

RS#6 Lombard, Blore, Wargrave, Armstrong

*(Some hours later. The curtains are drawn and the room is lit by three candles. **WARGRAVE, VERA, BLORE, LOMBARD** and **ARMSTRONG**, are sitting in silence. From time to time they shoot quick, covert glances at each other. **WARGRAVE** watches each in turn, but most often **VERA** with a long, speculative glance. There is silence for some time. Then suddenly **LOMBARD** speaks in a loud, jeering voice that makes them all jump.)*

- Start** → **LOMBARD.** “Five little soldier boys sitting in a row, watching each other and waiting for the blow.”
New version up to date!
- ARMSTRONG.** I hardly think this is a moment for facetiousness.
- LOMBARD.** Have to relieve the gloom. Damn that electric plant running down. Let’s play a nice round game. What about inventing one called “Suspicious?” A. suspects B., B. suspects C. – and so on. Let’s start with Blore. It’s not hard to guess whom Blore suspects. It sticks out a mile. I’m your fancy, aren’t I, Blore?
- BLORE.** I wouldn’t say no to that.
- LOMBARD.** You’re quite wrong, you know. Abstract justice isn’t my line. If I committed murder, there would have to be something in it for me.
- BLORE.** All I say is that you’ve acted suspiciously from the start. You’ve told two different stories. You came here with a revolver. Now you say you’ve lost it.
- LOMBARD.** I have lost it.
- BLORE.** That’s a likely story!
- LOMBARD.** What do you think I’ve done with it? I suggested myself that you should search me.
- BLORE.** Oh! You haven’t got it on you. You’re too clever for that. But you know where it is.
- LOMBARD.** You mean I’ve cached it ready for the next time?
- BLORE.** I shouldn’t be surprised.

LOMBARD. Why don't you use your brains, Blore? If I'd wanted to, I could have shot the lot of you by this time, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.

(BLORE points to the rhyme.)

BLORE. Yes, but that's not the big idea.

LOMBARD. The crazy touch? My God, man, I'm sane enough!

(BLORE looks around at everyone.)

BLORE. The doctor says there are some lunatics you'd never know were lunatics. That's true enough, I'd say.

ARMSTRONG. We – we shouldn't just sit here, doing nothing! There must be something – surely, surely, there is something that we can do? If we lit a bonfire –

BLORE. In this weather?

WARGRAVE. It is, I am afraid, a question of time and patience. The weather will clear. Then we can do something. Light a bonfire, heliograph, signal.

(ARMSTRONG laughs in an unbalanced way.)

ARMSTRONG. A question of time – time? We can't afford time. We shall all be dead.

WARGRAVE. I think the precautions we have now adopted will be adequate.

ARMSTRONG. I tell you – we shall all be dead. All but one – he'll think up something else – he's thinking now –

LOMBARD. Poor Louise – what was her name – Clees? Was it nerves that made you do her in, Doctor?

ARMSTRONG. *(Mechanically.)* No, drink. I used to be a heavy drinker. God help me, I was drunk when I operated – quite a simple operation. My hand shaking all over the place – I can remember her now – a big, heavy, countrified woman. And I killed her!

(ARMSTRONG buries his face in his hands.)

LOMBARD. So I was right – that's how it was?

ARMSTRONG. Sister knew, of course, but she was loyal to me – or to the hospital. I gave up drink – gave it up altogether. I went in for a study of nervous diseases.

WARGRAVE. Very successfully.

ARMSTRONG. One or two lucky shots. Good results with one or two important women. They talked to their friends. For the last year or two I've been so busy I've hardly known which way to turn. I'd got to the top of the tree.

LOMBARD. Until Mr. Unknown Owen – and down will come cradle and doctor and all.

ARMSTRONG. Will you stop your damnable sneering and joking?

WARGRAVE. Gentlemen, gentlemen, please. We can't afford to quarrel.

LOMBARD. That's okay by me. I apologise.

ARMSTRONG. It's this terrible inactivity that gets on my nerves.

WARGRAVE. We are adopting, I feel convinced, the only measures possible. So long as we remain together, all within sight of each other, a repetition of the tragedies that have occurred is – must be – impossible. We have all submitted to a search. Therefore, we know that no man is armed either with firearms or a knife. Nor has any man got cyanide or any drug about his person. If we remain, as I say, within sight of each other, nothing can happen.

ARMSTRONG. But we can't go on like this – we shall need food – sleep –

BLORE. That's what I say.

←————— End