Chapter 4

—And His Daughter Much-Afraid

The women also looked pale and wan.

The Pilgrim's Progress

Mr Bunter brought Parker's letter up to Lord Peter in bed on the Wednesday morning. The house was almost deserted, everybody having gone to attend the police-court proceedings at Northallerton. The thing would be purely formal, of course, but it seemed only proper that the family should be fully represented. The Dowager Duchess, indeed, was there—she had promptly hastened to her son's side and was living heroically in furnished lodgings, but the younger Duchess thought her mother-in-law more energetic than dignified. There was no knowing what she might do if left to herself. She might even give an interview to a newspaper reporter. Besides, at these moments of crisis a wife's right place is at her husband's side. Lady Mary was ill, and nothing could be said about that, and if Peter chose to stay smoking cigarettes in his pyjamas while his only brother was undergoing public humiliation, that was only what might be expected. Peter took after his mother. How that eccentric strain had got into the family her grace could not imagine, for the Dowager came of a good Hampshire family; there must have been some foreign blood somewhere. Her own duty was clear, and she would do it.

Lord Peter was awake, and looked rather fagged, as though he had been sleuthing in his sleep. Mr Bunter wrapped him solicitously in a brilliant Oriental robe, and placed the tray on his knees.

'Bunter,' said Lord Peter rather fretfully, 'your *café au lait* is the one tolerable incident in this beastly place.'

'Thank you, my lord. Very chilly again this morning, my lord, but not actually raining.'

Lord Peter frowned over his letter.

'Anything in the paper, Bunter?'

'Nothing urgent, my lord. A sale next week at Northbury Hall—Mr Fleetwhite's library, my lord—a Caxton *Confessio Amantis*— '

'What's the good of tellin' me that when we're stuck up here for God knows how long? I wish to heaven I'd stuck to books and never touched crime. Did you send those specimens up to Lubbock?'

'Yes, my lord,' said Bunter gently. Dr Lubbock was the 'analytical gentleman.'

'Must have facts,' said Lord Peter, 'facts. When I was a small boy I always hated facts. Thought of 'em as nasty, hard things, all knobs. Uncompromisin'.'

'Yes, my lord. My old mother— '

'Your mother, Bunter? I didn't know you had one. I always imagined you were turned out ready-made, so to speak. 'Scuse me. Infernally rude of me. Beg your pardon, I'm sure.'

'Not at all, my lord. My mother lives in Kent, my lord, near Maidstone. Seventy-five, my lord, and an extremely active woman for her years, if you'll excuse my mentioning it. I was one of seven.'

'That is an invention, Bunter. I know better. You are unique. But I interrupted you. You were goin' to tell me about your mother.'

'She always says, my lord, that facts are like cows. If you look them in the face hard enough they generally run away. She is a very courageous woman, my lord.'

Lord Peter stretched out his hand impulsively, but Mr Bunter was too well trained to see it. He had, indeed, already begun to strop a razor. Lord Peter suddenly bundled out of bed with a violent jerk and sped across the landing to the bathroom.

Here he revived sufficiently to lift up his voice in 'Come unto these Yellow Sands'. Thence, feeling in a Purcellish mood, he passed to 'I Attempt from Love's Fever to Fly', with such improvement of spirits that, against all custom, he ran several gallons of cold water into the bath and sponged himself vigorously. Wherefore, after a rough toweling, he burst explosively from the bathroom, and caught his shin somewhat violently

into the moor. Is it worth rummaging about, do you think? Rather like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. It's odd about that diamond cat. You've got nothing out of the household, I suppose? It doesn't seem to fit № 10, somehow—and yet you'd think somebody would have heard about it in the village if it had been lost. Well, so long,

Yours Ever,
Ch. Parker.

If Mrs Marchbanks had told me this, I admit I should have thought the episode worth looking into, but I feel strongly that if I were dying I should still lock the door between myself and Mrs Pettigrew-Robinson. Mrs P. was quite sure that at no time had Lady Mary anything in her hand. She was dressed as described at the inquest—a long coat over her pyjamas (sleeping suit was Mrs P's expression), stout shoes, and a woolly cap, and she kept these garments on throughout the subsequent visit of the doctor. Another odd little circumstance is that Mrs Pettigrew-Robinson (who was awake, you remember, from 2 A.M. onwards) is certain that just *before* Lady Mary knocked on Mr Arbuthnot's door she heard a door slam somewhere in the passage. I don't know what to make of this—perhaps there's nothing in it, but I just mention it.

I've had a rotten time in town. Your brother-in-law elect was a model of discretion. His room at the Albany is a desert from a detecting point of view; no papers except a few English bills and receipts, and invitations. I looked up a few of his inviters, but they were mostly men who had met him at the club or knew him in the Army, and could tell me nothing about his private life. He is known at several night-clubs. I made the round of them last night—or, rather, this morning. General verdict: generous but impervious. By the way, poker seems to have been his great game. No suggestion of anything crooked. He won pretty consistently on the whole, but never very spectacularly.

I think the information we want must be in Paris. I have written to the Sûreté and the Crédit Lyonnais to produce his papers, especially his account and check-book.

I'm pretty dead with yesterday's and today's work. Dancing all night on top of a journey is a jolly poor joke. Unless you want me, I'll wait here for the papers, or I may run over to Paris myself.

Cathcart's books here consist of a few modern French novels of the usual kind, and another copy of *Manon* with what the catalogues call 'curious' plates. He must have had a life somewhere, mustn't he?

The enclosed bill from a beauty specialist in Bond Street may interest you. I called on her. She says he came regularly every week when he was in England.

I drew quite blank at King's Fenton on Sunday—oh, but I told you that. I don't think the fellow ever went there. I wonder if he slunk off up

against the lid of a large oak chest which stood at the head of the staircase —so violently, indeed, that the lid lifted with the shock and shut down with a protesting bang.

Lord Peter stopped to say something expressive and to caress his leg softly with the palm of his hand. Then a thought struck him. He set down his towels, soap, sponge, loofah, bath-brush, and other belongings, and quietly lifted the lid of the chest.

Whether, like the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, he expected to find anything gruesome inside was not apparent. It is certain that, like her, he beheld nothing more startling than certain sheets and counterpanes neatly folded at the bottom. Unsatisfied, he lifted the top one of these gingerly and inspected it for a few moments in the light of the staircase window. He was just returning it to its place, whistling softly the while, when a little hiss of indrawn breath caused him to look up with a start.

His sister was at his elbow. He had not heard her come, but she stood there in her dressing-gown, her hands clutched together on her breast. Her blue eyes were dilated till they looked almost black, and her skin seemed nearly the colour of her ash-blond hair. Wimsey stared at her over the sheet he held in his arms, and the terror in her face passed over into his, stamping them suddenly with the mysterious likeness of blood-relationship.

Peter's own impression was that he stared 'like a stuck pig' for about a minute. He knew, as a matter of fact, that he had recovered himself in a fraction of a second. He dropped the sheet into the chest and stood up.

'Hullo, Polly, old thing,' he said, 'where've you been hidin' all this time? First time I've seen you. 'Fraid you've been havin' a pretty thin time of it.'

He put his arm round her, and felt her shrink.

'What's the matter?' he demanded. 'What's up, old girl? Look here, Mary, we've never seen enough of each other, but I am your brother. Are you in trouble? Can't I— '

'Trouble?' she said. 'Why, you silly old Peter, of course I'm in trouble. Don't you know they've killed my man and put my brother in prison? Isn't that enough to be in trouble about?' She laughed, and Peter suddenly thought, 'She's talking like somebody in a blood-and-thunder novel.' She went on more naturally. 'It's all right, Peter, truly—only my head's so bad.

I really don't know what I'm doing. What are you after? You made such a noise, I came out. I thought it was a door banging.'

'You'd better toddle back to bed,' said Lord Peter. 'You're gettin' all cold. Why do girls wear such mimsy little pajimjams in this damn cold climate? There, don't you worry. I'll drop in on you later and we'll have a jolly old pow-wow, what?'

'Not today—not today, Peter. I'm going mad, I think.' ('Sensation fiction again,' thought Peter.) 'Are they trying Gerald today?'

'Not exactly trying,' said Peter, urging her gently along to her room. 'It's just formal, y'know. The jolly old magistrate bird hears the charge read, and then old Murbles pops up and says please he wants only formal evidence given as he has to instruct counsel. That's Biggy, y'know. Then they hear the evidence of arrest, and Murbles says old Gerald reserves his defence. That's all till the Assizes—evidence before the Grand Jury—a lot of bosh! That'll be early next month, I suppose. You'll have to buck up and be fit by then.'

Mary shuddered.

'No—no! Couldn't I get out of it? I couldn't go through it all again. I should be sick. I'm feeling awful. No, don't come in. I don't want you. Ring the bell for Ellen. No, let go; go away! I don't want you, Peter!'

Peter hesitated, a little alarmed.

'Much better not, my lord, if you'll excuse me,' said Bunter's voice at his ear. 'Only produce hysterics,' he added, as he drew his master gently from the door. 'Very distressing for both parties, and altogether unproductive of results. Better to wait for the return of her grace, the Dowager.'

'Quite right,' said Peter. He turned back to pick up his paraphernalia, but was dexterously forestalled. Once again he lifted the lid of the chest and looked in.

'What did you say you found on that skirt, Bunter?'

'Gravel, my lord, and silver sand.'

'Silver sand.'

Behind Riddlesdale Lodge the moor stretched starkly away and upward. The heather was brown and wet, and the little streams had no colour in them. It was six o'clock, but there was no sunset. Only a paleness had moved behind the thick sky from east to west all day. Lord Peter, tramping

'I know I didn't, but if I did I'm not goin' to have you askin' questions and lookin' at me in that tone of voice. However, just to oblige you, I don't mind sayin' plainly that I don't know who did away with the fellow. When I do I'll tell you.'

'You will?'

'Yes, I will, but not till I'm sure. You people can make such a little circumstantial evidence go such a damn long way, you might hang me while I was only in the early stages of suspectin' myself.'

'H'm!' said Biggs. 'Meanwhile, I tell you candidly, I am taking the line that they can't make out a case.'

'Not proven, eh? Well, anyhow, Biggs, I swear my brother shan't hang for lack of my evidence.'

'Of course not,' said Biggs, adding inwardly: 'but you hope it won't come to that.'

A spurt of rain plashed down the wide chimney and sizzled on the logs.

Craven Hotel,
Strand, W.C.,
Tuesday.

My Dear Wimsey—A line as I promised, to report progress, but it's precious little. On the journey up I sat next to Mrs Pettigrew-Robinson, and opened and shut the window for her and looked after her parcels. She mentioned that when your sister roused the household on Thursday morning she went first to Mr Arbuthnot's room—a circumstance which the lady seemed to think odd, but which is natural enough when you come to think of it, the room being directly opposite the head of the staircase. It was Mr Arbuthnot who knocked up the Pettigrew-Robinsons, and Mr P. ran downstairs immediately. Mrs P. then saw that Lady Mary was looking very faint, and tried to support her. Your sister threw her off—rudely, Mrs P. says—declined 'in a most savage manner' all offers of assistance, rushed to her own room, and locked herself in. Mrs Pettigrew-Robinson listened at the door 'to make sure,' as she says, 'that everything was all right,' but, hearing her moving about and slamming cupboards, she concluded that she would have more chance of poking her finger into the pie downstairs, and departed.

'Do you suppose,' broke in Biggs, 'I have not made it my business to *make* him realize? All he says is, "They can't hang me; I didn't kill the man, though I think it's a jolly good thing he's dead. It's no business of theirs what I was doing in the garden." Now I ask you, Wimsey, is that a reasonable attitude for a man in Denver's position to take up?'

Peter muttered something about 'Never had any sense.'

'Had anybody told Denver about this other man?'

'Something vague was said about footsteps at the inquest, I believe.'

'That Scotland Yard man is your personal friend, I'm told?'

'Yes.'

'So much the better. He can hold his tongue.'

'Look here, Biggs, this is all damned impressive and mysterious, but what are you gettin' at? Why shouldn't I lay hold of the beggar if I can?'

'I'll answer that question by another.' Sir Impey leaned forward a little. 'Why is Denver screening him?'

Sir Impey Biggs was accustomed to boast that no witness could perjure himself in his presence undetected. As he put the question, he released the other's eyes from his, and glanced down with finest cunning at Wimsey's long, flexible mouth and nervous hands. When he glanced up again a second later he met the eyes passing, guarded and inscrutable, through all the changes expressive of surprised enlightenment; but by that time it was too late; he had seen a little line at the corner of the mouth fade out, and the fingers relax ever so slightly. The first movement had been one of relief.

'B'Jove!' said Peter. 'I never thought of that. What sleuths you lawyers are. If that's so, I'd better be careful, hadn't I? Always was a bit rash. My mother says— '

'You're a clever devil, Wimsey,' said the barrister. 'I may be wrong, then. Find your man by all means. There's just one other thing I'd like to ask. Whom are *you* screening?'

'Look here, Biggs,' said Wimsey, 'you're not paid to ask that kind of question here, you know. You can jolly well wait till you get into court. It's your job to make the best of the stuff we serve up to you, not to give us the third degree. Suppose I murdered Cathcart myself— '

'You didn't.'

back after a long and fruitless search for tidings of the man with the motor-cycle, voiced the dull suffering of his gregarious spirit. 'I wish old Parker was here,' he muttered, and squelched down a sheep-track.

He was making, not directly for the Lodge, but for a farmhouse about two and a half miles distant from it, known as Grider's Hole. It lay almost due north of Riddlesdale village, a lonely outpost on the edge of the moor, in a valley of fertile land between two wide swells of heather. The track wound down from the height called Whemmeling Fell, skirted a vile swamp, and crossed the little river Ridd about half a mile before reaching the farm. Peter had small hope of hearing any news at Grider's Hole, but he was filled with a sullen determination to leave no stone unturned. Privately, however, he felt convinced that the motor-cycle had come by the high road, Parker's investigations notwithstanding, and perhaps passed directly through King's Fenton without stopping or attracting attention. Still, he had said he would search the neighbourhood, and Grider's Hole was in the neighbourhood. He paused to relight his pipe, then squelched steadily on. The path was marked with stout white posts at regular intervals, and presently with hurdles. The reason for this was apparent as one came to the bottom of the valley, for only a few yards on the left began the stretch of rough, reedy tussocks, with slobbering black bog between them, in which anything heavier than a water-wagtail would speedily suffer change into a succession of little bubbles. Wimsey stooped for an empty sardine-tin which lay, horridly battered, at his feet, and slung it idly into the quag. It struck the surface with a noise like a wet kiss, and vanished instantly. With that instinct which prompts one, when depressed, to wallow in every circumstance of gloom, Peter leaned sadly upon the hurdles and abandoned himself to a variety of shallow considerations upon (1) The vanity of human wishes; (2) Mutability; (3) First love; (4) The decay of idealism; (5) The aftermath of the Great War; (6) Birth-control; and (7) The fallacy of free-will. This was his nadir, however. Realizing that his feet were cold and his stomach empty, and that he had still some miles to go, he crossed the stream on a row of slippery stepping-stones and approached the gate of the farm, which was not an ordinary five-barred one, but solid and uncompromising. A man was leaning over it, sucking a straw. He made no attempt to move at Wimsey's

approach. 'Good evening,' said that nobleman in a sprightly manner, laying his hand on the catch. 'Chilly, ain't it?'

The man made no reply, but leaned more heavily, and breathed. He wore a rough coat and breeches, and his leggings were covered with manure.

'Seasonable, of course, what?' said Peter. 'Good for the sheep, I daresay. Makes their wool curl, and so on.'

The man removed the straw and spat in the direction of Peter's right boot.

'Do you lose many animals in the bog?' went on Peter, carelessly unlatching the gate, and leaning upon it in the opposite direction. 'I see you have a good wall all round the house. Must be a bit dangerous in the dark, what, if you're thinkin' of takin' a little evenin' stroll with a friend?'

The man spat again, pulled his hat over his forehead, and said briefly: 'What doost 'a want?'

'Well,' said Peter, 'I thought of payin' a little friendly call on Mr—on the owner of this farm, that is to say. Country neighbours, and all that. Lonely kind of country, don't you see. Is he in, d'ye think?'

The man grunted.

'I'm glad to hear it,' said Peter; 'it's so uncommonly jolly findin' all you Yorkshire people so kind and hospitable, what? Never mind who you are, always a seat at the fireside and that kind of thing. Excuse me, but do you know you're leanin' on the gate so as I can't open it? I'm sure it's a pure oversight, only you mayn't realize that just where you're standin' you get the maximum of leverage. What an awfully charmin' house this is, isn't it? All so jolly stark and grim and all the rest of it. No creepers or little rose-grown porches or anything suburban of that sort. Who lives in it?'

The man surveyed him up and down for some moments, and replied, 'Mester Grimethorpe.'

'No, does he now?' said Lord Peter. 'To think of that. Just the fellow I want to see. Model farmer, what? Wherever I go throughout the length and breadth of the North Riding I hear of Mr Grimethorpe. "Grimethorpe's butter is the best"; "Grimethorpe's fleeces Never go to pieces"; "Grimethorpe's pork Melts on the fork"; "For Irish stews Take Grimethorpe's ewes"; "A tummy lined with Grimethorpe's beef, Never, never comes to grief". It has been my life's ambition to see Mr Grimethorpe

until collapse was inevitable, took the cigar out again, deposited the ash entire in the exact centre of the ash-tray, and began his statement, omitting only the matter of the suit-case and Bunter's information obtained from Ellen.

Sir Impey Biggs listened with what Peter irritably described as a cross-examining countenance, putting a sharp question every now and again. He made a few notes, and, when Wimsey had finished, sat tapping his note-book thoughtfully.

'I think we can make a case out of this,' he said, 'even if the police don't find your mysterious man. Denver's silence is an awkward complication, of course.' He hooded his eyes for a moment. 'Did you say you'd put the police on to find the fellow?' 'Yes.'

'Have you a very poor opinion of the police?'

'Not for that kind of thing. That's in their line; they have all the facilities, and do it well.'

'Ah! You expect to find the man, do you?'

'I hope to.'

'Ah! What do you think is going to happen to my case if you *do* find him, Wimsey?'

'What do I— '

'See here, Wimsey,' said the barrister, 'you are not a fool, and it's no use trying to look like a country policeman. You are really trying to find this man?'

'Certainly.'

'Just as you like, of course, but my hands are rather tied already. Has it ever occurred to you that perhaps he'd better not be found?'

Wimsey stared at the lawyer with such honest astonishment as actually to disarm him.

'Remember this,' said the latter earnestly, 'that if once the police get hold of a thing or a person it's no use relying on my, or Murbles's, or anybody's professional discretion. Everything's raked out into the light of common day, and very common it is. Here's Denver accused of murder, and he refuses in the most categorical way to give me the smallest assistance.'

'Jerry's an ass. He doesn't realize— '

is absurd of Gerald not to realize that he must speak out. He has *no* consideration.'

'I am doing my very best to persuade him, Duchess,' said Sir Impey, 'but you must have patience. Lawyers enjoy a little mystery, you know. Why, if everybody came forward and told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth straight out, we should all retire to the workhouse.'

'Captain Cathcart's death is very mysterious,' said the Duchess, 'though when I think of the things that have come out about him it really seems quite providential, as far as my sister-in-law is concerned.'

'I s'pose you couldn't get 'em to bring it in "Death by the Visitation of God", could you, Biggs?' suggested Lord Peter. 'Sort of judgment for wantin' to marry into our family, what?'

'I have known less reasonable verdicts,' returned Biggs dryly. 'It's wonderful what you can suggest to a jury if you try. I remember once at the Liverpool Assizes— '

He steered skilfully away into a quiet channel of reminiscence. Lord Peter watched his statuesque profile against the fire; it reminded him of the severe beauty of the charioteer of Delphi and was about as communicative.

It was not until after dinner that Sir Impey opened his mind to Wimsey. The Duchess had gone to bed, and the two men were alone in the library. Peter, scrupulously in evening dress, had been valeted by Bunter, and had been more than usually rambling and cheerful all evening. He now took a cigar, retired to the largest chair, and effaced himself in a complete silence.

Sir Impey Biggs walked up and down for some half-hour, smoking. Then he came across with determination, brutally switched on a reading-lamp right into Peter's face, sat down opposite to him, and said:

'Now, Wimsey, I want to know all you know.'

'Do you, though?' said Peter. He got up, disconnected the reading-lamp, and carried it away to a side-table.

'No bullying of the witness, though,' he added, and grinned.

'I don't care so long as you wake up,' said Biggs, unperturbed. 'Now then.'

Lord Peter removed his cigar from his mouth, considered it with his head on one side, turned it carefully over, decided that the ash could hang on to its parent leaf for another minute or two, smoked without speaking

in the flesh. And you no doubt are his sturdy henchman and right-hand man. You leap from bed before the breaking-day, To milk the kine amid the scented hay. You, when the shades of evening gather deep, Home from the mountain lead the mild-eyed sheep. You, by the ingle's red and welcoming blaze, Tell your sweet infants tales of olden days! A wonderful life, though a trifle monotonous p'raps in the winter. Allow me to clasp your honest hand.'

Whether the man was moved by this lyric outburst, or whether the failing light was not too dim to strike a pale sheen from the metal in Lord Peter's palm, at any rate he moved a trifle back from the gate.

'Thanks awfully, old bean,' said Peter, stepping briskly past him. 'I take it I shall find Mr Grimethorpe in the house?'

The man said nothing till Wimsey had proceeded about a dozen yards up the flagged path, then he hailed him, but without turning round.

'Mester!'

'Yes, old thing?' said Peter affably, returning.

'Happen he'll set dog on tha.'

'You don't say so?' said Peter. 'The faithful hound welcomes the return of the prodigal. Scene of family rejoicing. "My own long lost boy!" Sobs and speeches, beer all round for the delighted tenantry. Glees by the old fireside, till the rafters ring and all the smoked hams tumble down to join in the revelry. Good night, sweet Prince, until the cows come home and the dogs eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel when the hounds of spring are on winter's traces. I suppose,' he added to himself, 'they will have finished tea.'

As Lord Peter approached the door of the farm his spirits rose. He enjoyed paying this kind of visit. Although he had taken to detecting as he might, with another conscience or constitution, have taken to Indian hemp—for its exhilarating properties—at a moment when life seemed dust and ashes, he had not primarily the detective temperament. He expected next to nothing from inquiries at Grider's Hole, and, if he had, he might probably have extracted all the information he wanted by a judicious display of Treasury notes to the glum man at the gate. Parker would in all likelihood have done so; he was paid to detect and to do nothing else, and neither his natural gifts nor his education (at Barrow-in-Furness Grammar School) prompted him to stray into side-tracks at the beck of

an ill-regulated imagination. But to Lord Peter the world presented itself as an entertaining labyrinth of side-issues. He was a respectable scholar in five or six languages, a musician of some skill and more understanding, something of an expert in toxicology, a collector of rare editions, an entertaining man-about-town, and a common sensationalist. He had been seen at half-past twelve on a Sunday morning walking in Hyde Park in a top-hat and frock-coat, reading the *News of the World*. His passion for the unexplored led him to hunt up obscure pamphlets in the British Museum, to unravel the emotional history of income-tax collectors, and to find out where his own drains led to. In this case, the fascinating problem of a Yorkshire farmer who habitually set the dogs on casual visitors imperatively demanded investigation in a personal interview. The result was unexpected.

His first summons was unheeded, and he knocked again. This time there was a movement, and a surly male voice called out:

'Well, let 'un in then, dang 'un—and dang *thee*,' emphasized by the sound of something falling or thrown across the room.

The door was opened unexpectedly by a little girl of about seven, very dark and pretty, and rubbing her arm as though the missile had caught her there. She stood defensively, blocking the threshold, till the same voice growled impatiently:

'Well, who is it?'

'Good evening,' said Wimsey, removing his hat. 'I hope you'll excuse me droppin' in like this. I'm livin' at Riddlesdale Lodge.'

'What of it?' demanded the voice. Above the child's head Wimsey saw the outline of a big, thick-set man smoking in the inglenook of an immense fireplace. There was no light but the firelight, for the window was small, and dusk had already fallen. It seemed to be a large room, but a high oak settle on the farther side of the chimney ran out across it, leaving a cavern of impenetrable blackness beyond.

'May I come in?' said Wimsey.

'If tha must,' said the man ungraciously. 'Shoot door, lass; what art starin' at? Go to thi moother and bid her mend thi manners for thee.'

This seemed a case of the pot lecturing the kettle on cleanliness, but the child vanished hurriedly into the blackness behind the settle, and Peter walked in.

this. Sensitive man; feels it keenly. By the way, I'm a very uncertain bird—always hoppin' about; you might wire me any news in duplicate, to Riddlesdale and to town—110 Piccadilly. Always delighted to see you, by the way, if ever you're in town. You'll forgive me slopin' off now, won't you? I've got a lot to do.'

Returning to Riddlesdale, Lord Peter found a new visitor seated at the tea-table. At Peter's entry he rose into towering height, and extended a shapely, expressive hand that would have made an actor's fortune. He was not an actor, but he found this hand useful, nevertheless, in the exploitation of dramatic moments. His magnificent build and the nobility of his head and mask were impressive; his features were flawless; his eyes ruthless. The Dowager Duchess had once remarked: 'Sir Impey Biggs is the handsomest man in England, and no woman will ever care twopence for him.' He was, in fact, thirty-eight, and a bachelor, and was celebrated for his rhetoric and his suave but pitiless dissection of hostile witnesses. The breeding of canaries was his unexpected hobby, and besides their song he could appreciate no music but revue airs. He answered Wimsey's greeting in his beautiful, resonant, and exquisitely controlled voice. Tragic irony, cutting contempt, or a savage indignation were the emotions by which Sir Impey Biggs swayed court and jury; he prosecuted murderers of the innocent, defended in actions for criminal libel, and, moving others, was himself as stone. Wimsey expressed himself delighted to see him in a voice, by contrast, more husky and hesitant even than usual.

'You just come from Jerry?' he asked. 'Fresh toast, please Fleming. How is he? Enjoyin' it? I never knew a fellow like Jerry for gettin' the least possible out of any situation. I'd rather like the experience myself, you know; only I'd hate bein' shut up and watchin' the other idiots bunglin' my case. No reflection on Murbles and you, Biggs. I mean myself—I mean the man who'd be me if I was Jerry. You follow me?'

'I was just saying to Sir Impey,' said the Duchess, 'that he really must make Gerald say what he was doing in the garden at three in the morning. If only I'd been at Riddlesdale none of this would have happened. Of course, *we* all know that he wasn't doing any harm, but we can't expect the jurymen to understand that. The lower orders are so prejudiced. It