

CLARISSA. So you heard?

MISS PEAKE. What I always say is, stand by your own sex.

(She looks at HUGO and snorts.)

Men! I don't hold with them. If they can't find the body, my dear, they can't bring a charge against you. And I say, if that brute was blackmailing you, you did quite right to crack him over the head and good riddance.

CLARISSA. *(Faintly.)* But I didn't...

MISS PEAKE. I heard you tell that inspector all about it. And if it wasn't for that eavesdropping, skulking fellow Elgin, your story would sound quite all right.

CLARISSA. Which one?

MISS PEAKE. About mistaking him for a burglar. It's the blackmail angle that puts a different complexion on it all. So I thought there was only one thing to do; get rid of the body and let the police chase their tails looking for it. Pretty smart work, if I say so myself.

(They all stare at MISS PEAKE.)

JEREMY. *(Fascinated.)* D'you mean to say - that it was you?

MISS PEAKE. We're all friends here, aren't we? Yes. I moved the body.

(She taps her pocket.)

Locking the door! I've got keys to all the doors in this house.

CLARISSA. But how? Where - where did you put it?

MISS PEAKE. *(Whispering.)* The spare room bed. You know, that big four-poster. Right across the head of the bed under the bolster. Then I remade the bed and lay down on top of it.

CLARISSA. But how did you get the body up to the spare room? You couldn't manage it all by yourself.

MISS PEAKE. *(Heartily.)* You'd be surprised. Good old fireman's lift. Slung it over my shoulder.

SIR ROWLAND. Supposing you'd met someone, on the stairs?

MISS PEAKE. Ah, but I didn't. The police were in here with Mrs. Hailsham-Brown; you three were in the dining room. So I grabbed my chance and of course the body, took it through the hall, locked the library door again and popped it up the stairs to the spare room.

SIR ROWLAND. Well, upon my soul!

CLARISSA. But he can't stay under the bolster forever.

MISS PEAKE. No, not forever, of course, Mrs. Hailsham-Brown. Twenty-four hours, though. By that time the police will have finished with the house and grounds. They'll be looking further afield. Now, I've been thinking. I took out a nice deep trench this morning - for the sweet peas. Well, we'll bury the body there and plant a nice double row of sweet peas all along it.

SIR ROWLAND. I'm afraid, Miss Peake, grave digging is no longer a matter for private enterprise.

MISS PEAKE. *(Laughing.)* Oh, you men! Always such sticklers. Now, we've got more sense. We can even take murder in our stride. Eh, Mrs. Hailsham-Brown?

HUGO. Of course, she didn't kill him. Don't believe a word of it.

MISS PEAKE. *(Breezily.)* If she didn't kill him, who did?

(PIPPA enters from the hall. She is yawning and walks in a half-drunk, sleepy manner. She is carrying a dish containing chocolate mousse with a teaspoon in it.)

CLARISSA. *(Startled.)* Pippa! What are you doing out of bed?

PIPPA. I came down. I'm so frightfully hungry.

(Reproachfully.) You said you'd bring this up.

(CLARISSA takes the mousse from PIPPA and sits her on the sofa.)

CLARISSA. I thought you were asleep.

PIPPA. *(Yawning.)* I was asleep. Then I thought a policeman came in and looked at me. I'd been having an awful

(She indicates the French windows.)

MISS PEAKE. Behind a curtain or...

CLARISSA. Oh, really, Miss Peake, there isn't anybody hidden behind any of the curtains. And I'm sure Elgin would never murder anybody. It's quite ridiculous.

MISS PEAKE. You're so trusting, Mrs. Hailsham-Brown. When you're my age, you'll realise how often people are not quite what they seem.

(The INSPECTOR opens his mouth to speak.)

Now then, where would a man like Elgin hide the body? There's that cupboard place between here and the library. You've looked there, I suppose?

SIR ROWLAND. Miss Peake, the inspector has looked both here and in the library.

(The INSPECTOR looks at SIR ROWLAND.)

INSPECTOR. What do you mean by "that cupboard place," Miss Peake?

(The others give a definite, though controlled reaction.)

MISS PEAKE. Oh, it's a wonderful place when you're playing sardines. You'd really never dream it was there. I'll show it to you.

(She makes to the panel.)

CLARISSA. No.

(They turn to CLARISSA.)

There's nothing there now. I know because I went that way, through to the library, just now.

MISS PEAKE. *(Disappointed.)* Oh well, in that case, then...

(She turns away from the panel.)

INSPECTOR. Just show me all the same. I'd like to see.

MISS PEAKE. It was a door originally - matched the one over there.

(She actuates the lever.)

You pull this catch back, and the door comes open. You see.

(The panel opens. The body slumps down and falls forward. MISS PEAKE screams. The INSPECTOR looks at CLARISSA.)

INSPECTOR. So there was a murder here tonight.

(MISS PEAKE continues to scream.)