The third gate was in bad repair. It sagged heavily from its hinges; the hasp was gone, and gate and post had been secured with elaborate twists of wire. Wimsey dismounted and examined these, convincing himself that their rusty surface had not been recently disturbed.

There remained only two more gates before he came to the cross-roads. One led into plough again, where the dark ridge-and-furrow showed no sign of disturbance, but at sight of the last gate Wimsey's heart gave a leap.

There was plough-land here also, but round the edge of the field ran a wide, beaten path, rutted and water-logged. The gate was not locked, but opened simply with a spring catch. Wimsey examined the approach. Among the wide ruts made by farm-wagons was the track of four narrow wheels—the unmistakable prints of rubber tyres. He pushed the gate open and passed through.

The path skirted two sides of the plough; then came another gate and another field, containing a long barrow of mangold wurzels and a couple of barns. At the sound of Polly's hoofs, a man emerged from the nearest barn, with a paint-brush in his hand, and stood watching Wimsey's approach.

''Morning!' said the latter genially.

''Morning, sir.'

'Fine day after the rain.'

'Yes, it is, sir.'

'I hope I'm not trespassing?'

'Where was you wanting to go, sir?'

'I thought, as a matter of fact—hullo!'

'Anything wrong, sir?'

Wimsey shifted in the saddle.

'I fancy this girth's slipped a bit. It's a new one.' (This was a fact.) 'Better have a look.'

The man advanced to investigate, but Wimsey had dismounted and was tugging at the strap, with his head under the mare's belly.

'Yes, it wants taking up a trifle. Oh! Thanks most awfully. Is this a short cut to Abbotts Bolton, by the way?'

'Not to the village, sir, though you can get through this way. It comes out by Mr Mortimer's stables.'

'Ah, yes. This his land?'

'No, sir, it's Mr Topham's land, but Mr Mortimer rents this field and the next for fodder.'

'Oh, yes.' Wimsey peered across the hedge. 'Lucerne, I suppose. Or clover.'

'Clover, sir. And the mangolds is for the cattle.'

'Oh—Mr Mortimer keeps cattle as well as horses?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very jolly. Have a gasper?' Wimsey had sidled across to the barn in his interest, and was gazing absently into its dark interior. It contained a number of farm implements and a black fly of antique construction, which seemed to be undergoing renovation with black varnish. Wimsey pulled some vestas from his pocket. The box was apparently damp, for, after one or two vain attempts he abandoned it, and struck a match on the wall of the barn. The flame, lighting up the ancient fly, showed it to be incongruously fitted with rubber tyres.

'Very fine stud, Mr Mortimer's, I understand,' said Wimsey carelessly.

'Yes, sir, very fine indeed.'

'I suppose he hasn't any greys, by any chance. My mother—queenly woman, Victorian ideas, and all that—is rather keen on greys. Sports a carriage and pay-ah, don't you know.'

'Yes, sir? Well, Mr Mortimer would be able to suit the lady, I think, sir. He has several greys.'

'No? has he though? I must really go over and see him. Is it far?'

'Matter of five or six mile by the fields, sir.'

Wimsey looked at his watch.

'Oh, dear! I'm really afraid it's too far for this morning. I absolutely promised to get back to lunch. I must come over another day. Thanks *so* much. Is that girth right now? Oh, really, I'm immensely obliged. Get yourself a drink, won't you—and tell Mr Mortimer not to sell his greys till I've seen them. Well, *good* morning, and many thanks.'

He set Polly Flinders on the homeward path and trotted gently away. Not till he was out of sight of the barn did he pull up and, stooping from the saddle, thoughtfully examine his boots. They were liberally plastered with bran.

'I must have picked it up in the barn,' said Wimsey. 'Curious, if true. Why should Mr Mortimer be lashing the stuffing out of his greys in an

old fly at dead of night—and with muffled hoofs and no heads to boot? It's not a kind thing to do. It frightened Plunkett very much. It made me think I was drunk—a thought I hate to think. Ought I to tell the police? Are Mr Mortimer's jokes any business of mine? What do *you* think, Polly?'

The mare, hearing her name, energetically shook her head.

'You think not? Perhaps you are right. Let us say that Mr Mortimer did it for a wager. Who am I to interfere with his amusements? All the same,' added his lordship, 'I'm glad to know it wasn't Lumsden's whisky.'

'This is the library,' said Haviland, ushering in his guests. 'A fine room—and a fine collection of books, I'm told, though literature isn't much in my line. It wasn't much in the governor's line, either, I'm afraid. The place wants doing up, as you see. I don't know whether Martin will take it in hand. It's a job that'll cost money, of course.'

Wimsey shivered a little as he gazed round—more from sympathy than from cold, though a white November fog lay curled against the tall windows and filtered damply through the frames.

A long, mouldering room, in the frigid neo-classical style, the library was melancholy enough in the sunless grey afternoon, even without the signs of neglect which wrung the book-collector's heart. The walls, panelled to half their height with book-cases, ran up in plaster to the moulded ceiling. Damp had blotched them into grotesque shapes, and here and there were ugly cracks and squamous patches, from which the plaster had fallen in yellowish flakes. A wet chill seemed to ooze from the books, from the calf bindings peeling and perishing, from the stains of greenish mildew which spread horridly from volume to volume. The curious musty odour of decayed leather and damp paper added to the general cheerlessness of the atmosphere.

'Oh, dear, dear!' said Wimsey, peering dismally into this sepulchre of forgotten learning. With his shoulders hunched like the neck-feathers of a chilly bird, with his long nose and half-shut eyes, he resembled a dilapidated heron, brooding over the stagnation of a wintry pool.

'What a freezing-cold place!' exclaimed Mrs Hancock. 'You really ought to scold Mrs Lovall, Mr Burdock. When she was put in here as

He was pleased with this thought, and tapped his boot cheerfully with his whip.

'But damn it all! They never passed me again. Where did they go to? A coach-and-horses can't vanish into thin air, you know. There must be a side-road after all—or else, Polly Flinders, you've been pulling my leg all the time.'

The bridle-path eventually debouched upon the highway at the now familiar fork where Wimsey had met the policeman. As he slowly ambled homewards, his lordship scanned the left-hand hedgerow, looking for the lane which surely must exist. But nothing rewarded his search. Enclosed fields with padlocked gates presented the only breaks in the hedge, till he again found himself looking down the avenue of trees up which the death-coach had come galloping two nights before.

'Damn!' said Wimsey.

It occurred to him for the first time that the coach might perhaps have turned round and gone back through Little Doddering. Certainly it had been seen by Little Doddering Church on Wednesday. But on that occasion, also, it had galloped off in the direction of Frimpton. In fact, thinking it over, Wimsey concluded that it had approached from Frimpton, gone round the church—widdershins, naturally—by the Back Lane, and returned by the high-road whence it came. But in that case—

'Turn again, Whittington,' said Wimsey, and Polly Flinders rotated obediently in the road. 'Through one of those fields it went, or I'm a Dutchman.'

He pulled Polly into a slow walk, and passed along the strip of grass at the right-hand side, staring at the ground as though he were an Aberdonian who had lost a sixpence.

The first gate led into a ploughed field, harrowed smooth and sown with autumn wheat. It was clear that no wheeled thing had been across it for many weeks. The second gate looked more promising. It gave upon fallow ground, and the entrance was seamed with innumerable wheel-ruts. On further examination, however, it was clear that this was the one and only gate. It seemed unlikely that the mysterious coach should have been taken into a field from which there was no way out. Wimsey decided to seek farther.

if them's your sentiments, I won't do violence to them. But may I ask why, if you're so sensitive about a mere post, you should swallow a death-coach and four headless horses with such hardened equanimity?'

The mare took the shoulder of his jacket gently between her lips and mumbled at it.

'Just so,' said Wimsey. 'I perfectly understand. You would if you could, but you really can't. But those horses, Polly—did they bring with them no brimstone blast from the nethermost pit? Can it be that they really exuded nothing but an honest and familiar smell of stables?'

He mounted, and, turning Polly's head to the right, guided her in a circle, so as to give Dead Man's Post a wide berth before striking the path again.

'The supernatural explanation is, I think, excluded. Not on *a priori* grounds, which would be unsound, but on the evidence of Polly's senses. There remain the alternatives of whisky and jiggery-pokery. Further investigation seems called for.'

He continued to muse as the mare moved quietly forward.

'Supposing I wanted, for some reason, to scare the neighbourhood with the apparition of a coach and headless horses, I should choose a dark, rainy night. Good! It was that kind of night. Now, if I took black horses and painted their bodies white—poor devils! what a state they'd be in. No. How do they do these Maskelyne-and-Devant stunts where they cut off people's heads? White horses, of course—and black felt clothing over their heads. Right! And luminous paint on the harness, with a touch here and there on their bodies, to make good contrast and ensure that the whole show wasn't invisible. No difficulty about that. But they must go silently. Well, why not? Four stout black cloth bags filled with bran, drawn well up and tied round the fetlocks would make any horse go quietly enough, especially if there was a bit of a wind going. Rags round the bridle-rings to prevent clinking, and round the ends of the traces to keep 'em from squeaking. Give 'em a coachman in a white coat and a black mask, hitch 'em to a rubber-tyred fly, picked out with phosphorus and well-oiled at the joints—and I swear I'd make something quite ghostly enough to startle a rather well-irrigated gentleman on a lonely road at half-past two in the morning.'

caretaker, I said to my husband—didn't I, Philip?—that your father had chosen the laziest woman in Little Doddering. She ought to have kept up big fires here, *at least* twice a week! It's really shameful, the way she has let things go.'

'Yes, isn't it?' agreed Haviland.

Wimsey said nothing. He was nosing along the shelves, every now and then taking a volume down and glancing at it.

'It was always rather a depressing room,' went on Haviland. 'I remember, when I was a kid, it used to overawe me rather. Martin and I used to browse about among the books, you know, but I think we were always afraid that something or somebody would stalk out upon us from the dark corners. What's that you've got there, Lord Peter? Oh, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Dear me! How those pictures did terrify me in the old days! And there was a *Pilgrim's Progress*, with a most alarming picture of Apollyon straddling over the whole breadth of the way, which gave me many nightmares. Let me see. It used to live over in this bay, I think. Yes, here it is. How it does bring it all back, to be sure! Is it valuable, by the way?'

'No, not really. But this first edition of Burton is worth money; badly spotted, though—you'd better send it to be cleaned. And this is an extremely fine Boccaccio; take care of it.'

'John Boccace—*The Dance of Machabree*. It's a good title, anyhow. Is that the same Boccaccio that wrote the naughty stories?'

'Yes,' said Wimsey, a little shortly. He resented this attitude towards Boccaccio.

'Never read them,' said Haviland, with a wink at his wife, 'but I've seen 'em in the windows of those surgical shops—so I suppose they're naughty, eh? The vicar's looking shocked.'

'Oh, not at all,' said Mr Hancock, with a conscientious assumption of broad-mindedness. 'Et ego in Arcadia—that is to say, one doesn't enter the Church without undergoing a classical education, and making the acquaintance of much more worldly authors even than Boccaccio. Those wood-cuts are very fine, to my uninstructed eye.'

'Very fine indeed,' said Wimsey.

'There's another old book I remember, with jolly pictures,' said Haviland. 'A chronicle of some sort—what's 'is name—place in Germany—

you know—where that hangman came from. They published his diary the other day. I read it, but it wasn't really exciting; not half as gruesome as old Harrison Ainsworth. What's the name of the place?'

'Nüremberg?' suggested Wimsey.

'That's it, of course—the *Nüremberg Chronicle*. I wonder if that's still in its old place. It was over here by the window, if I remember rightly.'

He led the way to the end of one of the bays, which ran up close against a window. Here the damp seemed to have done its worst. A pane of glass was broken, and rain had blown in.

'Now where has it gone to? A big book, it was, with a stamped leather binding. I'd like to see the old *Chronicle* again. I haven't set eyes on it for donkey's years.'

His glance roamed vaguely over the shelves. Wimsey, with the book-lover's instinct, was the first to spot the *Chronicle*, wedged at the extreme end of the shelf, against the outer wall. He hitched his finger into the top edge of the spine, but finding that the rotting leather was ready to crumble at a touch, he dislodged a neighbouring book and drew the *Chronicle* gently out, using his whole hand.

'Here he is—in pretty bad condition, I'm afraid. Hullo!'

As he drew the book away from the wall, a piece of folded parchment came away with it and fell at his feet. He stooped and picked it up.

'I say, Burdock—isn't this what you've been looking for?'

Haviland Burdock, who had been rooting about on one of the lower shelves, straightened himself quickly, his face red from stooping.

'By Jove!' he said, turning first redder and then pale with excitement. 'Look at this, Winnie. It's the governor's will. What an extraordinary thing! Whoever would have thought of looking for it here, of all places?'

'Is it really the will?' cried Mrs Hancock.

'No doubt about it, I should say,' observed Wimsey coolly. 'Last Will and Testament of Simon Burdock.' He stood, turning the grimy document over and over in his hands, looking from the endorsement to the plain side of the folded parchment.

'Well, well!' said Mr Hancock. 'How strange! It seems almost providential that you should have taken that book down.'

'What does the will say?' demanded Mrs Burdock, in some excitement.

'Queer!' said Wimsey. 'If this is my state of mind communicating itself to my mount, I'd better see a doctor. My nerves must be in a rotten state. Come up, old lady! What's the matter with you?'

Polly Flinders, apologetic but determined, refused to budge. He urged her gently with his heel. She sidled away, with ears laid back, and he saw the white of a protesting eye. He slipped from the saddle, and, putting his hand through the bridle, endeavoured to lead her forward. After a little persuasion, the mare followed him, with stretched neck and treading as though on egg-shells. After a dozen hesitating paces, she stopped again, trembling in all her limbs. He put his hand on her neck and found it wet with sweat.

'Damn it all!' said Wimsey. 'Look here, I'm jolly well going to read what's on that post. If you won't come, will you stand still?'

He dropped the bridle. The mare stood quietly, with hanging head. He left her and went forward, glancing back from time to time to see that she showed no disposition to bolt. She stood quietly enough, however, only shifting her feet uneasily.

Wimsey walked up to the post. It was a stout pillar of ancient oak, newly painted white. The inscription, too, had been recently blacked in. It read:

ON THIS SPOT
GEORGE WINTER
WAS FOULLY MURTHERED
IN DEFENSE OF
HIS MASTER'S GOODS
BY BLACK RALPH
OF HERRIOTTING
WHO WAS AFTERWARD
HANGED IN CHAINS
ON THE PLACE OF HIS CRIME
9 NOVEMBER 1674

FEAR JUSTICE

'And very nice, too,' said Wimsey. 'Dead Man's Post without a doubt. Polly Flinders seems to share the local feeling about the place. Well, Polly,

booked to attend a Board of Guardians' meeting in connection with the workhouse.

'But you could go up and get a good blow on the common,' he suggested. 'Why not go round by Petering Friars, turn off across the common till you get to Dead Man's Post, and come back by the Frimpton road? It makes a very pleasant round—about nineteen miles. You'll be back in nice time for lunch if you take it easy.'

Wimsey fell in with the plan—the more readily that it exactly coincided with his own inward purpose. He had a reason for wishing to ride over the Frimpton road by daylight.

'You'll be careful about Dead Man's Post,' said Mrs Frobisher-Pym a little anxiously. 'The horses have a way of shying at it. I don't know why. People say, of course— '

'All nonsense,' said her husband. 'The villagers dislike the place and that makes the horses nervous. It's remarkable how a rider's feelings communicate themselves to his mount. *I've* never had any trouble at Dead Man's Post.'

It was a quiet and pretty road, even on a November day, that led to Petering Friars. Jogging down the winding Essex lanes in the wintry sunshine, Wimsey felt soothed and happy. A good burst across the common raised his spirits to exhilaration pitch. He had entirely forgotten Dead Man's Post and its uncanny reputation, when a violent start and swerve, so sudden that it nearly unseated him, recalled him to what he was doing. With some difficulty, he controlled Polly Flinders, and brought her to a standstill.

He was at the highest point of the common, following a bridle-path which was bordered on each side by gorse and dead bracken. A little way ahead of him another bridle-path seemed to run into it, and at the junction of the two was something which he had vaguely imagined to be a decayed sign-post. Certainly it was short and thick for a sign-post, and had no arms. It appeared, however, to bear some sort of inscription on the face that was turned towards him.

He soothed the mare, and urged her gently towards the post. She took a few hesitating steps, and plunged sideways, snorting and shivering.

'I beg your pardon,' said Wimsey, handing it over to her. 'Yes, as you say, Mr Hancock, it does almost seem as if I was meant to find it.' He glanced down again at the *Chronicle*, mournfully tracing with his finger the outline of a damp stain which had rotted the cover and spread to the inner pages, almost obliterating the colophon.

Haviland Burdock meanwhile had spread the will out on the nearest table. His wife leaned over his shoulder. The Hancocks, barely controlling their curiosity, stood near, awaiting the result. Wimsey, with an elaborate pretence of non-interference in this family matter, examined the wall against which the *Chronicle* had stood, feeling its moist surface and examining the damp-stains. They had assumed the appearance of a grinning face. He compared them with the corresponding mark on the book, and shook his head desolately over the damage.

Mr Frobisher-Pym, who had wandered away some time before and was absorbed in an ancient book of Farriery, now approached, and enquired what the excitement was about.

'Listen to this!' cried Haviland. His voice was quiet, but a suppressed triumph throbbed in it and glittered from his eyes.

'"I bequeath everything of which I die possessed"—there's a lot of enumeration of properties here, which doesn't matter—"to my eldest son, Martin"— '

Mr Frobisher-Pym whistled.

'Listen! "To my eldest son Martin, for so long as my body shall remain above ground. But so soon as I am buried, I direct that the whole of this property shall revert to my younger son Haviland absolutely"— '

'Good God!' said Mr Frobisher-Pym.

'There's a lot more,' said Haviland, 'but that's the gist of it.'

'Let me see,' said the magistrate.

He took the will from Haviland, and read it through with a frowning face.

'That's right,' he said. 'No possible doubt about it. Martin has had his property and lost it again. How very curious. Up till yesterday everything belonged to him, though nobody knew it. Now it is all yours, Burdock. This certainly is the strangest will I ever saw. Just fancy that. Martin the heir, up to the time of the funeral. And now—well, Burdock, I must congratulate you.'

'Thank you,' said Haviland. 'It is very unexpected.' He laughed unsteadily.

'But what a queer idea!' cried Mrs Burdock. 'Suppose Martin had been at home. It almost seems a mercy that he wasn't, doesn't it? I mean, it would all have been so awkward. What would have happened if he had tried to stop the funeral, for instance?'

'Yes,' said Mrs Hancock. 'Could he have done anything? Who decides about funerals?'

'The executors, as a rule,' said Mr Frobisher-Pym.

'Who are the executors in this case?' enquired Wimsey.

'I don't know. Let me see.' Mr Frobisher-Pym examined the document again. 'Ah, yes! Here we are. 'I appoint my two sons, Martin and Haviland, joint executors of this my will.' What an extraordinary arrangement.'

'I call it a wicked, un-Christian arrangement,' cried Mrs Hancock. 'It might have caused dreadful mischief if the will hadn't been—quite providentially—lost!'

'Hush, my dear!' said her husband.

'I'm afraid,' said Haviland grimly, 'that that was my father's idea. It's no use my pretending he wasn't spiteful; he was, and I believe he hated both Martin and me like poison.'

'Don't say that,' pleaded the vicar.

'I do say it. He made our lives a burden to us, and he obviously wanted to go on making them a burden after he was dead. If he'd seen us cutting each other's throats, he'd only have been too pleased. Come, vicar, it's no use pretending. He hated our mother and was jealous of us. Everybody knows that. It probably pleased his unpleasant sense of humour to think of us squabbling over his body. Fortunately, he over-reached himself when he hid the will here. He's buried now, and the problem settles itself.'

'Are you quite sure of that?' said Wimsey.

'Why, of course,' said the magistrate. 'The property goes to Mr Haviland Burdock as soon as his father's body is underground. Well, his father was buried yesterday.'

'But are you sure of *that*?' repeated Wimsey. He looked from one to the other quizzically, his long lips curling into something like a grin.

'Sure of that?' exclaimed the vicar. 'My dear Lord Peter, you were present at the funeral. You saw him buried yourself.'

Mrs Hancock interposed and said, wouldn't Lord Peter come to tea at the vicarage first.

Wimsey said it was very good of her.

'Then that's settled,' said Mrs Burdock. 'You and Mr Pym come to tea, and then we'll all go over the house together. I've hardly seen it myself yet.'

'It's very well worth seeing,' said Mr Frobisher-Pym. 'Fine old place, but takes some money to keep up. Has nothing been seen of the will yet, Mr Burdock?'

'Nothing whatever,' said Haviland. 'It's curious, because Mr Graham—the solicitor, you know, Lord Peter—certainly drew one up, just after poor Martin's unfortunate difference with our father. He remembers it perfectly.'

'Can't he remember what's in it?'

'He could, of course, but he doesn't think it etiquette to say. He's one of the crusted old type. Poor Martin always called him an old scoundrel—but then, of course, he never approved of Martin, so Martin was not altogether unprejudiced. Besides, as Mr Graham says, all that was some years ago, and it's quite possible that the governor destroyed the will later, or made a new one in America.'

''Poor Martin' doesn't seem to have been popular hereabouts,' said Wimsey to Mr Frobisher-Pym, as they parted from the Burdocks and turned homewards.

'N-no,' said the magistrate. 'Not with Graham, anyway. Personally, I rather liked the lad, though he was a bit harum-scarum. I dare say he's sobered up with time—and marriage. It's odd that they can't find the will. But, if it was made at the time of the rumpus, it's bound to be in Haviland's favour.'

'I think Haviland thinks so,' said Wimsey. 'His manner seemed to convey a chastened satisfaction. I expect the discreet Graham made it fairly clear that the advantage was not with the unspeakable Martin.'

The following morning turned out fine, and Wimsey, who was supposed to be enjoying a rest-and-fresh-air cure in Little Doddering, petitioned for a further loan of Polly Flinders. His host consented with pleasure, and only regretted that he could not accompany his guest, being

'I've heard of you, my lord,' said the constable, gratified, 'and I'm sure it's very kind of your lordship. Well, I suppose I'd best be getting along now. You leave it to me, Mr Frobisher-Pym, sir; we'll soon get at the bottom of this here.'

'I hope you do,' said the magistrate. 'Meanwhile, Mr Hancock, I trust you will realise the inadvisability of leaving the church doors open at night. Well, come along, Wimsey; we'll leave them to get the church straight for the funeral. What have you found there?'

'Nothing,' said Wimsey, who had been peering at the floor of the Lady-chapel. 'I was afraid you'd got the worm in here, but I see it's only sawdust.' He dusted his fingers as he spoke, and followed Mr Frobisher-Pym out of the building.

When you are staying in a village, you are expected to take part in the interests and amusements of the community. Accordingly, Lord Peter duly attended the funeral of Squire Burdock, and beheld the coffin safely committed to the ground, in a drizzle, certainly, but not without the attendance of a large and reverent congregation. After this ceremony, he was formally introduced to Mr and Mrs Haviland Burdock, and was able to confirm his previous impression that the lady was well, not to say too well, dressed, as might be expected from one whose wardrobe was based upon silk stockings. She was a handsome woman, in a large, bold style, and the hand that clasped Wimsey's was quite painfully encrusted with diamonds. Haviland was disposed to be friendly—and, indeed, silk manufacturers have no reason to be otherwise to rich men of noble birth. He seemed to be aware of Wimsey's reputation as an antiquarian and book-collector, and extended a hearty invitation to him to come and see the old house.

'My brother Martin is still abroad,' he said, 'but I'm sure he would be delighted to have you come and look at the place. I'm told there are some very fine old books in the library. We shall be staying here till Monday—if Mrs Hancock will be good enough to have us. Suppose you come along to-morrow afternoon.'

Wimsey said he would be delighted.

'I saw his coffin buried,' said Wimsey mildly. 'That the body was in it is merely an unverified inference.'

'I think,' said Mr Frobisher-Pym, 'this is rather an unseemly kind of jest. There is no reason to imagine that the body was not in the coffin.'

'I saw it in the coffin,' said Haviland, 'and so did my wife.'

'And so did I,' said the vicar. 'I was present when it was transferred from the temporary shell in which it crossed over from the States to a permanent lead-and-oak coffin provided by Joliffe. And, if further witnesses are necessary, you can easily get Joliffe himself and his men, who put the body in and screwed it down.'

'Just so,' said Wimsey. 'I'm not denying that the body was in the coffin when the coffin was placed in the chapel. I only doubt whether it was there when it was put in the ground.'

'That is a most unheard-of suggestion to make, Lord Peter,' said Mr Frobisher-Pym, with severity. 'May I ask if you have anything to go upon? And, if the body is not in the grave, perhaps you wouldn't mind telling us where you imagine it to be?'

'Not at all,' said Wimsey. He perched himself on the edge of the table and sat, swinging his legs and looking down at his own hands, as he ticked his points off on his fingers.

'I think,' he said, 'that this story begins with young Rawlinson. He is a clerk in the office of Mr Graham, who drew up this will, and I fancy he knows something about its conditions. So, of course, does Mr Graham, but I don't somehow suspect *him* of being mixed up in this. From what I can hear, he is not a man to take sides—or not Mr Martin's side, at any rate.

When the news of Mr Burdock's death was cabled over from the States, I think young Rawlinson remembered the terms of the will, and considered that Mr Martin—being abroad and all that—would be rather at a disadvantage. Rawlinson must be rather attached to your brother, by the way— '

'Martin always had a way of picking up good-for-nothing youths and wasting his time with them,' agreed Haviland sulkily.

The vicar seemed to feel that this statement needed some amendment, and murmured that he had always heard how good Martin was with the village lads.

'Quite so,' said Wimsey. 'Well, I think young Rawlinson wanted to give Martin an equal chance of securing the legacy, don't you see. He didn't like to say anything about the will—which might or might not turn up—and possibly he thought that even if it did turn up there might be difficulties. Well, anyway, he decided that the best thing to do was to steal the body and keep it above-ground till Martin came home to see to things himself.'

'This is an extraordinary accusation,' began Mr Frobisher-Pym.

'I dare say I'm mistaken,' said Wimsey, 'but it's just my idea. It makes a damn good story, anyhow—you see! Well, then, young Rawlinson saw that this was too big a job to carry out alone, so he looked round for somebody to help him. And he pitched on Mr Mortimer.'

'Mortimer?'

'I don't know Mr Mortimer personally, but he seems to be a sportin' sort of customer from what I can hear, with certain facilities which everybody hasn't got. Young Rawlinson and Mortimer put their heads together and worked out a plan of action. Of course, Mr Hancock, you helped them enormously with this lying-in-state idea of yours. Without that, I don't know if they could have worked it.'

Mr Hancock made an embarrassed clucking sound.

'The idea was this. Mortimer was to provide an antique fly and four white horses, made up with luminous paint and black cloth to represent the Burdock death-coach. The advantage of that idea was that nobody would feel inclined to inspect the turn-out too closely if they saw it hangin' round the churchyard at unearthly hours. Meanwhile, young Rawlinson had to get himself accepted as a watcher for the chapel, and to find a sporting companion to watch with him and take a hand in the game. He fixed things up with the publican-fellow, and spun a tale for Mr Hancock, so as to get the vigil from four to six. Didn't it strike you as odd, Mr Hancock, that he should be so keen to come all the way from Herriotting?'

'I am accustomed to find keenness in my congregation,' said Mr Hancock stiffly.

'Yes, but Rawlinson didn't belong to your congregation. Anyway it was all worked out, and there was a dress-rehearsal on the Wednesday night, which frightened your man Plunkett into fits, sir.'

'If I thought this was true— ' said Mr Frobisher-Pym.

'It doesn't seem a sensible thing to do, certainly.'

'No, sir. And'—the constable leaned close to Wimsey and spoke into his ear—'and Mr Mortimer is a man that's got a head on his shoulders—*and, what's more, so have his horses*.'

'Why,' said Wimsey, a little startled by the aptness of this remark, 'did you ever know a horse that hadn't?'

'No, sir,' said the policeman, with emphasis, 'I never knew no *livin'* horse that hadn't. But that's neether here nor there, as the sayin' goes. But as to this church business, that's just a bit of a lark got up among the boys, that's what that is. They don't mean no harm, you know, sir; they likes to be up to their tricks. It's all very well for the vicar to talk, sir, but this ain't no Kensitites nor anythink of that, as you can see with half an eye. Just a bit of fun, that's all it is.'

'I'd come to the same conclusion myself,' said Wimsey, interested, 'but I'd rather like to know what makes you think so.'

'Lord bless you, sir, ain't it plain as the nose on your face? If it had a-bin these Kensitites, wouldn't they have gone for the crosses and the images and the lights and—that there?" He extended a horny finger in the direction of the tabernacle. "No, sir, these lads what did this ain't laid a finger on the things what you might call sacred images—and they ain't done no harm neether to the communion-table. So I says as it ain't a case of con*trou*versy, but more a bit of fun, like. And they've treated Mr Burdock's corpse respectful, sir, you see, too. That shows they wasn't meaning anything wrong at heart, don't you see?'

'I agree absolutely,' said Wimsey. 'In fact, they've taken particular care not to touch anything that a churchman holds really sacred. How long have you been on this job, officer?'

'Three years, sir, come February.'

'Ever had any idea of going to town or taking up the detective side of the business?'

'Well, sir—I have—but it isn't just ask and have, as you might say.'

Wimsey took a card from his note-case.

'If you ever think seriously about it,' he said, 'give this card to Chief Inspector Parker, and have a chat with him. Tell him I think you haven't got opportunities enough down here. He's a great friend of mine, and he'll give you a good chance, I know.'