Translation

Simone,—I have just got your letter. What am I to say? It is useless to entreat or reproach you. You would not understand, or even read the letter.

Besides, I always knew you must betray me some day. I have suffered a hell of jealousy for the last eight years. I know perfectly well you never meant to hurt me. It was just your utter lightness and carelessness and your attractive way of being dishonest which was so adorable. I knew everything, and loved you all the same.

Oh, no, my dear, I never had any illusions. You remember our first meeting that night at the Casino. You were seventeen, and heartbreakingly lovely. You came to me the very next day. You told me, very prettily, that you loved me and that I was the first. My poor little girl, that wasn't true. I expect, when you were alone, you laughed to think I was so easily taken in. But there was nothing to laugh at. From our very first kiss I foresaw this moment.

I'm afraid I'm weak enough, though, to want to tell you just what you have done for me. You may be sorry. But no—if you could regret anything, you wouldn't be Simone any longer.

Eight years ago, before the war, I was rich—not so rich as your new American, but rich enough to give you what you wanted. You didn't want quite so much before the war, Simone. Who taught you to be so extravagant while I was away? I think it was very nice of me never to ask you. Well, most of my money was in Russian and German securities, and more than three-quarters of it went west. The remainder in France went down considerably in value. I had my captain's pay, of course, but that didn't amount to much. Even before the end of the war you had managed to get through all my savings. Of course, I was a fool. A young man whose income has been reduced by three-quarters can't afford an expensive mistress and a flat in the Avenue Kléber.

He ought either to dismiss the lady or to demand a little self-sacrifice. But I didn't dare demand anything. Suppose I had come to you one day and said, 'Simone, I've lost my money'—what would you have said to me?

What do you think I did? I don't suppose you ever thought about it at all. You didn't care if I was chucking away my money and my honour and my happiness to keep you. I gambled desperately. I did worse, I cheated at cards. I can see you shrug your shoulders and say, 'Good for you!' But it's a rotten thing to do—a rotter's game. If anybody had found out they'd have cashiered me.

Besides, it couldn't go on for ever. There was one row in Paris, though they couldn't prove anything. So then I got engaged to the English girl I told you about—the duke's daughter. Pretty, wasn't it? I actually brought myself to consider keeping my mistress on my wife's money! But I'd have done it, and I'd do it again, to get you back.

And now you've chucked me. This American is colossally rich. For a long time you've been dinning into my ears that the flat is too small and that you're bored to death. Your 'good friend' can offer you cars, diamonds—Aladdin's palace—the moon! I admit that love and honour look pretty small by comparison.

Ah, well, the Duke is most obligingly stupid. He leaves his revolver about in his desk drawer. Besides, he's just been in to ask what about this card-sharping story. So you see the game's up, anyhow. I don't blame you. I suppose they'll put my suicide down to fear of exposure. All the better. I don't want my love-affairs in the Sunday Press.

Good-bye, my dear—oh, Simone, my darling, my darling, good-bye. Be happy with your new lover. Never mind me—what does it all matter? My God—how I loved you, and how I still love you in spite of myself. It's all done with. You'll never break my heart again. I'm mad—mad with misery! Good-bye.

Sais-tu ce que j'ai fait ? Non—tu n'as jamais pensé à demander d'où venait cet argent. Qu'est-ce que cela pouvait te faire que j'ai tout jeté—fortune, honneur, bonheur—pour te posséder ? J'ai joué, désespérément, éperdument—j'ai fait pis : j'ai triché au jeu. Je te vois hausser les épaules—tu ris—tu dis, « Tiens, c'est malin, ça ! » Oui, mais cela ne se fait pas. On m'aurait chassé du régiment. Je devenais le dernier des hommes.

D'ailleurs, cela ne pouvait durer. Déjà un soir à Paris on m'a fait une scène désagréable, bien qu'on n'ait rien pu prouver. C'est alors que je me suis fiancé avec cette demoiselle dont je t'ai parlé, la fille du duc anglais. Le beau projet, quoi ! Entretenir ma maîtresse avec l'argent de ma femme ! Et je l'aurais fait—et je le ferais encore demain, si c'était pour te reposséder.

Mais tu me quittes. Cet Américain est riche—archi-riche. Depuis longtemps tu me répètes que ton appartement est trop petit et que tu t'ennuies à mourir. Cet « ami bienveillant » t'offre les autos, les diamants, les mille-et-une nuits, la lune ! Auprés de ces merveilles, évidemment, que valent l'amour et l'honneur ?

Enfin, le bon duc est d'une stupidité très commode. Il laisse traîner son révolver dans le tiroir de son bureau. D'ailleurs, il vient de me demander une explication à propos de cette histoire de cartes. Tu vois qu'en tout cas la partie était finie. Pourquoi t'en vouloir ? On mettra sans doute mon suicide au compte de cet exposé. Tant mieux, je ne veux pas qu'on affiche mon histoire amoureuse dans les journaux.

Adieu, ma bien-aimée—mon adorée, mon adorée, ma Simone. Sois heureuse avec ton nouvel amant. Ne pense plus à moi. Qu'est-ce tout cela peut bien te faire ? Mon Dieu, comme je t'ai aimée—comme je t'aime toujours, malgré moi. Mais c'en est fini. Jamais plus tu ne me perceras le cœur. Oh ! J'enrage—je suis fou de douleur ! Adieu.

Denis Cathcart.

torments que puisse infliger la jalousie. Je comprends bien que tu n'as jamais voulu me faire de la peine. C'est tout justement cette insouciance, cette légèreté, cette façon séduisante d'être malhonnête, que j'adorais en toi. J'ai tout su, et je t'ai aimée.

Ma foi, non, ma chère, jamais je n'ai eu la moindre illusion. Te rappelles-tu cette première rencontre, un soir au Casino? Tu avais dix-sept ans, et tu étais jolie à ravir. Le lendemain tu fus à moi. Tu m'as dit, si gentiment, que tu m'aimais bien, et que j'étais, moi, le premier. Ma pauvre enfant, tu en as menti. Tu riais, toute seule, de ma naïveté—il y avait bien de quoi rire! Dès notre premier baiser, j'ai prévu ce moment.

Mais écoute, Simone. J'ai la faiblesse de vouloir te montrer exactement ce que tu as fait de moi. Tu regretteras peut-être en peu. Mais, non—si tu pouvais regretter quoi que ce fût, tu ne serais plus Simone.

Il y a huit ans, la veille de la guerre, j'étais riche—moins riche que ton Américain, mais assez riche pour te donner l'établissement qu'il te fallait. Tu étais moins exigeante avant la guerre, Simone—qui est-ce qui, pendant mon absence, t'a enseigné le goût du luxe? Charmante discrétion de ma part de ne jamais te le demander! Eh bien, une grande partie de ma fortune se trouvant placée en Russie et en Allemagne, j'en ai perdu plus des trois-quarts. Ce que m'en restait en France a beaucoup diminué en valeur. Il est vrai que j'avais mon traitement de capitaine dans l'armée britannique, mais c'est peu de chose, tu sais. Avant même la fin de la guerre, tu m'avais mangé toutes mes économies. C'était idiot, quoi? Un jeune homme qui a perdu les trois-quarts de ses rentes ne se permet plus une maîtresse et un appartement Avenue Kléber. Ou il congédie madame, ou bien il lui demande quelques sacrifices. Je n'ai rien osé demander. Si j'étais venu un jour te dire, «Simone, je suis pauvre»—que m'aurais-tu répondu?

Chapter 18

The Speech for the Defence

Nobody; I myself; farewell.

Othello

After the reading of Cathcart's letter even the appearance of the prisoner in the witness-box came as an anti-climax. In the face of the Attorney-General's cross-examination he maintained stoutly that he had wandered on the moor for several hours without meeting anybody, though he was forced to admit that he had gone downstairs at 11:30, and not at 2:30, as he had stated at the inquest. Sir Wigmore Wrinching made a great point of this, and, in a spirited endeavour to suggest that Cathcart was blackmailing Denver, pressed his questions so hard that Sir Impey Biggs, Mr Murbles, Lady Mary, and Bunter had a nervous feeling that learned counsel's eyes were boring through the walls to the side-room where, apart from the other witnesses, Mrs Grimethorpe sat waiting. After lunch Sir Impey Biggs rose to make his plea for the defence.

'My lords,—Your lordships have now heard—and I, who have watched and pleaded here for these three anxious days, know with what eager interest and with what ready sympathy you have heard—the evidence brought by my noble client to defend him against this dreadful charge of murder. You have listened while as it were from his narrow grave, the dead man has lifted his voice to tell you the story of that fatal night of the thirteenth of October, and I feel sure you can have no doubt in your hearts that that story is the true one. As your lordships know, I was myself totally ignorant of the contents of that letter until I heard it read in Court just now, and, by the profound impression it made upon my own mind, I can judge how tremendously and how painfully it must have affected your lordships. In my long experience at the criminal bar, I think I have never

met with a history more melancholy than that of the unhappy young man whom a fatal passion—for here indeed we may use that well-worn expression in all the fullness of its significance—whom a truly fatal passion thus urged into deep after deep of degradation, and finally to a violent death by his own hand.

The noble peer at the Bar has been indicted before your lordships of the murder of this young man. That he is wholly innocent of the charge must, in the light of what we have heard, be so plain to your lordships that any words from me might seem altogether superfluous. In the majority of cases of this kind the evidence is confused, contradictory; here, however, the course of events is so clear, so coherent, that had we ourselves been present to see the drama unrolled before us, as before the all-seeing eye of God, we could hardly have a more vivid or a more accurate vision of that night's adventures. Indeed, had the death of Denis Cathcart been the sole event of the night, I will venture to say that the truth could never have been one single moment in doubt. Since, however, by a series of unheard-of coincidences, the threads of Denis Cathcart's story became entangled with so many others, I will venture to tell it once again from the beginning, lest, in the confusion of so great a cloud of witnesses, any point should still remain obscure.

Let me, then, go back to the beginning. You have heard how Denis Cathcart was born of mixed parentage—from the union of a young and lovely southern girl with an Englishman twenty years older than herself: imperious, passionate, and cynical. Till the age of 18 he lives on the Continent with his parents, travelling from place to place, seeing more of the world even than the average young Frenchman of his age, learning the code of love in a country where the *crime passionel* is understood and forgiven as it never can be over here.

At the age of 18 a terrible loss befalls him. In a very short space of time he loses both his parents—his beautiful and adored mother and his father, who might, had he lived, have understood how to guide the impetuous nature which he had brought into the world. But the father dies, expressing two last wishes, both of which, natural as they were, turned out in the circumstances to be disastrously ill-advised. He left his son to the care of his sister, whom he had not seen for many years, with the direction that the boy should be sent to his own old University.

willing—nay, eager—to put in this document immediately, as it stands, without perusal, to stand or fall by the contents.'

'The handwriting must be identified as that of the deceased,' interposed the Lord High Steward.

The ravening pencils of the reporters tore along the paper. The lean young man who worked for the *Daily Trumpet* scented a scandal in high life and licked his lips, never knowing what a much bigger one had escaped him by a bare minute or so.

Miss Lydia Cathcart was recalled to identify the handwriting, and the letter was handed to the Lord High Steward, who announced:

'The letter is in French. We shall have to swear an interpreter.'

'You will find,' said the witness suddenly, 'that those bits of words on the blotting-paper come out of the letter. You'll 'scuse my mentioning it.'

'Is this person put forward as an expert witness?' inquired Sir Wigmore witheringly.

'Right ho!' said Lord Peter. 'Only, you see, it has been rather sprung on Biggy as you might say.

Biggy and Wiggy
Were two pretty men,
They went into court
When the clock—'

'Sir Impey, I must really ask you to keep your witness in order.'

Lord Peter grinned, and a pause ensued while an interpreter was fetched and sworn. Then, at last, the letter was read, amid a breathless silence:

Riddlesdale Lodge,
Stapley,
N.E. Yorks.
le 13 Octobre, 192—

Simone—

Je viens de recevoir ta lettre. Que dire ? Inutiles, les prières ou les reproches. Tu ne comprendras—tu ne liras même pas.

N'ai-je pas toujours su, d'ailleurs, que tu devais infailliblement me trahir ? Depuis huit ans déjà je souffre tous les

no attempt to cross-examine the witness, and the noble lords wondered to one another what it was all about.

At this point Sir Impey Biggs leaned forward, and, tapping his brief impressively with his forefinger, began:

'My lords, so strong is our case that we had not thought it necessary to present an alibi— ' when an officer of the court rushed up from a little whirlpool of commotion by the door and excitedly thrust a note into his hand. Sir Impey read, coloured, glanced down the hall, put down his brief, folded his hands over it, and said in a sudden, loud voice which penetrated even to the deaf ear of the Duke of Wiltshire:

'My lords, I am happy to say that our missing witness is here. I call Lord Peter Wimsey.'

Every neck was at once craned, and every eye focused on the very grubby and oily figure that came amiably trotting up the long room. Sir Impey Biggs passed the note down to Mr Murbles, and, turning to the witness, who was yawning frightfully in the intervals of grinning at all his acquaintances, demanded that he should be sworn.

The witness's story was as follows:

'I am Lord Peter Wimsey, brother of the accused. I live at 110 Piccadilly. In consequence of what I read on that bit of blotting-paper which I now identify, I went to Paris to look for a certain lady. The name of the lady is Mademoiselle Simone Vonderaa. I found she had left Paris in company with a man named Van Humperdinck. I followed her, and at length came up with her in New York. I asked her to give me the letter Cathcart wrote on the night of his death.' (Sensation). 'I produce that letter, with Mademoiselle Vonderaa's signature on the corner, so that it can be identified if Wiggy there tries to put it over you.' (Joyous sensation, in which the indignant protests of prosecuting counsel were drowned.) 'And I'm sorry I've given you such short notice of this, old man, but I only got it the day before yesterday. We came as quick as we could, but we had to come down near Whitehaven with engine trouble, and if we had come down half a mile sooner I shouldn't be here now.' (Applause, hurriedly checked by the Lord High Steward.)

'My lords,' said Sir Impey, 'your lordships are witnesses that I have never seen this letter in my life before. I have no idea of its contents; yet so positive am I that it cannot but assist my noble client's case, that I am

My lords, you have seen Miss Lydia Cathcart, and heard her evidence. You will have realized how uprightly, how conscientiously, with what Christian disregard of self, she performed the duty entrusted to her, and yet how inevitably she failed to establish any real sympathy between herself and her young ward. He, poor lad, missing his parents at every turn, was plunged at Cambridge into the society of young men of totally different upbringing from himself. To a young man of his cosmopolitan experience the youth of Cambridge, with its sports and rags and naïve excursions into philosophy o' nights, must have seemed unbelievably childish. You all, from your own recollections of your Alma Mater, can reconstruct Denis Cathcart's life at Cambridge, its outward gaiety, its inner emptiness.

Ambitious of embracing a diplomatic career, Cathcart made extensive acquaintances among the sons of rich and influential men. From a worldly point of view he was doing well, and his inheritance of a handsome fortune at the age of twenty-one seemed to open up the path to very great success. Shaking the academic dust of Cambridge from his feet as soon as his Tripos was passed, he went over to France, established himself in Paris, and began, in a quiet, determined kind of way, to carve out a little niche for himself in the world of international politics.

But now comes into his life that terrible influence which was to rob him of fortune, honour, and life itself. He falls in love with a young woman of that exquisite, irresistible charm and beauty for which the Austrian capital is world-famous. He is enthralled body and soul, as utterly as any Chevalier des Grieux, by Simone Vonderaa.

Mark that in this matter he follows the strict, continental code: complete devotion, complete discretion. You have heard how quietly he lived, how *rangé* he appeared to be. We have had in evidence his discreet banking-account, with its generous checks drawn to self, and cashed in notes of moderate denominations, and with its regular accumulation of sufficient "economies" quarter by quarter. Life has expanded for Denis Cathcart. Rich, ambitious, possessed of a beautiful and complaisant mistress, the world is open before him.

Then, my lords, across this promising career there falls the thunderbolt of the Great War—ruthlessly smashing through his safeguards, overthrowing the edifice of his ambition, destroying and devastating here, as everywhere, all that made life beautiful and desirable.

You have heard the story of Denis Cathcart's distinguished army career. On that I need not dwell. Like thousands of other young men, he went gallantly through those five years of strain and disillusionment, to find himself left, in the end, with his life and health indeed, and, so far, happy beyond many of his comrades, but with his life in ruins about him.

Of his great fortune—all of which had been invested in Russian and German securities—literally nothing is left to him. What, you say, did that matter to a young man so well equipped, with such excellent connections, with so many favourable openings, ready to his hand? He needed only to wait quietly for a few years, to reconstruct much of what he had lost. Alas! my lords, he could not afford to wait. He stood in peril of losing something dearer to him than fortune or ambition; he needed money in quantity, and at once.

My lords, in that pathetic letter which we have heard read nothing is more touching and terrible than that confession: "I knew you could not but be unfaithful to me." All through that time of seeming happiness he knew—none better—that his house was built on sand. "I was never deceived by you," he says. From their earliest acquaintance she had lied to him, and he knew it, and that knowledge was yet powerless to loosen the bands of his fatal fascination. If any of you, my lords, have known the power of love exercised in this irresistible—I may say, this predestined manner—let your experience interpret the situation to you better than any poor words of mine can do. One great French poet and one great English poet have summed the matter up in a few words. Racine says of such a fascination:

C'est Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée.

And Shakespeare has put the lover's despairing obstinacy into two piteous lines:

If my love swears that she is made of truth
I will believe her, though I know she lies.

My lords, Denis Cathcart is dead; it is not our place to condemn him, but only to understand and pity him.

Chapter 17

The Eloquent Dead

Je connaissais Manon : pourquoi m'affliger tant d'un malheur que j'avais dû prévoir.

Manon Lescaut

THE gale had blown itself out into a wonderful fresh day, with clear spaces of sky, and a high wind rolling boulders of cumulus down the blue slopes of air.

The prisoner had been wrangling for an hour with his advisers when finally they came into court, and even Sir Impey's classical face showed flushed between the wings of his wig.

'I'm not going to say anything,' said the Duke obstinately. 'Rotten thing to do. I suppose I can't prevent you callin' her if she insists on comin'—damn' good of her—makes me feel no end of a beast.'

'Better leave it at that,' said Mr Murbles. 'Makes a good impression, you know. Let him go into the box and behave like a perfect gentleman. They'll like it.'

Sir Impey, who had sat through the small hours altering his speech, nodded.

The first witness that day came as something of a surprise. She gave her name and address as Eliza Briggs, known as Madame Brigette of New Bond Street, and her occupation as beauty specialist and perfumer. She had a large and aristocratic clientele of both sexes, and a branch in Paris.

Deceased had been a client of hers in both cities for several years. He had massage and manicure. After the war he had come to her about some slight scars caused by grazing with shrapnel. He was extremely particular about his personal appearance, and, if you called that vanity in a man, you might certainly say he was vain. Thank you. Sir Wigmore Wrinching made

'The best thing we can do, I think,' said Sir Impey, 'is to put in the evidence, and, if necessary, arrange for some kind of protection for this lady. In the meantime— '

'She is coming round with me to mother,' said Lady Mary determinedly.

'My dear lady,' expostulated Mr Murbles, 'that would be very unsuitable in the circumstances. I think you hardly grasp— '

'Mother said so,' retorted her ladyship. 'Bunter, call a taxi.'

Mr Murbles waved his hands helplessly, but Sir Impey was rather amused. 'It's no good, Murbles,' he said. 'Time and trouble will tame an advanced young woman, but an advanced old woman is uncontrollable by any earthly force.'

So it was from the Dowager's town house that Lady Mary rang up Mr Charles Parker to tell him the news.

My lords, I need not put before you in detail the shocking shifts to which this soldier and gentleman unhappily condescended. You have heard the story in all its cold, ugly details upon the lips of Monsieur du Bois-Gobey Houdin, and, accompanied by unavailing expressions of shame and remorse, in the last words of the deceased. You know how he gambled, at first honestly—then dishonestly. You know from whence he derived those large sums of money which came at irregular intervals, mysteriously and in cash, to bolster up a bank-account always perilously on the verge of depletion. We need not, my lords, judge too harshly of the woman. According to her own lights, she did not treat him unfairly. She had her interests to consider. While he could pay for her she could give him beauty and passion and good humour and a moderate faithfulness. When he could pay no longer she would find it only reasonable to take another position. This Cathcart understood. Money he must have, by hook or by crook. And so, by an inevitable descent, he found himself reduced to the final deep of dishonour.

It is at this point, my lords, that Denis Cathcart and his miserable fortunes come into the life of my noble client and of his sister. From this point begin all those complications which led to the tragedy of October 14th, and which we are met in this solemn and historic assembly to unravel.

About eighteen months ago Cathcart, desperately searching for a secure source of income, met the Duke of Denver, whose father had been a friend of Cathcart's father many years before. The acquaintance prospered, and Cathcart was introduced to Lady Mary Wimsey, at that time (as she has very frankly told us) "at a loose end," "fed up," and distressed by the dismissal of her fiancé, Mr Goyles. Lady Mary felt the need of an establishment of her own, and accepted Denis Cathcart, with the proviso that she should be considered a free agent, living her own life in her own way, with the minimum of interference. As to Cathcart's object in all this, we have his own bitter comment, on which no words of mine could improve: "I actually brought myself to consider keeping my mistress on my wife's money."

So matters go on until October of this year. Cathcart is now obliged to pass a good deal of his time in England with his fiancée, leaving Simone Vonderaa unguarded in the Avenue Kléber. He seems to have felt fairly

secure so far; the only drawback was that Lady Mary, with a natural reluctance to commit herself to the hands of a man she could not really love, had so far avoided fixing a definite date for the wedding. Money is shorter than it used to be in the Avenue Kléber, and the cost of robes and millinery, amusements and so forth, has not diminished. And, meanwhile, Mr Cornelius van Humperdinck, the American millionaire, has seen Simone in the Bois, at the races, at the opera, in Denis Cathcart's flat.

But Lady Mary is becoming more and more uneasy about her engagement. And at this critical moment, Mr Goyles suddenly sees the prospect of a position, modest but assured, which will enable him to maintain a wife. Lady Mary makes her choice. She consents to elope with Mr Goyles, and by an extraordinary fatality the day and hour selected are 3 A.M. on the morning of October 14th.

At about 9:30 on the night of Wednesday, October 13th, the party at Riddlesdale Lodge are just separating to go to bed. The Duke of Denver was in the gun-room, the other men were in the billiard-room, the ladies had already retired, when the manservant, Fleming, came up from the village with the evening post. To the Duke of Denver he brought a letter with news of a startling and very unpleasant kind. To Denis Cathcart he brought another letter—one which we shall never see, but whose contents it is easy enough to guess.

You have heard the evidence of Mr Arbuthnot that, before reading this letter, Cathcart had gone upstairs gay and hopeful, mentioning that he hoped soon to get a date fixed for the marriage. At a little after ten, when the Duke of Denver went up to see him, there was a great change. Before his grace could broach the matter in hand Cathcart spoke rudely and harshly, appearing to be all on edge, and entreating to be left alone. Is it very difficult, my lords, in the face of what we have heard today—in the face of our knowledge that Mademoiselle Vonderaa crossed to New York on the *Berengaria* on October 15th—to guess what news had reached Denis Cathcart in that interval to change his whole outlook upon life?

At this unhappy moment, when Cathcart is brought face to face with the stupefying knowledge that his mistress has left him, comes the Duke of Denver with a frightful accusation. He taxes Cathcart with the vile truth—that this man, who has eaten his bread and sheltered under his roof, and who is about to marry his sister, is nothing more nor less than

'No, that is why I feel inclined—in spite of the risk—to put this evidence in,' said Mr Murbles.

'I am ready to take the risk,' interposed Mrs Grimethorpe starkly.

'We quite appreciate that,' replied Sir Impey. 'It is the risk to our client we have to consider first of all.'

'Risk?' cried Mary. 'But surely this clears him!'

'Will you swear absolutely to the time when his grace of Denver arrived at Grider's Hole, Mrs Grimethorpe?' went on the lawyer, as though he had not heard her.

'It was a quarter past twelve by the kitchen clock—'tis a very good clock.'

'And he left you at— '

'About five minutes past two.'

'And how long would it take a man, walking quickly, to get back to Riddlesdale Lodge?'

'Oh, wellnigh an hour. It's rough walking, and a steep bank up and down to the beck.'

'You mustn't let the other counsel upset you on those points, Mrs Grimethorpe, because they will try to prove that he had time to kill Cathcart either before he started or after he returned, and by admitting that the Duke had something in his life that he wanted kept secret we shall be supplying the very thing the prosecution lack—*a motive for murdering anyone who might have found him out.*'

There was a stricken silence.

'If I may ask, madam,' said Sir Impey, 'has any person any suspicion?'

'My husband guessed,' she answered hoarsely. 'I am sure of it. He has always known. But he couldn't prove it. That very night— '

'What night?'

'The night of the murder—he laid a trap for me. He came back from Stapley in the night, hoping to catch us and do murder. But he drank too much before he started, and spent the night in the ditch, or it might be Gerald's death you'd be inquiring into, and mine, as well as the other.'

It gave Mary an odd shock to hear her brother's name spoken like that, by that speaker and in that company. She asked suddenly, apropos of nothing, 'Isn't Mr Parker here?'

'No, my dear,' said Mr Murbles reprovingly, 'this is not a police matter.'