Chapter 8

Mr Parker Takes Notes

A man was taken to the Zoo and shown the giraffe. After gazing at it a little in silence: 'I don't believe it,' he said.

PARKER'S first impulse was to doubt his own sanity; his next, to doubt Lady Mary's. Then, as the clouds rolled away from his brain, he decided that she was merely not speaking the truth.

'Come, Lady Mary,' he said encouragingly, but with an accent of reprimand as to an over-imaginative child, 'you can't expect us to believe that, you know.'

'But you must,' said the girl gravely; 'it's a fact. I shot him. I did, really. I didn't exactly mean to do it; it was a—well, a sort of accident.'

Mr Parker got up and paced about the room.

'You have put me in a terrible position, Lady Mary,' he said. 'You see, I'm a police-officer. I never imagined— '

'It doesn't matter,' said Lady Mary. 'Of course you'll have to arrest me, or detain me, or whatever you call it. That's what I came for. I'm quite ready to go quietly—that's the right expression, isn't it? I'd like to explain about it, though, first. Of course I ought to have done it long ago, but I'm afraid I lost my head. I didn't realize that Gerald would get blamed. I hoped they'd bring it in suicide. Do I make a statement to you now? Or do I do it at the police-station?'

Parker groaned.

'They won't—they won't punish me so badly if it was an accident, will they?' There was a quiver in the voice.

'No, of course not—of course not. But if only you had spoken earlier! No,' said Parker, stopping suddenly short in his distracted pacing and sitting down

beside her. 'It's impossible—absurd.' He caught the girl's hand suddenly in his own. 'Nothing will convince me,' he said. 'It's absurd. It's not like you.'

'But an accident— '

'I don't mean that—you know I don't mean that. But that you should keep silence— '

'I was afraid. I'm telling you now.'

'No, no, no,' cried the detective. 'You're lying to me. Nobly, I know; but it's not worth it. No man could be worth it. Let him go, I implore you. Tell the truth. Don't shield this man. If he murdered Denis Cathcart— '

'*No!*' The girl sprang to her feet, wrenching her hand away. 'There was no other man. How dare you say it or think it! I killed Denis Cathcart, I tell you, and you *shall* believe it. I swear to you that there was no other man.'

Parker pulled himself together.

'Sit down, please. Lady Mary, you are determined to make this statement?'

'Yes.'

'Knowing that I have no choice but to act upon it?'

'If you will not hear it I shall go straight to the police.'

Parker pulled out his note-book. 'Go on,' he said.

With no other sign of emotion than a nervous fidgeting with her gloves, Lady Mary began her confession in a clear, hard voice, as though she were reciting it by heart.

'On the evening of Wednesday, October 13th, I went upstairs at half-past nine. I sat up writing a letter. At a quarter past ten I heard my brother and Denis quarrelling in the passage. I heard my brother call Denis a cheat, and tell him that he was never to speak to me again. I heard Denis run out. I listened for some time, but did not hear him return. At half-past eleven I became alarmed. I changed my dress and went out to try and find Denis and bring him in. I feared he might do something desperate. After some time I found him in the shrubbery. I begged him to come in. He refused, and he told me about my brother's accusation and the quarrel. I was very much horrified, of course. He said where was the good of denying anything, as Gerald was determined to ruin him, and asked me to go away and marry him and live abroad. I said I was surprised that he should suggest such a thing in the circumstances. We both became very angry. I said "Come in now. Tomorrow you can leave by the first train." He seemed almost crazy. He pulled out a pistol and said that he'd come

'It was an experience I shall *never* forget,' said Miss Tarrant. 'One felt so *close* to the earth and the primitive things. If only we could abolish industrialism. I'm afraid, though, we shall never get it put right without a "bloody revolution," you know. It's very terrible, of course, but salutary and inevitable. Shall we have coffee? We shall have to carry it upstairs ourselves, if you don't mind. The maids don't bring it up after dinner.'

Miss Tarrant settled her bill and returned, thrusting a cup of coffee into his hand. It had already overflowed into the saucer, and as he groped his way round a screen and up a steep and twisted staircase it overflowed quite an amount more.

Emerging from the basement, they almost ran into a young man with fair hair who was hunting for letters in a dark little row of pigeon-holes. Finding nothing, he retreated into the lounge. Miss Tarrant uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

'Why, there *is* Mr Goyles,' she cried.

Wimsey glanced across, and at the sight of the tall, slightly stooping figure with the untidy fair hair and the gloved right hand he gave an irrepressible little gasp.

'Won't you introduce me?' he said.

'I'll fetch him,' said Miss Tarrant. She made off across the lounge and addressed the young agitator, who started, looked across at Wimsey, shook his head, appeared to apologize, gave a hurried glance at his watch, and darted out by the entrance. Wimsey sprang forward in pursuit.

'Extraordinary,' cried Miss Tarrant, with a blank face. 'He says he has an appointment—but he can't surely be missing the— '

'Excuse me,' said Peter. He dashed out, in time to perceive a dark figure retreating across the street. He gave chase. The man took to his heels, and seemed to plunge into the dark little alley which leads into the Charing Cross Road. Hurrying in pursuit, Wimsey was almost blinded by a sudden flash and smoke nearly in his face. A crashing blow on the left shoulder and a deafening report whirled his surroundings away. He staggered violently, and collapsed on to a second-hand brass bedstead.

never told you about Mr Goyles. They were so *very* friendly, you know, some time ago. Everybody thought she was going to marry him—but it seemed to fall through. And then your sister left town. Do you know about it?'

'That was the fellow, was it? Yes—well, my people didn't altogether see it, you know. Thought Mr Goyles wasn't quite the son-in-law they'd take to. Family row and so on. Wasn't there myself; besides, Mary'd never listen to *me*. Still, that's what I gathered.'

'Another instance of the absurd, old-fashioned tyranny of parents,' said Miss Tarrant warmly. 'You wouldn't think it could still be possible—in post-war times.'

'I don't know,' said Wimsey, 'that you could exactly call it that. Not parents exactly. My mother's a remarkable woman. I don't think she interfered. Fact, I fancy she wanted to ask Mr Goyles to Denver. But my brother put his foot down.'

'Oh, well, what can you expect?' said Miss Tarrant scornfully. 'But I don't see what business it was of his.'

'Oh, none,' agreed Wimsey. 'Only, owin' to my late father's circumscribed ideas of what was owin' to women, my brother has the handlin' of Mary's money till she marries with his consent. I don't say it's a good plan—I think it's a rotten plan. But there it is.'

'Monstrous!' said Miss Tarrant, shaking her head so angrily that she looked like shock-headed Peter. 'Barbarous! Simply feudal, you know. But, after all, what's money?'

'Nothing, of course,' said Peter. 'But if you've been brought up to havin' it it's a bit awkward to drop it suddenly. Like baths, you know.'

'I can't understand how it could have made any difference to Mary,' persisted Miss Tarrant mournfully. 'She liked being a worker. We once tried living in a workman's cottage for eight weeks, five of us, on eighteen shillings a week. It was a *marvellous* experience—on the very *edge* of the New Forest.'

'In the winter?'

'Well, no—we thought we'd better not *begin* with winter. But we had nine wet days, and the kitchen chimney smoked all the time. You see, the wood came out of the forest, so it was all damp.'

'I see. It must have been uncommonly interestin'.'

to the end of things, that his life was ruined, that we were a lot of hypocrites, and that I had never cared for him, or I shouldn't have minded what he'd done. Anyway, he said, if I wouldn't come with him it was all over, and he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb—he'd shoot me and himself. I think he was quite out of his mind. He pulled out a revolver; I caught his hand; we struggled; I got the muzzle right up against his chest, and—either I pulled the trigger or it went off of itself—I'm not clear which. It was all in such a whirl.'

She paused. Parker's pen took down the words, and his face showed growing concern. Lady Mary went on:

'He wasn't quite dead. I helped him up. We struggled back nearly to the house. He fell once— '

'Why,' asked Parker, 'did you not leave him and run into the house to fetch help?'

Lady Mary hesitated.

'It didn't occur to me. It was a nightmare. I could only think of getting him along. I think—*I think I wanted him to die*.'

There was a dreadful pause.

'He did die. He died at the door. I went into the conservatory and sat down. I sat for hours and tried to think. I hated him for being a cheat and a scoundrel. I'd been taken in, you see—made a fool of by a common sharper. I was glad he was dead. I must have sat there for hours without a coherent thought. It wasn't till my brother came along that I realized what I'd done, and that I might be suspected of murdering him. I was simply terrified. I made up my mind all in a moment that I'd pretend I knew nothing—that I'd heard a shot and come down. You know what I did.'

'Why, Lady Mary,' said Parker, in a perfectly toneless voice, 'why did you say to your brother "Good God, Gerald, you've killed him"?'

Another hesitant pause.

'I never said that. I said, "Good God, Gerald, he's killed, then." I never meant to suggest anything but suicide.'

'You admitted to those words at the inquest?'

'Yes— ' Her hands knotted the gloves into all manner of shapes. 'By that time I had decided on a burglar story, you see.'

The telephone bell rang, and Parker went to the instrument. A voice came thinly over the wire:

'Is that 110 Piccadilly? This is Charing Cross Hospital. A man was brought in tonight who says he is Lord Peter Wimsey. He was shot in the shoulder, and struck his head in falling. He has only just recovered consciousness. He was brought in at 9:15. No, he will probably do very well now. Yes, come round by all means.'

'Peter has been shot,' said Parker. 'Will you come round with me to Charing Cross Hospital? They say he is in no danger; still— '

'Oh, quick!' cried Lady Mary.

Gathering up Mr Bunter as they hurried through the hall, detective and self-accused rushed hurriedly out into Pall Mall, and, picking up a belated taxi at Hyde Park Corner, drove madly away through the deserted streets.

'Oh, am I?' cried Miss Tarrant, withdrawing hastily. 'Oh, thank you so much. Especially as the colour runs. I hope it isn't arsenic or anything.' Then, leaning forward again, she whispered hoarsely:

'The girl next me is Erica Heath-Warburton—the writer, you know.'

Wimsey looked with a new respect at the lady in the Russian blouse. Few books were capable of calling up a blush to his cheek, but he remembered that one of Miss Heath-Warburton's had done it. The authoress was just saying impressively to her companion:

'—ever know a sincere emotion to express itself in a subordinate clause?'

'Joyce has freed us from the superstition of syntax,' agreed the curly man.

'Scenes which make emotional history,' said Miss Heath-Warburton, 'should ideally be expressed in a series of animal squeals.'

'The D. H. Lawrence formula,' said the other.

'Or even Dada,' said the authoress.

'We need a new notation,' said the curly-haired man, putting both elbows on the table and knocking Wimsey's bread on to the floor. 'Have you heard Robert Snoates recite his own verse to the tom-tom and the penny whistle?'

Lord Peter with difficulty detached his attention from this fascinating discussion to find that Miss Tarrant was saying something about Mary.

'One misses your sister very much,' she said. 'Her wonderful enthusiasm. She spoke so well at meetings. She had such a *real* sympathy with the worker.'

'It seems astonishing to me,' said Wimsey, 'seeing Mary's never had to do a stroke of work in her life.'

'Oh,' cried Miss Tarrant, 'but she *did* work. She worked for us. Wonderfully! She was secretary to our Propaganda Society for nearly six months. And then she worked so hard for Mr Goyles. To say nothing of her nursing in the war. Of course, I don't approve of England's attitude in the war, but nobody would say the work wasn't hard.'

'Who is Mr Goyles?'

'Oh, one of our leading speakers—quite young, but the Government are really afraid of him. I expect he'll be here tonight. He has been lecturing in the North, but I believe he's back now.' 'I say, do look out,' said Peter. 'Your beads are in your plate again.'

'Are they? Well, perhaps they'll flavour the mutton. I'm afraid the cooking isn't very good here, but the subscription's so small, you see. I wonder Mary

and you'll be seized and turned out. I suppose I oughtn't to have told you anything about it, because you ought to be a deadly enemy, but I can't really believe you're dangerous.'

'I'm just an ordinary capitalist, I expect,' said Lord Peter, 'highly obnoxious.'

'Well, come to dinner, anyhow. I *do* so want to hear all the news.'

Peter reflected that the dinner at the Soviet Club would be worse than execrable, and was just preparing an excuse when it occurred to him that Miss Tarrant might be able to tell him a good many of the things that he didn't know, and really ought to know, about his own sister. Accordingly, he altered his polite refusal into a polite acceptance, and, plunging after Miss Tarrant, was led at a reckless pace and by a series of grimy short cuts into Gerrard Street, where an orange door, flanked by windows with magenta curtains, sufficiently indicated the Soviet Club.

The Soviet Club, being founded to accommodate free thinking rather than high living, had that curious amateur air which pervades all worldly institutions planned by unworldly people. Exactly why it made Lord Peter instantly think of mission teas he could not say, unless it was that all the members looked as though they cherished a purpose in life, and that the staff seemed rather sketchily trained and strongly in evidence. Wimsey reminded himself that in so democratic an institution one could hardly expect the assistants to assume that air of superiority which marks the servants in a West End club. For one thing, they would not be such capitalists. In the dining-room below the resemblance to a mission tea was increased by the exceedingly heated atmosphere, the babel of conversation, and the curious inequalities of the cutlery. Miss Tarrant secured seats at a rather crumby table near the serving-hatch, and Peter wedged himself in with some difficulty next to a very large, curly-haired man in a velvet coat, who was earnestly conversing with a thin, eager young woman in a Russian blouse, Venetian beads, a Hungarian shawl and a Spanish comb, looking like a personification of the United Front of the 'Internationale.'

Lord Peter endeavoured to please his hostess by a question about the great Mr Coke, but was checked by an agitated 'Hush!'

'*Please* don't shout about it,' said Miss Tarrant, leaning across till her auburn mop positively tickled his eyebrows. 'It's *so* secret.'

'I'm awfully sorry,' said Wimsey apologetically. 'I say, d'you know you're dipping those jolly little beads of yours in the soup?'

Chapter 9

Goyles

'—and the moral of that is— ' said the Duchess.

Alice's Adventures In Wonderland

A party of four were assembled next morning at a very late breakfast, or very early lunch, in Lord Peter's flat. Its most cheerful member, despite a throbbing shoulder and a splitting headache, was undoubtedly Lord Peter himself, who lay upon the Chesterfield surrounded with cushions and carousing upon tea and toast. Having been brought home in an ambulance, he had instantly fallen into a healing sleep, and had woken at nine o'clock aggressively clear and active in mind. In consequence, Mr Parker had been dispatched in a hurry, half-fed and burdened with the secret memory of last night's disclosures, to Scotland Yard. Here he had set in motion the proper machinery for catching Lord Peter's assassin. 'Only don't you say anything about the attack on me,' said his lordship. 'Tell 'em he's to be detained in connection with the Riddlesdale case. That's good enough for them.' It was now eleven, and Mr Parker had returned, gloomy and hungry, and was consuming a belated omelette and a glass of claret.

Lady Mary Wimsey was hunched up in the window-seat. Her bobbed golden hair made a little blur of light about her in the pale autumn sunshine. She had made an attempt to breakfast earlier, and now sat gazing out into Piccadilly. Her first appearance that morning had been made in Lord Peter's dressing-gown, but she now wore a serge skirt and jade-green jumper, which had been brought to town for her by the fourth member of the party, now composedly eating a mixed grill and sharing the decanter with Parker.

This was a rather short, rather plump, very brisk elderly lady, with bright black eyes like a bird's, and very handsome white hair exquisitely dressed. Far from looking as though she had just taken a long night journey, she was easily

the most composed and trim of the four. She was, however, annoyed, and said so at considerable length. This was the Dowager Duchess of Denver.

'It is not so much, Mary, that you went off so abruptly last night—just before dinner, too—inconveniencing and alarming us very much—indeed, poor Helen was totally unable to eat her dinner, which was extremely distressing to her feelings, because, you know, she always makes such a point of never being upset about anything—I really don't know why, for some of the greatest men have not minded showing their feelings, I don't mean Southerners necessarily, but, as Mr Chesterton very rightly points out—Nelson, too, who was certainly English if he wasn't Irish or Scotch, I forget, but United Kingdom, anyway (if that means anything nowadays with a Free State—such a ridiculous title, especially as it always makes one think of the Orange Free State, and I'm sure they wouldn't care to be mixed up with that, being so very green themselves). And going off without even proper clothes, and taking the car, so that I had to wait till the 1:15 from Northallerton—a ridiculous time to start, and such a bad train, too, not getting up till 10:30. Besides, if you *must* run off to town, why do it in that unfinished manner? If you had only looked up the trains before starting you would have seen you would have half an hour's wait at Northallerton, and you could quite easily have packed a bag. It's so much better to do things neatly and thoroughly—even stupid things. And it was very stupid of you indeed to dash off like that, to embarrass and bore poor Mr Parker with a lot of twaddle—though I suppose it was Peter you meant to see. You know, Peter, if you will haunt low places full of Russians and sucking Socialists taking themselves seriously, you ought to know better than to encourage them by running after them, however futile, and given to drinking coffee and writing poems with no shape to them, and generally ruining their nerves. And, in any case, it makes not the slightest difference; I could have told Peter all about it myself, if he doesn't know already, as he probably does.'

Lady Mary turned very white at this and glanced at Parker, who replied rather to her than to the Dowager:

'No, Lord Peter and I haven't had time to discuss anything yet.'

'Lest it should ruin my shattered nerves and bring a fever to my aching brow,' added that nobleman amiably. 'You're a kind, thoughtful soul, Charles, and I don't know what I should do without you. I wish that rotten old

'Thanks very much,' replied Sir Andrew. 'I hope you feel that all is going well. I had Parker in here this morning to report, and he seemed a little dissatisfied.'

'He's been doing a lot of ungrateful routine work,' said Wimsey, 'and being altogether the fine, sound man he always is. He's been a damn good friend to me, Sir Andrew, and it's a real privilege to be allowed to work with him. Well, so long, Chief.'

He found that his interview with Sir Andrew Mackenzie had taken up a couple of hours, and that it was nearly eight o'clock. He was just trying to make up his mind where to dine when he was accosted by a cheerful young woman with bobbed red hair, dressed in a short checked skirt, brilliant jumper, corduroy jacket, and a rakish green velvet tam-o'-shanter.

'Surely,' said the young woman, extending a shapely, ungloved hand, 'it's Lord Peter Wimsey. How're you? And how's Mary?'

'B'Jove!' said Wimsey gallantly, 'it's Miss Tarrant. How perfectly rippin' to see you again. Absolutely delightful. Thanks, Mary ain't as fit as she might be—worryin' about this murder business, y'know. You've heard that we're what the poor so kindly and tactfully call "in trouble," I expect, what?'

'Yes, of course,' replied Miss Tarrant eagerly, 'and, of course, as a good Socialist, I can't help rejoicing rather when a peer gets taken up, because it does make him look so silly, you know, and the House of Lords is silly, isn't it? But, really, I'd rather it was anybody else's brother. Mary and I were such great friends, you know, and, of course, *you* do investigate things, don't you, not just live on your estates in the country and shoot birds? So I suppose that makes a difference.'

'That's very kind of you,' said Peter. 'If you can prevail upon yourself to overlook the misfortune of my birth and my other deficiencies, p'raps you would honour me by comin' along and havin' a bit of dinner somewhere, what?'

'Oh, I'd have *loved* to,' cried Miss Tarrant, with enormous energy, 'but I've promised to be at the club tonight. There's a meeting at nine. Mr Coke—the Labour leader, you know—is going to make a speech about converting the Army and Navy to Communism. We expect to be raided, and there's going to be a grand hunt for spies before we begin. But look here, do come along and dine with me there, and, if you like, I'll try to smuggle you in to the meeting,

'There was no other man.'

'Oh, pardon me, Lady Mary. We saw his footmarks all the way up from the shrubbery to the conservatory.'

'It must have been some tramp. I know nothing about him.'

'But we have proof that he was there—of what he did, and how he escaped. For heaven's sake, and your brother's sake, Lady Mary, tell us the truth—for that man in the Burberry was the man who shot Cathcart.'

'No,' said the girl, with a white face, 'that is impossible.'

'Why impossible?'

'I shot Denis Cathcart myself.'

'So that's how the matter stands, you see, Lord Peter,' said the Chief of Scotland Yard, rising from his desk with a friendly gesture of dismissal. 'The man was undoubtedly seen at Marylebone on the Friday morning, and, though we have unfortunately lost him again for the moment, I have no doubt whatever that we shall lay hands on him before long. The delay has been due to the unfortunate illness of the porter Morrison, whose evidence has been so material. But we are wasting no time now.'

'I'm sure I may leave it to you with every confidence, Sir Andrew,' replied Wimsey, cordially shaking hands. 'I'm diggin' away too; between us we ought to get somethin'—you in your small corner and I in mine, as the hymn says—or is it a hymn? I remember readin' it in a book about missionaries when I was small. Did you want to be a missionary in your youth? I did. I think most kids do some time or another, which is odd, seein' how unsatisfactory most of us turn out.'

'Meanwhile,' said Sir Andrew Mackenzie, 'if you run across the man yourself, let us know. I would never deny your extraordinary good fortune, or it may be good judgment, in running across the criminals we may be wanting.'

'If I catch the bloke,' said Lord Peter, 'I'll come and shriek under your windows till you let me in, if it's the middle of the night and you in your little night-shirt. And talking of night-shirts reminds me that we hope to see you down at Denver one of these days, as soon as this business is over. Mother sends kind regards, of course.'

second-hand dealer had been a bit brisker about takin' in his stock-in-trade for the night, though. Perfectly 'straor'nary number of knobs there are on a brass bedstead. Saw it comin', y'know, an' couldn't stop myself. However, what's a mere brass bedstead? The great detective, though at first stunned and dizzy from his brutal treatment by the fifteen veiled assassins all armed with meat-choppers, soon regained his senses, thanks to his sound constitution and healthy manner of life. Despite the severe gassing he had endured in the underground room—eh? A telegram? Oh, thanks, Bunter.'

Lord Peter appeared to read the message with great inward satisfaction, for his long lips twitched at the corners, and he tucked the slip of paper away in his pocket-book with a little sigh of satisfaction. He called to Bunter to take away the breakfast-tray and to renew the cooling bandage about his brow. This done, Lord Peter leaned back among his cushions, and with an air of malicious enjoyment launched at Mr Parker the inquiry:

'Well, now, how did you and Mary get on last night? Polly, did you tell him you'd done the murder?'

Few things are more irritating than to discover, after you have been at great pains to spare a person some painful intelligence, that he has known it all along and is not nearly so much affected by it as he properly should be. Mr Parker quite simply and suddenly lost his temper. He bounded to his feet, and exclaimed, without the least reason: 'Oh, it's perfectly hopeless trying to do anything!'

Lady Mary sprang from the window-seat.

'Yes, I did,' she said. 'It's quite true. Your precious case is finished, Peter.'

The Dowager said, without the least discomposure: 'You must allow your brother to be the best judge of his own affairs, my dear.'

'As a matter of fact,' replied his lordship, 'I rather fancy Polly's right. Hope so, I'm sure. Anyway, we've got the fellow, so now we shall know.'

Lady Mary gave a sort of gasp, and stepped forward with her chin up and her hands tightly clenched. It caught at Parker's heart to see overwhelming catastrophe so bravely faced. The official side of him was thoroughly bewildered, but the human part ranged itself instantly in support of that gallant defiance.

'Whom have they got?' he demanded, in a voice quite unlike his own.

'The Goyles person,' said Lord Peter carelessly. 'Uncommon quick work, what? But since he'd no more original idea than to take the boat-train to Folkestone they didn't have much difficulty.'

'It isn't true,' said Lady Mary. She stamped. 'It's a lie. He wasn't there. He's innocent. I killed Denis.'

'Fine,' thought Parker, 'fine! Damn Goyles, anyway, what's he done to deserve it?'

Lord Peter said: 'Mary, don't be an ass.'

'Yes,' said the Dowager placidly. 'I was going to suggest to you, Peter, that this Mr Goyles—such a terrible name, Mary dear, I can't say I ever cared for it, even if there had been nothing else against him—especially as he would sign himself Geo. Goyles—G. e. o. you know, Mr Parker, for George, and I never *could* help reading it as Gargoyles—I very nearly wrote to you, my dear, mentioning Mr Goyles, and asking if you could see him in town, because there was something, when I came to think of it, about that ipecacuanha business that made me feel he might have something to do with it.'

'Yes,' said Peter, with a grin, 'you always did find him a bit sickenin', didn't you?'

'How can you, Wimsey?' growled Parker reproachfully, with his eyes on Mary's face.

'Never mind him,' said the girl. 'If you can't be a gentleman, Peter— '

'Damn it all!' cried the invalid explosively. 'Here's a fellow who, without the slightest provocation, plugs a bullet into my shoulder, breaks my collar-bone, brings me up head foremost on a knobbly second-hand brass bedstead and vamooses, and when, in what seems to me jolly mild, parliamentary language, I call him a sickenin' feller my own sister says I'm no gentleman. Look at me! In my own house, forced to sit here with a perfectly beastly headache, and lap up toast and tea, while you people distend and bloat yourselves on mixed grills and omelettes and a damn good vintage claret— '

'Silly boy,' said the Duchess, 'don't get so excited. And it's time for your medicine. Mr Parker, kindly touch the bell.'

Mr Parker obeyed in silence. Lady Mary came slowly across, and stood looking at her brother.

'Peter,' she said, 'what makes you say that *he* did it?'

'Did what?'

'And now?'

'I am going to speak the truth.'

Parker looked at her again. She met his eye frankly, but there was a tenseness in her manner which showed that it had cost her something to make her mind up.

'Very well,' said Parker, 'we shall all be glad of that, for I think there were one or two points at the inquest on which you didn't tell the truth, weren't there?'

'Yes.'

'Do believe,' said Parker, 'that I am sorry to have to ask these questions. The terrible position in which your brother is placed— '

'In which I helped to place him.'

'I don't say that.'

'I do. I helped to put him in jail. Don't say I didn't, because I did.'

'Well,' said Parker, 'don't worry. There's plenty of time to put it all right again. Shall I go on?'

'Yes.'

'Well, now, Lady Mary, it wasn't true about hearing that shot at three o'clock, was it?'

'No.'

'Did you hear the shot at all?'

'Yes.'

'When?'

'At 11:50.'

'What was it, then, Lady Mary, you hid behind the plants in the conservatory?'

'I hid nothing there.'

'And in the oak chest on the landing?'

'My skirt.'

'You went out—why?—to meet Cathcart?'

'Yes.'

'Who was the other man?'

'What other man?'

'The other man who was in the shrubbery. A tall, fair man dressed in a Burberry?'