return this evening to their first love, the CBS microphone, to appear in a study in terror by Lucille Fletcher called "The Diary of Sophronia Winters."

The story told by this diary is tonight's tale of ... suspense. If you've been with us on these Tuesday nights, you will know that Suspense is compounded of mystery and suspicion and dangerous adventure. In this series are tales calculated to intrigue you, to stir your nerves, to offer you a precarious situation and then withhold the solution ... until the last possible moment. And so it is with the story "The Diary of Sophronia Winters" and the performances of Agnes Moorehead and Ray Collins, we again hope to keep you in ...

(MUSIC: ... UP, DRAMATICALLY)

THE MAN IN BLACK: ... suspense!

(MUSIC ... THEME OUT ... HARMONIUM PLAYS THIS STORY'S SIGNATURE HYMN -- "WHEN MAN'S WORK IS DONE" ... THEN, IN BG)

SOPHRONIA: February 1st, St. Petersburg, Florida. I, Sophronia Winters, have hereby begun this diary because, on this date, I feel for the first time that I've begun to live. Diaries are no good unless one has thrilling experiences. For forty years, I've never had what could really be called a thrilling experience. But Papa's death has changed everything.

(MUSIC ... FADES OUT)

SOPHRONIA: Here I am in beautiful St. Petersburg with everything to start life anew -- money in my purse, two suitcases full of new clothes, and a gorgeous new permanent wave. And Florida is really the land of romance. It doesn't matter whether you're seventeen or seventy -- there are parties and dances and bingo games and flirtations for all. My landlady, in fact, tells me that people often become engaged and even married to perfect strangers overnight. I'm still shy, of course, but, just the same, it's such fun and so thrilling. To think one's fate may be just around the corner!

(MUSIC ... UPBEAT DANCE TUNE, THEN UNDER)

SOPHRONIA: February 3rd. Oh, diary, it IS beginning! This morning, when I came out of my lodging house to go down to the beach, I noticed a man -- a thrilling-looking man -- sitting across the street on a bench. It was just as though he were waiting for me because, when I came out, he sort of started up as though he knew me. Of course, I didn't speak first but I knew the minute I started down the street that he was following me. Well, I got to the beach and sat down with my magazines and, suddenly, there he was, strolling toward me with a broad smile.

HIRAM: Well! Sitting out here all by your lonesome?

SOPHRONIA: (NERVOUS DELIGHTED CHUCKLING) Oh, yes, yes, I am.

HIRAM: Didn't I see you last night over at the Starfish Tea Room?

SOPHRONIA: The Starfish Tea Room?

HIRAM: Mm hm.

SOPHRONIA: Oh, yes, yes, I was there yesterday. But it was so crowded I'm afraid I don't recall--

HIRAM: Mighty nice cuisine they've got over there. Er, mind if I sit down beside you?

SOPHRONIA: (DELIGHTED GASP) Oh, not at all! Oh, oh, just a minute, sit on this magazine -- the beach is SO sandy!

HIRAM: Oh, sand doesn't bother me. I'm from Maine, you know. We get plenty of sand up there.

SOPHRONIA: Do you?

HIRAM: You've been down here at St. Pete long?

SOPHRONIA: Oh, just three days.

HIRAM: Three days? That's a long time. It's a wonder I didn't spot you before.

SOPHRONIA: (CHUCKLES) Oh ho, Mister--?

HIRAM: Johnson's the name. Hiram Johnson.

SOPHRONIA: Oh.

HIRAM: I come from Green Harbor, Maine. Run a big hotel up there summers.

SOPHRONIA: Oh?

HIRAM: Well, that's my whole history in a nutshell.

SOPHRONIA: My name's Sophronia. Sophronia Winters.

HIRAM: (SURPRISED) Sophronia?

SOPHRONIA: Uh huh.

HIRAM: Well, you know, that's quite a coincidence. My sister-in-law's name was Sophronia.

SOPHRONIA: Oh?

HIRAM: Sophronia Johnson. You ever heard of her? She looked quite a bit like you, too.

SOPHRONIA: Sophronia Johnson? No, I'm afraid I haven't. Who was she? Someone very famous? I'm so ignorant about these things.

HIRAM: (CHUCKLES) Oh, that's all right. Say, look at that sun, will you? I'd say it was pretty nearly time for lunch. (FADES ... TO SEVERAL SECONDS OF SILENCE)

(MUSIC ... CALLIOPE ... FADES IN ... THEN, IN BG)

SOPHRONIA: ... and Diary darling, he IS wonderful. Strong and kind, warm-hearted, so generous. I don't want to be like the other silly women in this town but Hiram is different. There's something almost poetic about him. Something sad and - and deep.

HIRAM: (GENTLY) You know, Sophronia, it's kind of mysterious, us finding that nine-point starfish on the beach together. My sister-in-law Sophronia used to collect nine-point starfishes. And to think your name's Sophronia and you find a nine-point starfish with me. Well, it - kind of draws us together, eh? ... Ah? ... What do you think? (FADES OUT)

SOPHRONIA: (FADES IN) I feel as though I know him completely. As though I'd known him all my life.

(MUSIC ... GENTLE, MUTED VERSION OF "HERE COMES THE BRIDE" ... IN BG)

SOPHRONIA: My landlady says it's foolish -- but look at Romeo and Juliet! Weren't THEY foolish?

(MUSIC ... UP, TO FILL A PAUSE)

HIRAM: What's the good of waiting, Sophronia? I've got to be back at the hotel in a week. We - we may never see each other again.

SOPHRONIA: Oh, Hiram, don't say that. I - I couldn't bear it.

HIRAM: Then let's do it right away. Tomorrow? There's a parson out on Coral Avenue who'll do the job for us. We could take a nice moonlight drive out to the alligator farm afterward, have a nice short dinner. Then climb on board the Orange Blossom tomorrow night for Maine.

SOPHRONIA: (GASPS, THRILLED)

HIRAM: Just think of Maine. The big dark pine woods, the sand, the bay. The two of us, alone together.

SOPHRONIA: The two of us, alone together.

(MUSIC ... WEDDING MUSIC FADES TO SOUND)

SOUND: (TRAIN RUMBLES DOWN TRACK, TRAIN WHISTLE)

SOPHRONIA: February 7th, on board the Orange Blossom. I was married in a wedding dress of Alice Blue moiré with a thrill of white organdy at the collar and wrists. And a rhinestone belt buckle. Hiram sent me talisman roses. I'm pressing one precious flower between the pages of this diary for luck.

SOUND: (TRAIN WHISTLE FADES ... THEN CRICKETS CHIRPING, TRUDGING FOOTSTEPS)

HIRAM: You'll see it beyond this bend in a couple of minutes. Uh, bags heavy?

SOPHRONIA: No, not particularly, dearest. Oh, I can't get over that taxi man at the station. Imagine his insolence, saying he couldn't drive us over--

HIRAM: Mm, maybe he didn't have any gas. It happens sometimes around here.

SOPHRONIA: Well, anyway, I'm glad the weather's so mild. Can you imagine what it would be like in a blizzard?

HIRAM: There's the place!

SOUND: (FOOTSTEPS STOP)

SOPHRONIA: (EXCITED) Oh, wait a minute! Wait a minute! I don't want to look until I put down these bags. (EXHALES AS SHE PUTS THEM DOWN) Now, where?

HIRAM: There! Through those big pine trees.

SOPHRONIA: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh. Oh, it is - big, isn't it?

HIRAM: (PROUDLY) A hundred and twenty-five rooms!

SOPHRONIA: (AMAZED) So many fire escapes and balconies and - porches and towers.

SOUND: (TRUDGING FOOTSTEPS)

SOPHRONIA: I, er, I stayed in a hotel like that once years ago with Papa. It was very fashionable then.

HIRAM: My grandfather built that place fifty years ago. Hasn't been changed much since.

SOPHRONIA: No? Well, of course you've put in modern plumbing.

HIRAM: Not yet.

SOUND: (IRON GATE CLANKS AND SQUEAKS OPEN)

HIRAM: Here we are. Walk in.

SOUND: (DISTANT LOW OMINOUS NOTE)

SOPHRONIA: Ohh - what's that?

HIRAM: Just a fog horn out in the bay.

SOPHRONIA: Fog?

HIRAM: We get it almost every night in this kind of weather.

SOUND: (GATE SWINGS SHUT AND LOCKS)

SOPHRONIA: What are you locking the gate for?

HIRAM: Why not? There's nobody coming in after us. Or going out again for a while.

SOPHRONIA: But I - I thought you said the hotel--?

HIRAM: The hotel is empty.

SOUND: (FOOTSTEPS, WOODEN DOOR CLICKS AND SQUEAKS OPEN)

SOPHRONIA: (NERVOUS) Hiram!

HIRAM: (ANNOYED) What is it now?

SOPHRONIA: Hiram darling, I know it sounds silly but - but let's not go in there tonight. Let's - let's wait until morning.

HIRAM: Why?

SOPHRONIA: Oh, just because it's so dark and empty. There's - not a light in the whole place and no one's expecting us. What'll we eat? And where'll we sleep? Let's stay in the village just for tonight.

HIRAM: (CURT) I've got things to eat and a place to sleep. Come on!

SOUND: (GRABS HER ARM, FORCES HER INSIDE)

SOPHRONIA: (IN PAIN) Oooh! Oh, my arm! Hiram! Hiram!

SOUND: (DOOR SLAMS SHUT)

HIRAM: (QUIETLY) You remember my telling you down in Florida about my sister-in-law Sophronia? Well, that's her. Over there on the wall. Take a look at her.

SOUND: (FOOTSTEPS)

SOPHRONIA: Hiram, you hurt me! Do you realize that? You twisted my arm.

SOUND: (FOOTSTEPS STOP)

SOPHRONIA: Oh. Well, the - glass is very dusty. She must have died many years ago. But her face is sweet -- very sweet. And her eyes -- there's something very sad and wistful about her eyes.

HIRAM: (CRISP) She was a murderess. She was hanged in Portland twenty-five years ago for the murder of my brother Ephraim -- here, in the lobby of this hotel. She murdered him in cold blood with an axe! That fire axe hanging over there on the wall.

SOPHRONIA: (HORRIFIED) Hiram!

HIRAM: It was a summer day. There were guests sitting out on the front porch in the rockers. It was just after lunch. My brother Ephraim was sitting at the desk, counting his loose change. My mother was crocheting in that old wicker rocking chair. Sophronia came downstairs - humming a hymn.

SOPHRONIA: (UNNERVED) Oh, don't, Hiram. Please, please don't tell me any more.

HIRAM: Why not?

SOPHRONIA: Well, it makes me nervous to hear it like this in this big shadowy lobby. And - and your eyes, Hiram, your eyes-- Hiram, you're acting so strange. Hiram, what's the matter with you, dear? I - I know it was a terrible tragedy but it happened twenty-five years ago.

HIRAM: Don't touch me, Sophronia!

SOPHRONIA: Don't touch you?

HIRAM: Do you - remember what I said to you in Florida?

SOPHRONIA: What did you say? Well, you - you said a million sweet and wonderful things to me, Hiram.

HIRAM: I said - you resembled my dead sister-in-law. Look at her again. (OMINOUS) Look at her closely -- Sophronia.

SOPHRONIA: But why? Oh, no! No, I can't! It's too horrible. I can't look at her face with any pleasure now, knowing she was a murderess.

HIRAM: You're afraid to look! Is that it?

SOPHRONIA: No! No, I'm not afraid! Hiram! Please! My arm! (PAUSE) Oh, very well. I'll look. (WHIMPERS HELPLESSLY UNDER THE FOLLOWING)

HIRAM: Now -- Stand there, quietly. Like that. Take off your glasses. Ah! That's all I wanted to see. That's all I wanted to see. (FADES OUT, FOR SEVERAL SECONDS)

(MUSIC ... HARMONIUM PLAYS A HYMN)

SOPHRONIA: February 13th, Green Harbor Hotel, Maine. I can't understand it. I try to fathom it but my head aches and my heart is heavy. The hotel is deserted. Has been for twenty-five years. Everything is covered with spiders and cobwebs. The great dining room with its oak woodwork is alive with rats. And the row of broken rocking chairs on the front porch faces - emptily out to sea. Does he mean this to be my home? He's downstairs in the shabby parlor off the lobby playing the harmonium.

(MUSIC ... STOPS)

SOUND: (BEDROOM DOORKNOB RATTLES)

HIRAM: (MUFFLED VOICE BEHIND DOOR) Sophronia?

SOPHRONIA: Yes? Yes, Hiram?

HIRAM: Sleeping?

SOPHRONIA: No, dear.

HIRAM: Why is your door locked? Come out. I want to show you 'round the place.

SOPHRONIA: It's - it's all right, dear. I've - I've seen it. I - I've seen just about everything.

HIRAM: No, you haven't. You haven't seen the grounds at all.

SOPHRONIA: The grounds? But, Hiram, it's after midnight!

HIRAM: I want to show you where my sister-in-law Sophronia is buried.

SOPHRONIA: Well, n-not tonight, dear. Please, it's so late and I - I have a headache.

HIRAM: (INSISTENT) Open the door, Sophronia! I want you to come NOW!

SOPHRONIA: No! No, I shan't! Now, go away and let me alone! I won't! I - I won't! I won't!

SOUND: (DOOR UNLOCKS AND SWINGS CREAKILY OPEN)

HIRAM: No use carrying on like that. You see, I - I have passkeys to all the doors. (FADES, FOR SEVERAL SECONDS' SILENCE)

SOUND: (CRICKETS CHIRP, FOOTSTEPS TRUDGE, FOG HORN BLOWS IN THE DISTANCE ... FADE IN, IN BG)

HIRAM: (FADES IN) And beyond, where those four birches are standing is where my sister-in-law Sophronia was laid away twenty-five years ago. It was the biggest funeral in the neighborhood. Folks crowded outside the gate by the dozens trying to get a look but we wouldn't let them. Buried her ourselves, without a service, out here by herself on the grounds. Ephraim is buried in town but not Sophronia! I had a feeling I'd have to keep an eye on her even then.

SOPHRONIA: Keep an eye on her?

HIRAM: I knew she was one of those restless sleepers who wouldn't stay quiet in her own grave. I knew before the year was out she'd find some way to start roaming around, hunting for mischief again. She was a young she-devil to the core, Sophronia. They could hang her till doomsday -- wouldn't do any good.

SOPHRONIA: You mean - you mean, you - you think she - haunts this hotel?

HIRAM: No, no. Not this hotel. She never had any use for it -- alive or dead. No. She makes for the warmer climates. She was always a cold-blooded little fish, freezing and shivering all the time. It's places like California and Texas -- and Florida -- she makes for.

SOPHRONIA: Florida?

HIRAM: Yes. That's one of her favorite haunts. Particularly around St. Pete.

She likes the flowers and the sun and the romance.

SOPHRONIA: Hiram, I feel cold. Do you mind if I go inside now?

HIRAM: Just a minute, just a minute. I - I haven't explained everything. You think I'm crazy, I guess. Crazy. But I'm a lot smarter than some people give me credit for. Because, you see, I HAVE found her now - three times.

SOUND: (FOG HORN, FOR PUNCTUATION)

SOPHRONIA: (GASPS)

HIRAM: Do you see that grove of birches over there? Under every one of them's a grave. I've found her wandering the Earth in disguise - three times. And I've killed her three times.

SOPHRONIA: (WHIMPERS NERVOUSLY)

HIRAM: And it still doesn't do any good. She's still restless.

SOPHRONIA: You - you mean, you've - you've killed - three different women?

HIRAM: So, now, I keep another open grave to remind her. It's waiting now. Would you like to see it -- Sophronia?

SOPHRONIA: No, Hiram. No, no, please! I--!

HIRAM: Are you afraid to see it, Sophronia?

SOPHRONIA: No, I-- Hiram, you don't mean to say that you think - just because my name happens to be Sophronia and that - that I look a little like--?

HIRAM: Think what, Sophronia?

SOPHRONIA: Nothing.

SOUND: (FOG HORN, CRICKETS, FADES)

SOPHRONIA: (NEAR WHISPER) February 14th. My mind is made up. I've made a terrible mistake and I must get away from this place. I must get away from Hiram as quickly as I can. (COUGHS) It should be easy. There's no fog today. If I can only escape from the hotel, I can run and hide in the pine woods. No. No, I shall wait for dusk - when he generally sits down in the parlor and - plays the harmonium.

(MUSIC ... HARMONIUM PLAYS ... IN BG)

SOPHRONIA: (COUGHS) I can hide - a little earlier - in one of the deserted rooms - and - and then - when his back is toward the lobby, slip out the front door! (AFTER A PAUSE, COUGHS HARSHLY, THEN OUT)

(MUSIC ... SIMULTANEOUSLY OUT)

HIRAM: (AFTER A PAUSE, FROM OFF) Sophronia?! Sophronia!

SOUND: (SOPHRONIA TRIES THE FRONT DOOR BUT IT'S LOCKED)

HIRAM: (SAVAGE) Sophronia!

SOUND: (HIRAM'S HURRIED FOOTSTEPS)

SOPHRONIA: (COUGHS WEAKLY)

HIRAM: (CLOSER, RELIEVED, PLEASANT) Oh! There you are. What's the matter? Anything wrong?

SOPHRONIA: (COUGHS WEAKLY) No, Hiram. (CONTINUES TO COUGH UNDER THE FOLLOWING)

HIRAM: You - didn't want anything outside, did you? Because if you do, you'll have to ask me to get it for you. You see, I always keep the front door locked.

SOPHRONIA: (WHISPER) Yes, Hiram.

HIRAM: Yes, the back door, too. And all of the doors leading out into the porches and the fire escapes, and a good many of the windows. It makes one feel safe from thieves - and peeping toms. (OFF HER COUGHING, SYMPATHETIC) Oh. You've got a cold. That's too bad.

SOPHRONIA: Yes, I must have caught it last night. Outdoors. The damp.

HIRAM: You ought to be in bed. A good bed. The only good bed in the house is in my sister-in-law Sophronia's old room.

SOPHRONIA: No, no, Hiram! I - I'm all right. It's - it's just a little head cold.

HIRAM: Oh, little head colds often develop into pneumonia. Why, it's too bad I didn't think of that before. You might have slept in it from the beginning. Here, up these stairs. Why, what's the matter? Are you so weak?

SOPHRONIA: No. No, I'm all right.

SOUND: (DOOR UNLOCKS)

HIRAM: This room - is the cleanest in the hotel, too. I've always had a sort of suspicion about it.

SOUND: (DOOR SWINGS CREAKILY OPEN)

HIRAM: You see? I've kept everything as it was.

SOPHRONIA: (LOUD CRY OF SURPRISE -- HER COUGHING CEASES)

HIRAM: What's the matter?

SOPHRONIA: Nothing. Nothing. It's just that--

HIRAM: It seems kind of - familiar?

SOPHRONIA: No, no, no. I-it's just that seeing it so clean -- seeing it as though someone were living here, as - as though they'd - they'd only just stepped out for a moment.

HIRAM: It's as she left it that afternoon when she walked down to murder my brother. You see her needlework on the table with the needle sticking in it? And her hymn book still open? She was very fond of singing hymns, Sophronia was. Had a nice voice, too. I used to accompany her.

SOPHRONIA: (WHIMPERS)

HIRAM: I'll turn down the bed for you. Then you can get undressed while I go and make you some hot tea.

SOPHRONIA: No. I don't want any.

SOUND: (ANOTHER DOOR OPENS)

HIRAM: Here's the closet. You can put on one of Sophronia's dressing gowns.
(FADES)

SOUND: (TICKING CLOCK)

SOPHRONIA: Diary, I'm beside myself. I shall go mad. I shall go mad! Two hours have passed since he locked the door upon me. Night's fallen and I'm alone. Alone in this horrible room with its hideous little mementoes of death. I'm sitting here at her little wicker table, trying to be calm, trying to write this. Somehow, when one writes about a thing, it - it doesn't appear so real. My hand has just brushed against her needlework, her hymn book -- where they still lie, waiting. I can't bear having them near me no longer. (TO HERSELF) I must get them out of my sight. Anywhere. In that closet - or bureau drawer.

SOUND: (KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

HIRAM: (MUFFLED VOICE BEHIND DOOR) Ready for your tea?

SOPHRONIA: No--! Uh, yes, Hiram.

SOUND: (DOOR UNLOCKS, SWINGS CREAKILY OPENS)

HIRAM: Why aren't you in bed? You'll take worse cold, you know.

SOPHRONIA: I'll get in bed in a minute. First, I--

HIRAM: Oh! Brushing up on your needlework again?

SOPHRONIA: My needlework?

HIRAM: You've got it in your hands.

SOPHRONIA: Have I? Oh. Oh, yes. Yes, so I have. (QUICKLY, DESPERATE) But I - I wasn't working on it, Hiram! I swear I wasn't! I - I - I've never done a stitch of needlework in my whole life! I don't know one embroidery stitch from another! Let me show you. Look, I don't even know how to hold the needle!

HIRAM: Get into bed, Sophronia. You're feverish.

SOPHRONIA: (BREATHLESS, INCREASINGLY TEARFUL) Before we go on, Hiram, before you go on thinking I-- We've got to have an understanding. You've got to let me explain. I - I - I was born in 1892 in Kalamazoo, Michigan. My name IS Sophronia, that's true, but they named lots of people Sophronia. I - I was

named for my grandmother. She had just died-- No, no, no. You've GOT to listen to me! I've lived in Kalamazoo all my life. If you'd only just write a letter or send a wire! I've never heard of Green Harbor in my whole life. I - I never went anywhere. For almost ten years, I stayed home, day in and day out -- nursing Papa -- he had - he had a stroke. I wasn't out of the house. (ALMOST INCOHERENT) It was a red brick house with green shutters! (WEEPS) (FADES, FOR A FEW SECONDS)

SOUND: (TICKING CLOCK)

(MUSIC ... HARMONIUM PLAYS THE HYMN)

SOPHRONIA: (IN DESPAIR) February 15th. Now I live only from moment to moment, listening to each creak upon the stairs. (COUGHS) I've been in bed all day. It's night now.

SOUND: (FOG HORN BLOWS)

SOPHRONIA: The fog horn has begun to blow again.

(MUSIC ... FILLS A PAUSE)

SOPHRONIA: (AGITATED) February 19th. I - I woke up early this morning after a wretched night and the date was burning in letters of fire in my brain. If he's planning to kill me, it'll be today. But the hours have been crawling on. It's almost midnight. Oh, why, if he's going to kill me, doesn't he do it at once?! Why does he torture me like this? I'd rather be dead than sit here in this room one moment longer. I can't bear it! If he doesn't come in five minutes, I shall force him to come, I shall beat on the door. (COLLECTS HERSELF) No. No. Rather, let me sit quiet, praying that he doesn't come. Oh, I want to live. I want to live.

(MUSIC ... HARMONIUM FILLS A PAUSE ... THEN STOPS)

SOUND: (CLOCK CONTINUES TICKING IN BG)

HIRAM: (DISTANT) Sophronia?!

SOPHRONIA: (WHISPERS TO HERSELF) She's come.

HIRAM: (DISTANT) Sophronia?! Come downstairs! I want you to sing me a hymn!

SOPHRONIA: (WHISPERS TO HERSELF) Sing? Sing? He - he never asked me to sing for him before. (REALIZES) But SHE sang. (CALLS OUT) I - I can't sing, dear! I - I told you that long ago!

HIRAM: (DISTANT, JOVIAL) Did you?! Well, I'd forgotten!

SOPHRONIA: (CALLS OUT) And besides - how can I come downstairs when my door's locked?!

HIRAM: (DISTANT) It's unlocked! Try it!

SOPHRONIA: (WHISPERS, STUNNED) Unlocked? Oh, no. How could it?

SOUND: (DOOR CREAKS OPEN EASILY)

SOPHRONIA: (HORRIFIED, TO HERSELF) Ohhhh! Oh, it is! It is and I never knew it
- I never knew it.

HIRAM: (DISTANT) Coming?!

SOPHRONIA: (UPSET, TO HERSELF) He unlocked it - sometime when I was just sitting. Oh, why didn't I try a few more times? Why did I just sit there assuming--? No. No, he's got me anyway -- he'd've known. But I might have-- Ohhh, now it's too late. He's going to kill me!

HIRAM: (DISTANT, IMPATIENT) Sophronia!

SOPHRONIA: (CALLS OUT) Yes, Hiram! I'm coming!

SOUND: (DOOR CREAKS WIDER, SLOW FOOTSTEPS DOWN STAIRS, TICKING CLOCK CONTINUES IN BG)

SOPHRONIA: Hiram? Where are you?

HIRAM: (OFF) In here! In the parlor!

SOPHRONIA: What are you doing there, Hiram?

HIRAM: (OFF) Waiting to hear you sing!

SOPHRONIA: You're at the harmonium?

HIRAM: (OFF) Yes!

SOPHRONIA: All right. I'll sing. I haven't sung in years but - I might as well. (A SUDDEN INSPIRATION) I'll sing for you out here in the hall. My voice will carry better.

HIRAM: (OFF, POINTEDLY) It always DID carry better in the hall, didn't it, Sophronia? So you remember THAT, too? Of course you KNOW both the front and back doors are locked.

SOPHRONIA: Play a few bars, Hiram dear, to warm me up.

HIRAM: (OFF) Shall I sing, too, Sophronia? Would you like me to sing along with you?

SOPHRONIA: If it pleases you, Hiram.

(MUSIC ... HARMONIUM PLAYS THE HYMN, SLOW AND STATELY)

HIRAM: (SINGS)
Work for the night is coming
Work in the morning sun

SOPHRONIA: (SINGS)
Work for the night is coming
When man's work is done

HIRAM AND SOPHRONIA: (SING)
Work while the daylight darkens
Work in the summer sun

Work for the night is coming--

SOUND: (HIRAM'S HEAD BLUDGEONED BY FIRE AXE)

(MUSIC ... HARMONIUM STOPS)

HIRAM: (SCREAMS)

SOUND: (DISCORDANT NOTES FROM THE HARMONIUM AS HIRAM'S BODY FALLS ACROSS THE KEYBOARD AND HITS THE FLOOR ... SILENCE)

SOPHRONIA: (SINGS WEAKLY) When - man's work - is done ...

(MUSIC ... GRAND, FULLY ORCHESTRATED VERSION OF THE HYMN ... THEN OUT)

SOPHRONIA: There's only one more page. Shall - shall I read it to you?

NURSE: Yes. Yes, go ahead.

SOPHRONIA: March 22nd. I've been sick, I think, for a very long time. The pages of my diary are blank but I shall take you out again, poor diary, today, and start you over again.

No. No, I shall never look back at the other pages. I shall only write on and on about this beautiful place - so that no one reading this diary will ever know -- (DROPS TO A WHISPER) that I did it. (CHUCKLES HAPPILY)

(MUSIC ... SAD ACCENT ... UNDER)

SOPHRONIA: But I DID do it, diary. I was smarter than he. When I opened that door at the head of the stairs and heard the music, when I saw the fire axe still hanging on the wall - (LAUGHS MERRILY) - I was so cautious. So terribly cautious. I tiptoed like a little mouse even as I sang the hymn into that room where he was playing. But I was clever, so much cleverer than he. I kept on singing. And now, I'm free! Free as a bird! I'm free and he shall never catch me now. Not this time - or ever again. Because - because he's dead.

Isn't he, nurse?

Nurse? Isn't my dear brother-in-law, Hiram, really dead?

(MUSIC ... A BRIEF ACCENT, THEN OUT)

NURSE: Yes, miss. He's dead. And now I'll thank you to hand me that diary. The doctor doesn't approve of the patients writing anything.

(MUSIC ... FOR A GRAND FINISH ... OUT)

THE MAN IN BLACK: And so closes "The Diary of Sophronia Winters" starring Agnes Moorehead and Ray Collins, tonight's tale of ...

(MUSIC ... AN ACCENT ... THEN, BERNARD HERRMANN'S SUSPENSE THEME ... IN BG)

THE MAN IN BLACK: Suspense!

This is your narrator, The Man in Black, who conveys to you Columbia's invitation to spend this half hour in suspense with us again next Tuesday when

Richard Dix, Gale Page and Montagu Love star in "Death Flies Blind." The producer of these broadcasts is William Spier who, with Ted Bliss the director, Lud Gluskin the musical director, Lucien Moraweck the composer and Lucille Fletcher the author, collaborated on tonight's ... "Suspense."

(MUSIC: ... THEME ... CONTINUES)

ANNOUNCER: This is the Columbia Broadcasting System.

(MUSIC: ... OUT)

Originally broadcast: 27 April 1943

Share Page



Get a free website at Webs.com