'Where's the nearest spit of land where things usually get washed up?' he demanded.

'Eh, well! there's the Battery Pool, about a mile doon the river. Ye'll whiles find things washed up there. Aye. Imph'm. There's a pool and a bit sand, where the river mak's a bend. Ye'll mebbe find it there, I'm thinkin'. Mebbe no. I couldna say.'

'Let's have a look, anyway.'

Macpherson, to whom the prospect of searching the stream in detail appeared rather a dreary one, brightened a little at this.

'That's a good idea. If we take the car down to just above Gatehouse, we've only got two fields to cross.'

The car was still at the door; the hired driver was enjoying the hospitality of the cottage. They pried him loose from Maggie's scones and slipped down the road to Gatehouse.

'Those gulls seem rather active about something,' said Wimsey, as they crossed the second field. The white wings swooped backwards and forwards in narrowing circles over the yellow shoal. Raucous cries rose on the wind. Wimsey pointed silently with his hand. A long, unseemly object, like a drab purse, lay on the shore. The gulls, indignant, rose higher, squawking at the intruders. Wimsey ran forward, stooped, rose again with the long bag dangling from his fingers.

'Great-Uncle Joseph, I presume,' he said, and raised his hat with old-fashioned courtesy.

'The gulls have had a wee peck at it here and there,' said Jock. 'It'll be tough for them. Aye. They havena done so vera much with it.'

'Aren't you going to open it?' said Macpherson impatiently.

'Not here,' said Wimsey. 'We might lose something.' He dropped it into Jock's creel. 'We'll take it home first and show it to Robert.'

Robert greeted them with ill-disguised irritation.

'We've been fishing,' said Wimsey cheerfully. 'Look at our bonny wee fush.' He weighed the catch in his hand. 'What's inside this wee fush, Mr Ferguson?'

'I haven't the faintest idea,' said Robert.

'Then why did you go fishing for it?' asked Wimsey pleasantly. 'Have you got a surgical knife there, Mac?'

'Yes—here. Hurry up.'

'I'll leave it to you. Be careful. I should begin with the stomach.'

Macpherson laid Great-Uncle Joseph on the table, and slit him open with a practised hand.

'Gude be gracious to us!' cried Maggie, peering over his shoulder. 'What'll that be?'

Wimsey inserted a delicate finger and thumb into the cavities of Uncle Joseph. 'One—two—three— ' The stones glittered like fire as he laid them on the table. 'Seven—eight—nine. That seems to be all. Try a little farther down, Mac.'

Speechless with astonishment, Mr Macpherson dissected his legacy.

'Ten—eleven,' said Wimsey. 'I'm afraid the sea-gulls have got number twelve. I'm sorry, Mac.'

'But how did they get there?' demanded Robert foolishly.

'Simple as shelling peas. Great-Uncle Joseph makes his will, swallows his diamonds— '

'He must ha' been a grand man for a pill,' said Maggie, with respect.

'—and jumps out of the window. It was as clear as crystal to anybody who read the will. He told you, Mac, that the stomach was given you to study.'

Robert Ferguson gave a deep groan.

'I knew there was something in it,' he said. 'That's why I went to look up the will. And when I saw *you* there, I knew I was right. (Curse this leg of mine!) But I never imagined for a moment— '

His eyes appraised the diamonds greedily.

'And what will the value of these same stones be?' enquired Jock.

'About seven thousand pounds apiece, taken separately. More than that, taken together.'

'The old man was mad,' said Robert angrily. 'I shall dispute the will.'

'I think not,' said Wimsey. 'There's such an offence as entering and stealing, you know.'

'My God!' said Macpherson, handling the diamonds like a man in a dream. 'My God!'

'Seven thousan' pund,' said Jock. 'Did I unnerstan' ye richtly to say that one o' they gulls is gaun aboot noo wi' seven thousan' punds' worth o' diamonds in his wame? Ech! it's just awfu' to think of. Guid day to you, sirs. I'll be gaun round to Jimmy McTaggart to ask will he lend me the loan o' a gun.'

'Oh—well, before we'd got very far, we saw a fellow wading about in the river with a rod and a creel. I didn't pay much attention, because, you see, I was wondering what you—Yes. Well! Jock noticed him and said to me, "Yon's a queer kind of fisherman, I'm thinkin'." So I had a look, and there he was, staggering about among the stones with his fly floating away down the stream in front of him; and he was peering into all the pools he came to, and poking about with a gaff. So I hailed him, and he turned round, and then he put the gaff away in a bit of a hurry and started to reel in his line. He made an awful mess of it,' added Macpherson appreciatively.

'I can believe it,' said Wimsey. 'A man who admits to catching trout with a Pink Sisket would make a mess of anything.'

'A pink what?'

'Never mind. I only meant that Robert was no fisher. Get on.'

'Well, he got the line hooked round something, and he was pulling and hauling, you know, and splashing about, and then it came out all of a sudden, and he waved it all over the place and got my hat. That made me pretty wild, and I made after him, and he looked round again, and I yelled out, "Good God, it's Robert!" And he dropped his rod and took to his heels. And of course he slipped on the stones and came down an awful crack. We rushed forward and scooped him up and brought him home. He's got a nasty bang on the head and a fractured patella. Very interesting. I should have liked to have a shot at setting it myself, but it wouldn't do, you know, so I sent for Strachan. He's a good man.'

'You've had extraordinary luck about this business so far,' said Wimsey. 'Now the only thing left is to find Great-Uncle. How far down have you got?'

'Not very far. You see, what with getting Robert home and setting his knee and so on, we couldn't do much yesterday.'

'Damn Robert! Great-Uncle may be away out to sea by this time. Let's get down to it.'

He took up a gaff from the umbrella-stand ('Robert's,' interjected Macpherson), and led the way out. The little river was foaming down in a brown spate, rattling stones and small boulders along in its passage. Every hole, every eddy might be a lurking-place for Great-Uncle Joseph. Wimsey peered irresolutely here and there—then turned suddenly to Jock.

'Not so bad,' said Mr Ferguson. 'I've sometimes caught trout with it.'

'You surprise me,' said Wimsey, not unnaturally, since he had invented the Pink Sisket on the spur of the moment, and had hardly expected his improvisation to pass muster. 'Well, I suppose this unlucky accident has put a stop to your sport for the season. Damned bad luck. Otherwise, you might have helped us to have a go at the Patriarch.'

'What's that? A trout?'

'Yes—a frightfully wily old fish. Lurks about in the Fleet. You never know where to find him. Any moment he may turn up in some pool or other. I'm going out with Mac to try for him to-day. He's a jewel of a fellow. We've nicknamed him Great-Uncle Joseph. Hi! don't joggle about like that—you'll hurt that knee of yours. Is there anything I can get for you?'

He grinned amiably, and turned to answer a shout from the stairs.

'Hullo! Wimsey! is that you?'

'It is. How's sport?'

Macpherson came up the stairs four steps at a time, and met Wimsey on the landing as he emerged from the bedroom.

'I say, d'you know who that is? It's Robert.'

'I know. I saw him in town. Never mind him. Have you found Great-Uncle?'

'No, we haven't. What's all this mystery about? And what's Robert doing here? What did you mean by saying he was the burglar? And why is Great-Uncle Joseph so important?'

'One thing at a time. Let's find the old boy first. What have you been doing?'

'Well, when I got your extraordinary messages I thought, of course, you were off your rocker.' (Wimsey groaned with impatience.) 'But then I considered what a funny thing it was that somebody should have thought Great-Uncle worth stealing, and thought there might be some sense in what you said, after all.' ('Dashed good of you,' said Wimsey.) 'So I went out and poked about a bit, you know. Not that I think there's the faintest chance of finding anything, with the river coming down like this. Well, I hadn't got very far—by the way, I took Jock with me. I'm sure he thinks I'm mad, too. Not that he says anything; these people here never commit themselves— '

'Confound Jock! Get on with it.'

The Unsolved Puzzle of the Man With No Face

'And what would *you* say, sir,' said the stout man, 'to this here business of the bloke what's been found down on the beach at East Felpham?'

The rush of travellers after the Bank Holiday had caused an overflow of third-class passengers into the firsts, and the stout man was anxious to seem at ease in his surroundings. The youngish gentleman whom he addressed had obviously paid full fare for a seclusion which he was fated to forgo. He took the matter amiably enough, however, and replied in a courteous tone:

'I'm afraid I haven't read more than the headlines. Murdered, I suppose, wasn't he?'

'It's murder, right enough,' said the stout man, with relish. 'Cut about he was, something shocking.'

'More like as if a wild beast had done it,' chimed in the thin, elderly man opposite. 'No face at all he hadn't got, by what my paper says. It'll be one of these maniacs, I shouldn't be surprised, what goes about killing children.'

'I wish you wouldn't talk about such things,' said his wife, with a shudder. 'I lays awake at nights thinking what might 'appen to Lizzie's girls, till my head feels regular in a fever, and I has such a sinking in my inside I has to get up and eat biscuits. They didn't ought to put such dreadful things in the papers.'

'It's better they should, ma'am,' said the stout man, 'then we're warned, so to speak, and can take our measures accordingly. Now, from what I can make out, this unfortunate gentleman had gone bathing all by himself in a lonely spot. Now, quite apart from cramps, as is a thing that might 'appen to the best of us, that's a very foolish thing to do.'

'Just what I'm always telling my husband,' said the young wife. The young husband frowned and fidgeted. 'Well, dear, it really isn't safe, and you with your heart not strong— ' Her hand sought his under the newspaper. He drew away, self-consciously, saying, 'That'll do, Kitty.'

'The way I look at it is this,' pursued the stout man. 'Here we've been and had a war, what has left 'undreds o' men in what you might call a state of unstable ekilibrium. They've seen all their friends blown up or shot to pieces. They've been through five years of 'orrors and bloodshed, and it's given 'em what you might call a twist in the mind towards 'orrors. They may seem to forget it and go along as peaceable as anybody to all outward appearance, but it's all artificial, if you get my meaning. Then, one day something 'appens to upset them—they 'as words with the wife, or the weather's extra hot, as it is to-day—and something goes pop inside their brains and makes raving monsters of them. It's all in the books. I do a good bit of reading myself of an evening, being a bachelor without encumbrances.'

'That's all very true,' said a prim little man, looking up from his magazine, 'very true indeed—too true. But do you think it applies in the present case? I've studied the literature of crime a good deal—I may say I make it my hobby—and it's my opinion there's more in this than meets the eye. If you will compare this murder with some of the most mysterious crimes of late years—crimes which, mind you, have never been solved, and, in my opinion, never will be—what do you find?' He paused and looked round. 'You will find many features in common with this case. But especially you will find that the face—and the face only, mark you—has been disfigured, as though to prevent recognition. As though to blot out the victim's personality from the world. And you will find that, in spite of the most thorough investigation, the criminal is never discovered. Now what does all that point to? To organisation. Organisation. To an immensely powerful influence at work behind the scenes. In this very magazine that I'm reading now'—he tapped the page impressively— 'there's an account—not a faked-up story, but an account extracted from the annals of the police—of the organisation of one of these secret societies, which mark down men against whom they bear a grudge, and destroy them. And, when they do this, they disfigure their faces with the mark of the Secret Society, and they cover up the track of the assassin so completely—having money and resources at their disposal—that nobody is ever able to get at them.'

At this point three heavy thumps sounded on the ceiling.

'Gude save us!' ejaculated Maggie, 'I was forgettin' the puir gentleman.'

'What gentleman?' enquired Wimsey.

'Him that was feshed oot o' the Fleet,' replied Maggie. 'Excuse me juist a moment, sir.'

She fled swiftly upstairs. Wimsey poured himself out a third cup of coffee and lit a pipe.

Presently a thought occurred to him. He finished the coffee—not being a man to deprive himself of his pleasures—and walked quietly upstairs in Maggie's wake. Facing him stood a bedroom door, half open—the room which he had occupied during his stay at the cottage. He pushed it open. In the bed lay a red-headed gentleman, whose long, foxy countenance was in no way beautified by a white bandage, tilted rakishly across the left temple. A breakfast-tray stood on a table by the bed. Wimsey stepped forward with extended hand.

'Good morning, Mr Ferguson,' said he. 'This is an unexpected pleasure.'

'Good morning,' said Mr Ferguson snappishly.

'I had no idea, when we last met,' pursued Wimsey, advancing to the bed and sitting down upon it, 'that you were thinking of visiting my friend Macpherson.'

'Get off my leg,' growled the invalid. 'I've broken my kneecap.'

'What a nuisance! Frightfully painful, isn't it? And they say it takes years to get right—if it ever does get right. Is it what they call a Potts fracture? I don't know who Potts was, but it sounds impressive. How did you get it? Fishing?'

'Yes. A slip in that damned river.'

'Beastly. Sort of thing that might happen to anybody. A keen fisher, Mr Ferguson?'

'So-so.'

'So am I, when I get the opportunity. What kind of fly do you fancy for this part of the country? I rather like a Greenaway's Gadget myself. Ever tried it?'

'No,' said Mr Ferguson briefly.

'Some people find a Pink Sisket better, so they tell me. Do you use one? Have you got your fly-book here?'

'Yes—no,' said Mr Ferguson. 'I dropped it.'

'Pity. But do give me your opinion of the Pink Sisket.'

thocht they had mebbe came in and I not heard them. I waited a meenute to set the kettle on the fire, and then I heard a crackin' sound. So I cam' out and I called, "Is't you, Mr Macpherson?" And there was nae answer, only anither big crackin' noise, so I ran forrit, and a man cam' quickly oot o' the front room, brushin' past me an' puttin' me aside wi' his hand, so, and oot o' the front door like a flash o' lightnin'. So, wi' that, I let oot a skelloch, an' Jock's voice answered me fra' the gairden gate. "Och!" I says, "Jock! here's a burrglar been i' the hoose!" An' I heerd him runnin' across the gairden, doun tae the river, tramplin' doun a' the young kail and the stra'berry beds, the blackguard!'

Wimsey expressed his sympathy.

'Aye, that was a bad business. An' the next thing, there was Mr Macpherson and Jock helter-skelter after him. If Davie Murray's cattle had brokken in, they couldna ha' done mair deevastation. An' then there was a big splashin' an' crashin', an', after a bit, back comes Mr Macpherson an' he says, "He's jumpit intil the Fleet," he says, "an' he's awa'. What has he taken?" he says. "I dinna ken," says I, "for it all happened sae quickly I couldna see onything." "Come awa' ben," says he, "an' we'll see what's missin'." So we lookit high and low, an' all we could find was the cupboard door in the front room broken open, and naething taken but this bottle wi' the specimen.'

'Aha!' said Wimsey.

'Ah! an' they baith went oot tegither wi' lichts, but naething could they see of the thief. Sae Mr Macpherson comes back, and "I'm gaun to ma bed," says he, "for I'm that tired I can dae nae mair the nicht," says he. "Oh!" I said, "I daurna gae tae bed; I'm frichtened." An' Jock said, "Hoots, wumman, dinna fash yersel'. There'll be nae mair burglars the nicht, wi' the fricht we've gied 'em." So we lockit up a' the doors an' windies an' gaed to oor beds, but I couldna sleep a wink.'

'Very natural,' said Wimsey.

'It wasna till the next mornin',' said Maggie, 'that Mr Macpherson opened yon telegram. Eh! but he was in a taking. An' then the telegrams startit. Back an' forrit, back an' forrit atween the hoose an' the post-office. An' then they fund the bits o' the bottle that the specimen was in, stuck between twa stanes i' the river. And aff goes Mr Macpherson an' Jock wi' their waders on an' a couple o' gaffs, huntin' in a' the pools an' under the stanes to find the specimen. An' they're still at it.'

'I've read of such things, of course,' admitted the stout man, 'but I thought as they mostly belonged to the medeevial days. They had a thing like that in Italy once. What did they call it now? A Gomorrah, was it? Are there any Gomorrahs nowadays?'

'You spoke a true word, sir, when you said Italy,' replied the prim man. 'The Italian mind is made for intrigue. There's the Fascisti. That's come to the surface now, of course, but it started by being a secret society. And, if you were to look below the surface, you would be amazed at the way in which that country is honeycombed with hidden organisations of all sorts. Don't you agree with me, sir?' he added, addressing the first-class passenger.

'Ah!' said the stout man, 'no doubt this gentleman has been in Italy and knows all about it. Should you say this murder was the work of a Gomorrah, sir?'

'I hope not, I'm sure,' said the first-class passenger. 'I mean, it rather destroys the interest, don't you think? I like a nice, quiet, domestic murder myself, with the millionaire found dead in the library. The minute I open a detective story and find a Camorra in it, my interest seems to dry up and turn to dust and ashes—a sort of Sodom and Camorra, as you might say.'

'I agree with you there,' said the young husband, 'from what you might call the artistic standpoint. But in this particular case I think there may be something to be said for this gentleman's point of view.'

'Well,' admitted the first-class passenger, 'not having read the details— '

'The details are clear enough,' said the prim man. 'This poor creature was found lying dead on the beach at East Felpham early this morning, with his face cut about in the most dreadful manner. He had nothing on him but his bathing-dress— '

'Stop a minute. Who was he, to begin with?'

'They haven't identified him yet. His clothes had been taken— '

'That looks more like robbery, doesn't it?' suggested Kitty.

'If it was just robbery,' retorted the prim man, 'why should his face have been cut up in that way? No—the clothes were taken away, as I said, to prevent identification. That's what these societies always try to do.'

'Was he stabbed?' demanded the first-class passenger.

'No,' said the stout man. 'He wasn't. He was strangled.'

'Not a characteristically Italian method of killing,' observed the first-class passenger.

'No more it is,' said the stout man. The prim man seemed a little disconcerted.

'And if he went down there to bathe,' said the thin, elderly man, 'how did he get there? Surely somebody must have missed him before now, if he was staying at Felpham. It's a busy spot for visitors in the holiday season.'

'No,' said the stout man, 'not East Felpham. You're thinking of West Felpham, where the yacht-club is. East Felpham is one of the loneliest spots on the coast. There's no house near except a little pub all by itself at the end of a long road, and after that you have to go through three fields to get to the sea. There's no real road, only a cart-track, but you can take a car through. I've been there.'

'He came in a car,' said the prim man. 'They found the track of the wheels. But it had been driven away again.'

'It looks as though the two men had come there together,' suggested Kitty.

'I think they did,' said the prim man. 'The victim was probably gagged and bound and taken along in the car to the place, and then he was taken out and strangled and— '

'But why should they have troubled to put on his bathing-dress?' said the first-class passenger.

'Because,' said the prim man, 'as I said, they didn't want to leave any clothes to reveal his identity.'

'Quite; but why not leave him naked? A bathing-dress seems to indicate an almost excessive regard for decorum, under the circumstances.'

'Yes, yes,' said the stout man impatiently, 'but you 'aven't read the paper carefully. The two men couldn't have come there in company, and for why? There was only one set of footprints found, and they belonged to the murdered man.'

He looked round triumphantly.

'Only one set of footprints, eh?' said the first-class passenger quickly. 'This looks interesting. Are you sure?'

'It says so in the paper. A single set of footprints, it says, made by bare feet, which by a careful comparison 'ave been shown to be those of the murdered

'WAS GREAT-UNCLE IN BOTTLE WHEN DROPPED IF SO DRAG RIVER IF NOT PURSUE BURGLAR PROBABLY ROBERT FERGUSON SPARE NO PAINS STARTING FOR SCOTLAND TO-NIGHT HOPE ARRIVE EARLY TO-MORROW URGENT IMPORTANT PUT YOUR BACK INTO IT WILL EXPLAIN.'

The night express decanted Lord Peter Wimsey at Dumfries early the following morning, and a hired car deposited him at the Stone Cottage in time for breakfast. The door was opened to him by Maggie, who greeted him with hearty cordiality:

'Come awa' in, sir. All's ready for ye, and Mr Macpherson will be back in a few minutes, I'm thinkin'. Ye'll be tired with your long journey, and hungry, maybe? Aye. Will ye tak' a bit parritch to your eggs and bacon? There's nae troot the day, though yesterday was a gran' day for the fush. Mr Macpherson has been up and doun, up and doun the river wi' my Jock, lookin' for ane of his specimens, as he ca's them, that was dropped by the thief that cam' in. I dinna ken what the thing may be—my Jock says it's like a calf's pluck to look at, by what Mr Macpherson tells him.'

'Dear me!' said Wimsey. 'And how did the burglary happen, Maggie?'

'Indeed, sir, it was a vera' remarkable circumstance. Mr Macpherson was awa' all day Monday and Tuesday, up at the big loch by the viaduct, fishin'. There was a big rain Saturday and Sunday, ye may remember, and Mr Macpherson says, "There'll be grand fishin' the morn, Jock," says he. "We'll go up to the viaduct if it stops rainin' and we'll spend the nicht at the keeper's lodge." So on Monday it stoppit rainin' and was a grand warm, soft day, so aff they went together. There was a telegram come for him Tuesday mornin', and I set it up on the mantelpiece, where he'd see it when he cam' in, but it's been in my mind since that maybe that telegram had something to do wi' the burglary.'

'I wouldn't say but you might be right, Maggie,' replied Wimsey gravely.

'Aye, sir, that wadna surprise me.' Maggie set down a generous dish of eggs and bacon before the guest and took up her tale again.

'Well, I was sittin' in my kitchen the Tuesday nicht, waitin' for Mr Macpherson and Jock to come hame, and sair I pitied them, the puir souls, for the rain was peltin' down again, and the nicht was sae dark I was afraid they micht ha' tummelt into a bog-pool. Weel, I was listenin' for the sound o' the door-sneck when I heard something movin' in the front room. The door wasna lockit, ye ken, because Mr Macpherson was expectit back. So I up from my chair and I

dealer's voice, neatly extricated himself and left Mr Skrymes with the baby. After this disaster, the ring became sulky and demoralised and refused to bid at all, and a timid little outsider, suddenly flinging himself into the arena, became the owner of a fine fourteenth-century missal at bargain price. Crimson with excitement and surprise, he paid for his purchase and ran out of the room like a rabbit, hugging the missal as though he expected to have it snatched from him. Wimsey thereupon set himself seriously to acquire a few fine early printed books, and, having accomplished this, retired, covered with laurels and hatred.

After this delightful and satisfying day, he felt vaguely hurt at receiving no ecstatic telegram from Macpherson. He refused to imagine that his deductions had been wrong, and supposed rather that the rapture of Macpherson was too great to be confined to telegraphic expression and would come next day by post. However, at eleven next morning the telegram arrived. It said:

'JUST GOT YOUR WIRE WHAT DOES IT MEAN GREAT-UNCLE STOLEN LAST NIGHT BURGLAR ESCAPED PLEASE WRITE FULLY.'

Wimsey committed himself to a brief comment in language usually confined to the soldiery. Robert had undoubtedly got Great-Uncle Joseph, and, even if they could trace the burglary to him, the legacy was by this time gone for ever. He had never felt so furiously helpless. He even cursed the Catullus, which had kept him from going north and dealing with the matter personally.

While he was meditating what to do, a second telegram was brought in. It ran:

'GREAT-UNCLE'S BOTTLE FOUND BROKEN IN FLEET DROPPED BY BURGLAR IN FLIGHT CONTENTS GONE WHAT NEXT.'

Wimsey pondered this.

'Of course,' he said, 'if the thief simply emptied the bottle and put Great-Uncle in his pocket, we're done. Or if he's simply emptied Great-Uncle and put the contents in his pocket, we're done. But 'dropped in flight' sounds rather as though Great-Uncle had gone overboard lock, stock, and barrel. Why can't the fool of a Scotsman put a few more details into his wires? It'd only cost him a penny or two. I suppose I'd better go up myself. Meanwhile a little healthy occupation won't hurt him.'

He took a telegraph form from the desk and despatched a further message:

man, lead from the position occupied by the car to the place where the body was found. What do you make of that?'

'Why,' said the first-class passenger, 'that tells one quite a lot, don't you know. It gives one a sort of a bird's eye view of the place, and it tells one the time of the murder, besides castin' quite a good bit of light on the character and circumstances of the murderer—or murderers.'

'How do you make that out, sir?' demanded the elderly man.

'Well, to begin with—though I've never been near the place, there is obviously a sandy beach from which one can bathe.'

'That's right,' said the stout man.

'There is also, I fancy, in the neighbourhood, a spur of rock running out into the sea, quite possibly with a handy diving-pool. It must run out pretty far; at any rate, one can bathe there before it is high water on the beach.'

'I don't know how you know that, sir, but it's a fact. There's rocks and a bathing-pool, exactly as you describe, about a hundred yards farther along. Many's the time I've had a dip off the end of them.'

'And the rocks run right back inland, where they are covered with short grass.'

'That's right.'

'The murder took place shortly before high tide, I fancy, and the body lay just about at high-tide mark.'

'Why so?'

'Well, you say there were footsteps leading right up to the body. That means that the water hadn't been up beyond the body. But there were no other marks. Therefore the murderer's footprints must have been washed away by the tide. The only explanation is that the two men were standing together just below the tide-mark. The murderer came up out of the sea. He attacked the other man—maybe he forced him back a little on his own tracks—and there he killed him. Then the water came up and washed out any marks the murderer may have left. One can imagine him squatting there, wondering if the sea was going to come up high enough.'

'Ow!' said Kitty, 'you make me creep all over.'

'Now, as to these marks on the face,' pursued the first-class passenger. 'The murderer, according to the idea I get of the thing, was already in the sea when the victim came along. You see the idea?'

'I get you,' said the stout man. 'You think as he went in off them rocks what we was speaking of, and came up through the water, and that's why there weren't no footprints.'

'Exactly. And since the water is deep round those rocks, as you say, he was presumably in a bathing-dress too.'

'Looks like it.'

'Quite so. Well, now—what was the face-slashing done with? People don't usually take knives out with them when they go for a morning dip.'

'That's a puzzle,' said the stout man.

'Not altogether. Let's say, either the murderer had a knife with him or he had not. If he had— '

'If he had,' put in the prim man eagerly, 'he must have laid wait for the deceased on purpose. And, to my mind, that bears out my idea of a deep and cunning plot.'

'Yes. But, if he was waiting there with the knife, why didn't he stab the man and have done with it? Why strangle him, when he had a perfectly good weapon there to hand? No—I think he came unprovided, and, when he saw his enemy there, he made for him with his hands in the characteristic British way.'

'But the slashing?'

'Well, I think that when he had got his man down, dead before him, he was filled with a pretty grim sort of fury and wanted to do more damage. He caught up something that was lying near him on the sand—it might be a bit of old iron, or even one of those sharp shells you sometimes see about, or a bit of glass—and he went for him with that in a desperate rage of jealousy or hatred.'

'Dreadful, dreadful!' said the elderly woman.

'Of course, one can only guess in the dark, not having seen the wounds. It's quite possible that the murderer dropped his knife in the struggle and had to do the actual killing with his hands, picking the knife up afterwards. If the wounds were clean knife-wounds, that is probably what happened, and the murder was premeditated. But if they were rough, jagged gashes, made by an impromptu weapon, then I should say it was a chance encounter, and that the murderer was either mad or— '

'Or?'

'Or had suddenly come upon somebody whom he hated very much.'

He thrust his hand casually into a pocket, and brought out a little pool of crimson fire like a miniature sunset.

'Look nice in a ring, now, wouldn't it?' said Mr Abrahams. 'An engagement ring, eh?'

Wimsey laughed, and made his escape.

He was strongly tempted to return to Scotland and attend personally to the matter of Great-Uncle Joseph, but the thought of an important book sale next day deterred him. There was a manuscript of Catullus which he was passionately anxious to secure, and he never entrusted his interests to dealers. He contented himself with sending a wire to Thomas Macpherson:

'ADVISE OPENING UP GREAT-UNCLE JOSEPH IMMEDIATELY.'

The girl at the post-office repeated the message aloud and rather doubtfully. 'Quite right,' said Wimsey, and dismissed the affair from his mind.

He had great fun at the sale next day. He found a ring of dealers in possession, happily engaged in conducting a knock-out. Having lain low for an hour in a retired position behind a large piece of statuary, he emerged, just as the hammer was falling upon the Catullus for a price representing the tenth part of its value, with an overbid so large, prompt, and sonorous that the ring gasped with a sense of outrage. Skrymes—a dealer who had sworn an eternal enmity to Wimsey, on account of a previous little encounter over a Justinian—pulled himself together and offered a fifty-pound advance. Wimsey promptly doubled his bid. Skrymes overbid him fifty again. Wimsey instantly jumped another hundred, in the tone of a man prepared to go on till Doomsday. Skrymes scowled and was silent. Somebody raised it fifty more; Wimsey made it guineas and the hammer fell. Encouraged by this success, Wimsey, feeling that his hand was in, romped happily into the bidding for the next lot, a *Hypnerotomachia* which he already possessed, and for which he felt no desire whatever. Skrymes, annoyed by his defeat, set his teeth, determining that, if Wimsey was in the bidding mood, he should pay through the nose for his rashness. Wimsey, entering into the spirit of the thing, skied the bidding with enthusiasm. The dealers, knowing his reputation as a collector, and fancying that there must be some special excellence about the book that they had failed to observe, joined in whole-heartedly, and the fun became fast and furious. Eventually they all dropped out again, leaving Skrymes and Wimsey in together. At which point Wimsey, observing a note of hesitation in the