

CAT AND MOUSE

A mystery by Sam Craig

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Nora Marsh has lived with the burden of a father who's been branded a traitor. She has tried to keep their inn, the Cat and Mouse, running smoothly, but her father's depression and drinking after his return from the World War II European front has made life difficult. Her life begins to further unravel when a new boarder, Daniel Cavell, turns up missing. Kate Sherwin, the local Civil Defense warden, and Cavell's mother, Ruth, begin a search for the boy which ends when his body is found in the window seat of the inn's living room. Kate has long suspected Nora's father Harry, of being a spy. She's found incriminating equipment hidden in the attic of the Cat and Mouse. Daniel Cavell's death adds fuel to her suspicions. Harry Marsh may well be "The Cat," a notorious Nazi spy said to be somewhere on the East Coast. But Cavell was killed with the knife of another boarder, Sam Coggins, who is quickly arrested for the murder. Nora, torn by her love for her father and her love for her country, finds horrifying evidence that her father has been communicating with the Germans and may be involved in a plot to assassinate President Franklin D. Roosevelt. But can she be sure? A noose inevitably tightens around Nora who must somehow decide whom she can trust...if anyone.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 3 w, 1 flex)

NORA MARSH: Young woman trying to run an inn, about 18.

HARRY MARSH: Her father, 38 years old.

SAM COGGINS: A boarder, late twenties.

KATE SHERWIN: Local Civil Defense warden and another boarder, late forties.

RUTH CAVELL: Victim's mother, late forties.

SHERIFF McCLEARY: Late fifties.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I:

Scene 1 - March, 1944, 8 p.m.

Scene 2 - An hour later.

Scene 3 - Later that night.

ACT II:

Scene 1 - The following evening.

Scene 2 - A short time later.

SETTING

The Cat and Mouse Inn, located on an isolated stretch of Connecticut seashore. It is March, 1944. We see the parlor of the inn, with a stairway CS leading to the bedrooms. SR is an exit to the kitchen. SL is an exit to the hall and front door. A small fireplace is DSR with two chairs flanking it. At SL is a desk with chair and telephone. DSL is a window with a window box beneath it. The furnishings indicate the inn has been less than successful, and there's a brooding, dangerous feeling about the place.

PROPS

Dust rag, cane, bread and butter, radio, shovel, coats, scarves, boots, a drinking glass, phone, handkerchief stained with blood, paper and pen, woman's hanky, purse with note inside, glass of sherry, dish, dish towel, keys, pair of caltrops, bottle, another handkerchief, hunting knife, small bag, tea tray, wallet, piece of paper, revolver, papers on desk, rope, gag, match, candles, cup of coffee, briefcase, flashlight, remote detonator, envelope with paper inside, suitcase, towels.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: NORA is dusting the desk. The radio is on.)

ANNOUNCER: *(Voice on radio.)* Soviet troops have begun an offensive against the Nazis on the Belorussian front. And more bad news for Germany: the Allies have begun major daylight air raids on Berlin. And Berlin should be prepared: the British recently dropped over 3,000 tons of bombs on the northern industrial city of Hamburg. *(SAM, using his cane, enters SR eating bread and butter. He moves to the radio.)* In other war news, a second Allied attempt to capture Monte Cassino south of Rome is underway -

(SAM snaps off the radio. NORA turns around, almost frightened.)

NORA: Oh, Mr. Coggins ... you scared me.

SAM: *(Gruffly.)* No news is good news, right?

NORA: *(Trying to lighten the moment.)* I ... I guess you didn't get enough supper.

SAM: I had enough beans.

NORA: I ... I really should make more for supper ... but our new boarder hasn't given me his ration book yet, so I had to make do.

SAM: Where's your pa? Up in his room on the radio to Führer?

NORA: I wish you wouldn't talk like that.

SAM: Just speaking the truth, little girl.

NORA: I'm eighteen ... hardly a little girl.

SAM: You are if you don't face the facts.

NORA: Mr. Coggins, it really isn't any of your business.

SAM: It's everyone's business.

NORA: My father ... my father ...

SAM: Yeah?

NORA: He took sick.

SAM: *(Pointedly.)* Yeah ... sick with yellow fever.

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NORA: Is there something you wanted?

SAM: Be nice to have my knee back. *(NORA ignores HIM.)*

Then I could go back and help finish the job.

NORA: We'd all appreciate that.

SAM: I'll bet you would. So ... where's your old man?

NORA: I haven't seen him since supper.

SAM: Up talkin' to Jim Beam, I 'spose.

NORA: I told you, I don't know. Anything I can help you with?

SAM: Gotta borrow his truck tomorrow. Got a load of old tires to pick up and haul to the plant.

NORA: Unless he's using it, I'm sure he wouldn't mind.

SAM: He never uses it.

NORA: Then there's no problem, is there?

SAM: Guess not. I'll go up 'n knock on his door ... just to make sure.

(SAM exits up stairs. NORA moves to radio to turn it back on when HARRY enters SR carrying a shovel. He wears his coat and scarf. His boots and hands are muddy.)

NORA: Dad?

HARRY: Dirty as hell out there!

NORA: What were you doing?

HARRY: Working.

NORA: Outside? It's dark!

HARRY: Brought the lantern.

NORA: You know we're not supposed to use lights outside.

HARRY: Can't be seen from the water. I was behind the house.

NORA: That's not the point.

HARRY: Then what is the point?

NORA: Civil Defense said no lights outside.

HARRY: *(Sarcastically.)* Sure. No signals to the Nazis. U-boats are surfacing all the time out there, they say.

They're looking for quiet little spots to come ashore.

They're looking for ways to sneak their spies in.

NORA: They've caught men doing exactly that.

End of Freeview

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