

*(JEREMY enters from the library. He is attempting, rather unsuccessfully, to look quite at ease. The CONSTABLE closes the library door.)*

INSPECTOR. Sit down.

*(JEREMY sits.)*

Your name?

JEREMY. Jeremy Warrender.

INSPECTOR. Address?

JEREMY. Three hundred and forty Broad Street, and thirty-four Grosvenor Square. Country address, Hepplestone, Wiltshire.

INSPECTOR. A gentleman of independent means?

JEREMY. No. I'm private secretary to Sir Lazarus Stein. Those are his addresses.

INSPECTOR. How long have you been with him?

JEREMY. About a year.

INSPECTOR. Did you know this man Oliver Costello?

JEREMY. Never heard of him till tonight.

INSPECTOR. You didn't see him when he came to the house earlier this evening?

JEREMY. No. I'd gone over to the golf club with the others. We were dining there, you see. It was the servants' night out and Mr. Birch had asked us to dine with him at the club.

INSPECTOR. Was Mrs. Hailsham-Brown asked, too?

JEREMY. No.

*(The INSPECTOR raises his eyebrows. JEREMY hurries on.)*

That is, she could have come if she'd liked.

INSPECTOR. She was asked, then? And she refused?

JEREMY. *(Rattled.)* No. No. What I mean is - well, Hailsham-Brown is usually quite tired when he gets down here, and Clarissa said they'd just have a scratch meal here, as usual.

INSPECTOR. So Mrs. Hailsham-Brown expected her husband to dine here? She didn't expect him to go out again as soon as he came in?

JEREMY. *(Flustered.)* I - er - well - er - really I don't know. No - I believe she did say he was going to be out this evening.

INSPECTOR. It seems odd then that Mrs. Hailsham-Brown should not come out to the club, instead of remaining here to dine all by herself.

JEREMY. Well - er - well - *(Quickly.)* I mean it was the kid - Pippa, you know. Clarissa wouldn't have liked to go out to leave the kid all by herself in the house.

INSPECTOR. *(Significantly.)* Or perhaps she was making plans to receive a visitor of her own?

JEREMY. *(Hotly.)* I say, that's a rotten thing to say. And it isn't true. I'm sure she never planned anything of the kind.

INSPECTOR. Yet Oliver Costello came here to meet someone. The servants were out. Miss Peake has her own cottage. There was really no one he could have come to the house to meet except Mrs. Hailsham-Brown.

JEREMY. All I can say is – you ask her.

INSPECTOR. I have asked her.

JEREMY. What did she say?

INSPECTOR. (*Easily.*) Just what you say, Mr. Warrender.

JEREMY. There you are.

INSPECTOR. Now tell me how you all happened to come back here from the club. Was that the original plan?

JEREMY. Yes. I mean, no.

INSPECTOR. Which do you mean, sir?

JEREMY. Well, it was like this. We all went over to the club. Rowland and old Hugo went straight into the dining room and I came in a bit later. It's all a cold buffet, you know. I'd been knocking balls about till it got dark and then, well, somebody said, "Bridge?" and I said, "Well, why not come back and play here?" So we did.

INSPECTOR. I see. It was your idea?

JEREMY. I don't remember who suggested it first. Hugo Birch, I think.

INSPECTOR. And you arrived back here – when?

JEREMY. Can't say exactly. Probably left the club house just a bit before eight.

INSPECTOR. And it's what – five minutes' walk?

JEREMY. Just about. The golf course adjoins this garden.

INSPECTOR. And then you played bridge?

JEREMY. Yes.

INSPECTOR. That must have been about twenty minutes before my arrival.

(*He looks to the bridge table.*)

Surely you hadn't time to complete two rubbers and start –

(*He shows JEREMY Clarissa's marker.*)

– a third?

JEREMY. What? Oh, no. No. That first rubber must have been yesterday's score.

(*The INSPECTOR indicates the other markers.*)

INSPECTOR. Only one person seems to have scored.

JEREMY. Yes. I'm afraid we're all a bit lazy about scoring. We left it to Clarissa.

INSPECTOR. Did you know about the passageway between this room and the library?

JEREMY. You mean the place the body was found?

INSPECTOR. That's what I mean.

JEREMY. No. No, I'd no idea. Wonderful bit of camouflage, isn't it? You'd never guess.

(*The INSPECTOR sits on the arm of the sofa, dislodging the cushion. He sees the gloves.*)

INSPECTOR. Consequently you couldn't know there was a body in it. Could you?

JEREMY. You could have knocked me over with a feather, as the saying goes. Absolute blood and thunder melodrama. Couldn't believe my eyes.