

CLARISSA. Why?

*(CLARISSA moves to the desk and replaces the document in the drawer.)*

INSPECTOR. It so happens a lady and gentleman were down here with orders to view this house and the lady happened to lose a very valuable brooch. She called in at the police station to give particulars and she happened to mention this house. She said they were asking an absurd price. She thought eighteen guineas a week for a house right in the country and miles from anywhere was ridiculous. I agreed with her.

CLARISSA. Yes, that is extraordinary, very extraordinary. I understand why you were sceptical. But perhaps now you'll believe some of the other things I said.

INSPECTOR. I'm not doubting your *final* story, Mrs. Hailsham-Brown. We usually know the truth when we hear it. I knew too, that there would have to be some serious reason for those three gentlemen to cook up this harebrained scheme of concealment.

CLARISSA. You mustn't blame them too much, Inspector. It was my fault. I went on and on at them.

INSPECTOR. Ah, I've no doubt you did. But what I don't understand is, who telephoned the police?

CLARISSA. *(Startled.)* How extraordinary! Yes, I'd forgotten that.

INSPECTOR. It clearly wasn't you, and it wouldn't be any of the three gentlemen...

CLARISSA. Elgin, Miss Peake...

INSPECTOR. Not Miss Peake. She didn't know the body was there.

CLARISSA. *(Thoughtfully.)* I wonder...

INSPECTOR. Why, when the body was discovered she had hysterics.

CLARISSA. Oh, anyone can have hysterics.

*(CLARISSA realises what she has said. The INSPECTOR does a double-take. CLARISSA smiles at him.)*

INSPECTOR. Anyway, she doesn't live in the house. She has her own cottage.

CLARISSA. She could have been in the house. She has keys to all the doors.

INSPECTOR. It looks to me more like Elgin who telephoned.

CLARISSA. You won't send me to prison, will you? Uncle Roly said you wouldn't.

INSPECTOR. *(Austerely.)* It's a good thing you changed your story in time and told the truth, madam. If you'll let me advise you, Mrs. Hailsham-Brown, you'll get in touch with your solicitor as soon as possible. In the meantime, I'll get your statement typed out and read over to you and perhaps you will sign it.

*(SIR ROWLAND enters from the hall.)*

SIR ROWLAND. I couldn't keep away any longer. Inspector, is it all right? Do you understand?

CLARISSA. Roly, darling. I've made a statement and the police, Mr. Jones - is going to type it. Then I've got to sign it and I've told them everything.

*(She holds his hand and speaks with emphasis.)*

How I thought it was a burglar and hit him on the head -

*(SIR ROWLAND looks in alarm at CLARISSA.)*

- and then it turned out to be Oliver so I got in a terrible flap and rang you; and how I begged and begged and at last you gave in. I see now how wrong of me it was - but at the time I was just scared stiff and I thought it would be cosier for everybody, me, Henry, and even Miranda, if Oliver was found in Marsden Wood.

SIR ROWLAND. Clarissa! What have you been saying?

INSPECTOR. *(Complacently.)* Mrs. Hailsham-Brown has made a very full statement, sir.

SIR ROWLAND. *(Dryly.)* So it seems.

CLARISSA. It was the best thing to do. It was the only thing to do. The inspector made me see that.

**INSPECTOR.** It will lead to far less trouble in the end. Now, Mrs. Hailsham-Brown, I shan't ask you to go into the recess while the body is there, but I'd like you to show me exactly where the man was standing when you came through that way.

**CLARISSA.** Oh – yes – well – he was...

*(She crosses to the desk.)*

No – he was standing here like this.

*(The INSPECTOR motions to the CONSTABLE, who puts his hand on the panel switch.)*

**INSPECTOR.** I see – Jones – and then the door opened.

*(The CONSTABLE actuates the switch and the panel opens.)*

And you came through that way. And then –

*(He does a double-take. The recess is empty except for a small piece of paper.)*

– what the hell! Where's the body?

*(The CONSTABLE goes into the recess and picks up the piece of paper. The INSPECTOR looks accusingly at CLARISSA and SIR ROWLAND.)*

**CONSTABLE.** *(Reading.)* "Sucks to you!"