

CONSTABLE. Mr. Birch, please.

(HUGO enters from the library. He looks dogged and rather defiant. The CONSTABLE closes the door. The INSPECTOR indicates a chair at the bridge table.)

INSPECTOR. *(Pleasantly.)* Come in, Mr. Birch. Sit down here, please.

(HUGO sits.)

A very unpleasant business, I'm afraid, sir. What have you to say about it?

HUGO. *(Defiantly.)* Nothing.

INSPECTOR. Nothing?

HUGO. What do you expect me to say? The blinking woman snaps open the blinking cupboard and out falls a blinking corpse. Took my breath away. I've not got over it yet. It's no good asking me anything because I don't know anything.

INSPECTOR. That's your statement, is it? You know nothing at all about it?

HUGO. I'm telling you. I didn't kill the fellow. I didn't even know him.

INSPECTOR. You didn't know him. But you'd heard of him?

HUGO. Yes, and I heard he was a nasty bit of goods.

INSPECTOR. In what way?

HUGO. Oh, I don't know. Fellow that women liked and men had no use for. That sort of thing.

INSPECTOR. You've no idea why he should come back to this house a second time this evening?

HUGO. Not a clue.

INSPECTOR. Anything between him and the present Mrs. Hailsham-Brown, do you think?

HUGO. *(Shocked.)* Clarissa? Good Lord, no! Nice girl, Clarissa. Got a lot of sense. Wouldn't look twice at a fellow like that.

INSPECTOR. So you can't help us?

HUGO. Sorry. There it is.

INSPECTOR. You'd no idea that the body was in that recess?

HUGO. Of course not.

INSPECTOR. Thank you, sir.

HUGO. *(Vaguely.)* What?

INSPECTOR. That's all, thank you, sir.

(He moves to the desk and picks up a copy of Who's Who. HUGO rises and moves to the library door, but the CONSTABLE bars his way. HUGO turns towards the French windows.)

CONSTABLE. This way, Mr. Birch, please.

(He moves to the hall door and HUGO exits through it. The CONSTABLE closes the door.)

He was a mine of information, wasn't he? Mind you, not very nice for a J.P. to be mixed up in a murder.

(The INSPECTOR searches the book.)

INSPECTOR. *(Reading.)* "Delahaye, Sir Rowland Edward Mark, K.C.B., M.V.O...."

CONSTABLE. What have you got there?

(He peers over the INSPECTOR's shoulder.)