and tentative graspings after passion had been so obscure, so disastrous?

Penberthy, too—but Penberthy was easier to understand. Penberthy, cynical and bored with poverty, found himself in contact with this girl, who might be so well-off some day. And Penberthy, the physician, would not mistake the need for passion that made the girl such easy stuff to work on. So he carried on—bored with the girl, of course—keeping it all secret, till he saw which way the cat was going to jump. Then the old man—the truth about the will—the opportunity. And then, upsettingly, Robert.... Would the jury see it like that?

Wimsey leaned out of the cab window and told the driver to go to the Savoy. When they arrived, he handed the girl over to the cloak-room attendant. 'I'm going up to change,' he added, and turning, had the pleasure of seeing his sleuth arguing with the porter in the entrance-hall.

Bunter, previously summoned by telephone, was already in attendance with his master's dress clothes. Having changed, Wimsey passed through the hall again. The sleuth was there, quietly waiting. Wimsey grinned at him, and offered him a drink.

'I can't help it, my lord,' said the detective.

'Of course not; you've sent for a bloke in a boiled shirt to take your place, I suppose?'

'Yes, my lord.'

'More power to his elbow. So long.'

He rejoined his charge and they went into the dining-room. Dressed in a green which did not suit her, she was undoubtedly plain. But she had character; he was not ashamed of her. He offered her the menu.

'What shall it be?' he asked. 'Lobster and champagne?'

She laughed at him.

'Marjorie says you are an authority on food. I don't believe authorities on food ever take lobster and champagne. Anyway, I

don't like lobster, much. Surely there's something they do best here, isn't there? Let's have that.'

'You show the right spirit,' said Wimsey. 'I will compose a dinner for you.'

He called the head waiter, and went into the question scientifically.

'*Huîtres Musgrave*—I am opposed on principle to the cooking of oysters—but it is a dish so excellent that one may depart from the rules in its favor. Fried in their shells, Miss Dorland, with little strips of bacon. Shall we try it?—The soup must be *Tortue Vraie*, of course. The fish—oh! just a *Filet de Sole*, the merest mouthful, a hyphen between the prologue and the main theme.'

'That all sounds delightful. And what is the main theme to be?'

'I think a *Faisan Rôti* with *Pommes Byron*. And a salad to promote digestion. And, waiter—be sure the salad is dry and perfectly crisp. A *Soufflé Glace* to finish up with. And bring me the wine-list.'

They talked. When she was not on the defensive, the girl was pleasant enough in manner; a trifle downright and aggressive, perhaps, in her opinions, but needing only mellowing.

'What do you think of the *Romanée Conti*?' he asked, suddenly.

'I don't know much about wine. It's good. Not sweet, like Sauterne. It's a little—well—harsh. But it's harsh without being thin—quite different from that horrid Chianti people always seem to drink at Chelsea parties.'

'You're right; it's rather unfinished, but it has plenty of body—it'll be a grand wine in ten years' time. It's 1915. Now, you see. Waiter, take this away and bring me a bottle of the 1908.'

He leaned towards his companion.

'Miss Dorland—may I be impertinent?'

'How? Why?'

'Not an artist, not a bohemian, and not a professional man;—a man of the world.'

'What *do* you mean by those cryptic words?'

'For you. That is the kind of man who is going to like you very much. Look! that wine I've sent away—it's no good for a champagne-and-lobster sort of person, nor for very young people—it's too big and rough. But it's got the essential guts. So have you. It takes a fairly experienced palate to appreciate it. But you and it will come into your own one day. Get me?'

'Do you think so?'

'Yes. But your man won't be at all the sort of person you're expecting. You have always thought of being dominated by somebody, haven't you?'

'Well—'

'But you'll find that yours will be the leading brain of the two. He will take great pride in the fact. And you will find the man reliable and kind, and it will turn out quite well.'

'I didn't know you were a prophet.'

'I am, though.'

Wimsey took the bottle of 1908 from the waiter and glanced over the girl's head at the door. A man in a boiled shirt was making his way in, accompanied by the manager.

'I am a prophet,' said Wimsey. 'Listen. Something tiresome is going to happen—now, this minute. But don't worry. Drink your wine, and trust.'

The manager had brought the man to their table. It was Parker.

'Ah!' said Wimsey, brightly. 'You'll forgive our starting without you, old man. Sit down. I think you know Miss Dorland.'

'Have you come to arrest me?' asked Ann.

'Just to ask you to come down to the Yard with me,' said Parker, smiling pleasantly and unfolding his napkin.

Ann looked palely at Wimsey, and took a gulp of the wine.

Chapter 21

Lord Peter Calls A Bluff

'It is new to me,' said Lord Peter, glancing from the back window of the taxi at the other taxi which was following them, 'to be shadowed by the police, but it amuses them and doesn't hurt us.'

He was revolving ways and means of proof in his mind. Unhappily, all the evidence in favor of Ann Dorland was evidence against her as well—except, indeed, the letter to Pritchard. Damn Penberthy. The best that could be hoped for now was that the girl should escape from public inquiry with a verdict of 'Not proven.' Even if acquitted—even if never charged with the murder—she would always be suspect. The question was not one which could be conveniently settled by a brilliant flash of deductive logic, or the discovery of a blood-stained thumb-mark. It was a case for lawyers to argue—for a weighing of the emotional situation by twelve good and lawful persons. Presumably the association could be proved—the couple had met and dined together; probably the quarrel could be proved—but what next? Would a jury believe in the cause of the quarrel? Would they think it a pre-arranged blind, or perhaps—or mistake it for the falling-out of rogues among themselves? What would they think of this plain, sulky, inarticulate girl, who had never had any real friends, and whose clumsy

'Right,' said Wimsey. 'Miss Dorland has quite a lot to tell you. After dinner will suit us charmingly. What will you have?'

Parker, who was not imaginative, demanded a grilled steak.

'Shall we find any other friends at the Yard?' pursued Wimsey.

'Possibly,' said Parker.

'Well, cheer up! You put me off my food, looking so grim. Hullo! Yes, waiter, what is it?'

'Excuse me, my lord; is this gentleman Detective-Inspector Parker?'

'Yes, yes,' said Parker, 'what's the matter?'

'You're wanted on the 'phone, sir.'

Parker departed.

'It's all right,' said Wimsey to the girl. 'I know you're straight, and I'll damn well see you through.'

'What am I to do?'

'Tell the truth.'

'It sounds so silly.'

'They've heard lots of very much sillier stories than that.'

'But—I don't want to—to be the one to— '

'You're still fond of him, then?'

'*No!*—but I'd rather it wasn't me.'

'I'll be frank with you. I think it's going to be between you and him that suspicion will lie.'

'In that case'—she set her teeth—'he can have what's coming to him.'

'Thank the lord! I thought you were going to be noble and self-sacrificing and tiresome. You know. Like the people whose noble motives are misunderstood in chapter one and who get dozens of people tangled up in their miserable affairs till the family lawyer solves everything on the last page but two.'

Parker had come back from the telephone.

'Just a moment!' He spoke in Peter's ear.

'Hullo?'

'Look here; this is awkward. George Fentiman— '

'Yes?'

'He's been found in Clerkenwell.'

'Clerkenwell?'

'Yes; must have wandered back by 'bus or something. He's at the police-station; in fact he's given himself up.'

'Good lord!'

'For the murder of his grandfather.'

'The devil he has!'

'It's a nuisance; of course it must be looked into. I think perhaps I'd better put off interrogating Dorland and Penberthy. What are you doing with the girl, by the way?'

'I'll explain later. Look here—I'll take Miss Dorland back to Marjorie Phelps' place, and then come along and join you. The girl won't run away; I know that. And anyhow, you've got a man looking after her.'

'Yes, I rather wish you would come with me; Fentiman is pretty queer, by all accounts. We've sent for his wife.'

'Right. You buzz off, and I'll join you in—say in three quarters of an hour. What address? Oh, yes, righty-ho! Sorry you're missing your dinner.'

'It's all in the day's work,' growled Parker, and took his leave.

George Fentiman greeted them with a tired white smile.

'Hush!' he said. 'I've told them all about it. *He's* asleep; don't wake him.'

'Who's asleep, dearest?' said Sheila.

'I mustn't say the name,' said George, cunningly. 'He'd hear it —even in his sleep—even if you whispered it. But he's tired, and he nodded off. So I ran in here and told them all about it while he snored.'

The police superintendent tapped his forehead significantly behind Sheila's back.

'Has he made any statement?' asked Parker.

'No, but listen! Have you seen Ann?—I took her away. She's frightfully queer—and there's a policeman outside. But whatever she's done, I couldn't leave her alone in that awful house. You haven't come to—to— '

'Marjorie!' said Wimsey, 'don't you ever talk to me again about feminine intuition. You've been thinking all this time that that girl was suffering from guilty conscience. Well, she wasn't. It was a man, my child—a MAN!'

'How do you know?'

'My experienced eye told me as much at the first glance. It's all right now. Sorrow and sighing have fled away. I am going to take your young friend out to dinner.'

'But why didn't she tell me what it was all about?'

'Because,' said Wimsey, mincingly, 'it wasn't the kind of thing one woman tells another.'

'He was in a beast of a hole,' said Wimsey, apologetically. 'Mind you, it was a perfectly diabolical thing to do. I daresay he's feeling pretty rotten about it.'

Ann Dorland clenched her hands.

'I've been so horribly ashamed— '

'Well, you aren't any more, are you?'

'No—but— ' A thought seemed to strike her. 'Lord Peter—I can't *prove* a word of this. Everybody will think I was in league with him. And they'll think that our quarrel and his getting engaged to Naomi was just a put-up job between us to get us both out of a difficulty.'

'You've got brains,' said Wimsey, admiringly. '*Now* you see why I thanked God you'd been so keen on an inquiry at first. Pritchard can make it pretty certain that you weren't an accessory before the fact, anyhow.'

'Of course—so he can. Oh, I'm so glad! I *am* so glad.' She burst into excited sobs and clutched Wimsey's hand. 'I wrote him a letter—right at the beginning—saying I'd read about a case in which they'd proved the time of somebody's death by looking into his stomach, and asking if General Fentiman couldn't be dug up.'

'Did you? Splendid girl! You *have* got a head on your shoulders!... No, I observe that it's on my shoulders. Go on. Have a real, good howl—I feel rather like howling myself. I've been quite worried about it all. But it's all right now, isn't it?'

'I am a fool ... but I'm so thankful you came.'

'So am I. Here, have a hanky. Poor old dear!... Hullo! there's Marjorie.'

He released her and went out to meet Marjorie Phelps at the door.

'Lord Peter! Good lord!'

'Thank you, Marjorie,' said Wimsey, gravely.

'Yes, he insisted on writing it himself. Here it is. Of course....' the Superintendent shrugged his shoulders.

'That's all right,' said George. 'I'm getting sleepy myself. I've been watching him for a day and a night, you know. I'm going to bed. Sheila—it's time to go to bed.'

'Yes, dear.'

'We'll have to keep him here to-night, I suppose,' muttered Parker. 'Has the doctor seen him?'

'We've sent for him, sir.'

'Well, Mrs Fentiman, I think if you'd take your husband into the room the officer will show you, that would be the best way. And we'll send the doctor in to you when he arrives. Perhaps it would be as well that he should see his own medical man too. Whom would you like us to send for?'

'Dr Penberthy has vetted him from time to time, I think,' put in Wimsey, suddenly. 'Why not send for him?'

Parker gasped involuntarily.

'He might be able to throw some light on the symptoms,' said Wimsey, in a rigid voice.

Parker nodded.

'A good idea,' he agreed. He moved to the telephone. George smiled as his wife put her arm about his shoulder.

'Tired,' he said, 'very tired. Off to bed, old girl.'

A police-constable opened the door to them, and they started through it together; George leaned heavily on Sheila; his feet dragged.

'Let's have a look at his statement,' said Parker.

It was written in a staggering handwriting, much blotted and erased, with words left out and repeated here and there.

> I am making this statement quickly while he is asleep, because if I wait he may wake up and stop me. You will say I was moved and seduced by instigation of

but what they will not understand is that he is me and I am him. I killed my grandfather by giving him digitalin. I did not remember it till I saw the name on the bottle, but they have been looking for me ever since, so I know that he must have done it. That is why they began following me about, but he is very clever and misleads them. When he is awake. We were dancing all last night and that is why he is tired. He told me to smash the bottle so that you shouldn't find out, but they know I was the last person to see him. He is very cunning, but if you creep on him quickly now that he is asleep you will be able to bind him in chains and cast him into the pit and then I shall be able to sleep.

GEORGE FENTIMAN.

'Off his head, poor devil,' said Parker. 'We can't pay much attention to this. What did he say to you, superintendent?'

'He just came in, sir, and said "I'm George Fentiman and I've come to tell you about how I killed my grandfather." So I questioned him, and he rambled a good bit and then he asked for a pen and paper to make his statement. I thought he ought to be detained, and I rang up the Yard, sir.'

'Quite right,' said Parker.

The door opened and Sheila came out.

'He's fallen asleep,' she said. 'It's the old trouble come back again. He thinks he's the devil, you know. He's been like that twice before,' she added, simply. 'I'll go back to him till the doctors come.'

The police-surgeon arrived first and went in; then, after a wait of a quarter of an hour, Penberthy came. He looked worried, and greeted Wimsey abruptly. Then he, too, went into the inner room. The others stood vaguely about, and were presently joined

'But he did! That's what started our first quarrel. As soon as he heard about it, he said I was a fool not to compromise. I couldn't understand his saying that, since he himself had said there was something wrong. We had a fearful row. That was the time I mentioned the twelve thousand that was coming to me anyway.'

'What did he say?'

'"I didn't know that." Just like that. And then he apologized and said that the law was so uncertain, it would be best to agree to divide the money anyhow. So I rang up Mr Pritchard and told him not to make any more fuss. And we were friends again.'

'Was it the day after that, that Penberthy—er—said things to you?'

'Yes.'

'Right. Then I can tell you one thing: he would never have been so brutal if he hadn't been in fear of his life. Do you know what had happened in between?'

She shook her head.

'I had been on the phone to him, and told him there was going to be an autopsy.'

'Oh!'

'Yes—listen—you needn't worry any more about it. He knew the poison would be discovered, and that if he was known to be engaged to you, he was absolutely bound to be suspected. So he hurried to cut the connection with you—purely in self-defense.'

'But why do it in that brutal way?'

'Because, my dear, he knew that that particular accusation would be the very last thing a girl of your sort would tell people about. He made it absolutely impossible for you to claim him publicly. And he bolstered it up by engaging himself to the Rushworth female.'

'He didn't care how *I* suffered.'

the girl and my boys only get seven thousand apiece." That was why— '

'Just a moment. When did Penberthy tell you about that?'

'Why, later—when he said I was to compromise with the Fentimans.'

'That explains it. I wondered why you gave in so suddenly. I thought, then, that you—Well, anyhow, Penberthy hears this, and gets the brilliant idea of putting General Fentiman out of the way. So he gives him a slow-working kind of a pill— '

'Probably a powder in a very tough capsule that would take a long time to digest.'

'Good idea. Yes, very likely. And then the General, instead of heading straight for home, as he expected, goes off to the Club and dies there. And then Robert— '

He explained in detail what Robert had done, and resumed.

'Well, now—Penberthy was in a bad fix. If he drew attention at the time to the peculiar appearance of the corpse, he couldn't reasonably give a certificate. In which case there would be a post-mortem and an analysis, and the digitalin would be found. If he kept quiet, the money might be lost and all his trouble would be wasted. Maddenin' for him, wasn't it? So he did what he could. He put the time of the death as early as he dared, and hoped for the best.'

'He told me he thought there would be some attempt to make it seem later than it really was. I thought it was *you* who were trying to hush everything up. And I was so furious that of course I told Mr Pritchard to have a proper inquiry made and on no account to compromise.'

'Thank God you did,' said Wimsey.

'Why?'

'I'll tell you presently. But Penberthy now—I can't think why *he* didn't persuade you to compromise. That would have made him absolutely safe.'

by Robert Fentiman, whom an urgent summons had traced to a friend's house.

Presently the two doctors came out again.

'Nervous shock with well-marked delusions,' said the police-surgeon, briefly. 'Probably be all right to-morrow. Sleeping it off now. Been this way before, I understand. Just so. A hundred years ago they'd have called it diabolic possession, but *we* know better.'

'Yes,' said Parker, 'but do you think he is under a delusion in saying he murdered his grandfather? Or did he actually murder him under the influence of this diabolical delusion? That's the point.'

'Can't say just at present. Might be the one—might be the other. Much better wait till the attack passes off. You'll be able to find out better then.'

'You don't think he's permanently—insane, then?' demanded Robert, with brusque anxiety.

'No—I don't. I think it's what you'd call a nerve-storm. That is your opinion, too, I believe?' he added, turning to Penberthy.

'Yes; that is my opinion.'

'And what do you think about this delusion, Dr Penberthy?' went on Parker. 'Did he do this insane act?'

'He certainly thinks he did it,' said Penberthy; 'I couldn't possibly say for certain whether he has any foundation for the belief. From time to time he undoubtedly gets these fits of thinking that the devil has taken hold of him, and of course it's hard to say what a man might or might not do under the influence of such a delusion.'

He avoided Robert's distressed eyes, and addressed himself exclusively to Parker.

'It seems to me,' said Wimsey, 'if you'll excuse me pushin' my opinion forward and all that—it seems to me that's a question of fact that can be settled without reference to Fentiman and his

delusions. There's only the one occasion on which the pill could have been administered—would it have produced the effect that was produced at that particular time, or wouldn't it? If it couldn't take effect at 8 o'clock, then it couldn't, and there's an end of it.'

He kept his eyes fixed on Penberthy, and saw him pass his tongue over his dry lips before speaking.

'I can't answer that off-hand,' he said.

'The pill might have been introduced into General Fentiman's stock of pills at some other time,' suggested Parker.

'So it might,' agreed Penberthy.

'Had it the same shape and appearance as his ordinary pills?' demanded Wimsey, again fixing his eyes on Penberthy.

'Not having seen the pill in question, I can't say,' said the latter.

'In any case,' said Wimsey, 'the pill in question, which was one of Mrs Fentiman's, I understand, had strychnine in it as well as digitalin. The analysis of the stomach would no doubt have revealed strychnine if present. That can be looked into.'

'Of course,' said the police-surgeon. 'Well, gentlemen, I don't think we can do much more to-night. I have written out a prescription for the patient, with Dr Penberthy's entire agreement'—he bowed; Penberthy bowed—'I will have it made up, and you will no doubt see that it is given to him. I shall be here in the morning.'

He looked interrogatively at Parker, who nodded.

'Thank you, doctor; we will ask you for a further report to-morrow morning. You'll see that Mrs Fentiman is properly looked after, Superintendent. If you wish to stay here and look after your brother and Mrs Fentiman, Major, of course you may, and the Superintendent will make you as comfortable as he can.'

Wimsey took Penberthy by the arm.

'Come round to the Club with me for a moment, Penberthy,' he said. 'I want to have a word with you.'

'Yes, you could start a pretty decent clinic with half a million. So that was why you shot me out of the house.'

He grinned—and then reflected a few moments.

'Look here,' he said, 'I'm going to give you a bit of a shock, but it'll have to come sooner or later. Has it ever occurred to you that it was Penberthy who murdered General Fentiman?'

'I—wondered,' she said, slowly. 'I couldn't think—who else—But you know they suspect *me*?'

'Oh, well—*cui bono* and all that—they couldn't overlook you. They have to suspect every possible person, you know.'

'I don't blame them at all. But I didn't, you know.'

'Of course not. It was Penberthy. I look at it like this. Penberthy wanted money; he was sick of being poor, and he knew you would be certain to get *some* of Lady Dormer's money. He'd probably heard about the family quarrel with the General, and expected it would be the lot. So he started to make your acquaintance. But he was careful. He asked you to keep it quiet—just in case, you see. The money might be so tied up that you couldn't give it to him, or you might lose it if you married, or it might only be quite a small annuity, in which case he'd want to look for somebody richer.'

'We considered those points when we talked it over about the clinic.'

'Yes. Well, then, Lady Dormer fell ill. The General went round and heard about the legacy that was coming to him. And then he toddled along to Penberthy, feeling very groggy, and promptly told him all about it. You can imagine him saying: 'You've got to patch me up long enough to get the money.' That must have been a nasty jar for Penberthy.'

'It was. You see, he didn't even hear about my twelve thousand.'

'Oh?'

'No. Apparently what the General said was, "If only I last out poor Felicity, all the money comes to me. Otherwise it goes to