'A very painful matter, Lord Peter. You will forgive me for hoping you and Mr Parker may be mistaken.'

'I should like to be able to hope so too.'

Something heaving, straining, coming up out of the ground.

'Steady, men. This way. Can you see? Be careful of the graves—they lie pretty thick hereabouts. Are you ready?'

'Right you are, sir. You go on with the lantern. We can follow you.'

Lumbering footsteps. Catch hold of Parker's trench-coat again. 'That you, old man? Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr Levett—thought you were Parker.'

'Hullo, Wimsey—here you are.'

More graves. A headstone shouldered crookedly aslant. A trip and jerk over the edge of the rough grass. The squeal of gravel under your feet.

'This way, gentlemen, mind the step.'

The mortuary. Raw red brick and sizzling gas-jets. Two women in black, and Dr Grimbold. The coffin laid on the table with a heavy thump.

''Ave you got that there screw-driver, Bill? Thank 'ee. Be keerful wi' the chisel now. Not much substance to these 'ere boards, sir.'

Several long creaks. A sob. The Duchess's voice, kind but peremptory.

'Hush, Christine. You mustn't cry.'

A mutter of voices. The lurching departure of the Dante demons—good, decent demons in corduroy.

Dr Grimbold's voice—cool and detached as if in the consulting room.

'Now—have you got that lamp, Mr Wingate? Thank you. Yes, here on the table, please. Be careful not to catch your elbow in the flex, Mr Levett. It would be better, I think, if you came on this side. Yes—yes—thank you. That's excellent.'

The sudden brilliant circle of an electric lamp over the table. Dr Grimbold's beard and spectacles. Mr Levett blowing his nose. Parker bending close. The Master of the Workhouse peering over him. The rest of the room in the enhanced dimness of the gas-jets and the fog.

A low murmur of voices. All heads bent over the work.

Dr Grimbold again—beyond the circle of the lamplight.

'We don't want to distress you unnecessarily, Lady Levy. If you will just tell us what to look for—the—? Yes, yes, certainly—and—yes—stopped with gold? Yes—the lower jaw, the last but one on the right? Yes—no teeth missing

—no—yes? What kind of a mole? Yes—just over the left breast? Oh, I beg your pardon, just under—yes—appendicitis? Yes—a long one—yes—in the middle? Yes, I quite understand—a scar on the arm? Yes, I don't know if we shall be able to find that—yes—any little constitutional weakness that might—? Oh, yes—arthritis—yes—thank you, Lady Levy—that's very clear. Don't come unless I ask you to. Now, Wingate.'

A pause. A murmur. 'Pulled out? After death, you think—well, so do I. Where is Dr Colegrove? You attended this man in the workhouse? Yes. Do you recollect—? No? You're quite certain about that? Yes—we mustn't make a mistake, you know. Yes, but there are reasons why Sir Julian can't be present; I'm asking *you*, Dr Colegrove. Well, you're certain—that's all I want to know. Just bring the light closer, Mr Wingate, if you please. These miserable shells let the damp in so quickly. Ah! what do you make of this? Yes—yes—well, that's rather unmistakable, isn't it? Who did the head? Oh, Freke—of course. I was going to say they did good work at St Luke's. Beautiful, isn't it, Dr Colegrove? A wonderful surgeon—I saw him when he was at Guy's. Oh, no, gave it up years ago. Nothing like keeping your hand in. Ah—yes, undoubtedly that's it. Have you a towel handy, sir? Thank you. Over the head, if you please—I think we might have another here. Now, Lady Levy—I am going to ask you to look at a scar, and see if you recognise it. I'm sure you are going to help us by being very firm. Take your time—you won't see anything more than you absolutely must.'

'Lucy, don't leave me.'

'No, dear.'

A space cleared at the table. The lamplight on the Duchess's white hair.

'Oh, yes—oh, yes! No, no—I couldn't be mistaken. There's that funny little kink in it. I've seen it hundreds of times. Oh, Lucy—Reuben!'

'Only a moment more, Lady Levy. The mole— '

'I—I think so—oh, yes, that is the very place.'

'Yes. And the scar—was it three-cornered, just above the elbow?'

'Yes, oh, yes.'

'Is this it?'

'Yes—yes— '

'I must ask you definitely, Lady Levy. Do you, from these three marks identify the body as that of your husband?'

'Oh! I must, mustn't I? Nobody else could have them just the same in just those places? It is my husband. It is Reuben. Oh— '

'Thank you, Lady Levy. You have been very brave and very helpful.'

'But—I don't understand yet. How did he come here? Who did this dreadful thing?'

'Hush, dear,' said the Duchess; 'the man is going to be punished.'

'Oh, but—how cruel! Poor Reuben! Who could have wanted to hurt him? Can I see his face?'

'No, dear,' said the Duchess. 'That isn't possible. Come away—you mustn't distress the doctors and people.'

'No—no—they've all been so kind. Oh, Lucy!'

'We'll go home, dear. You don't want us any more, Dr Grimbold?'

'No, Duchess, thank you. We are very grateful to you and to Lady Levy for coming.'

There was a pause, while the two women went out, Parker, collected and helpful, escorting them to their waiting car. Then Dr Grimbold again:

'I think Lord Peter Wimsey ought to see—the correctness of his deductions—Lord Peter—very painful—you may wish to see—yes, I was uneasy at the inquest—yes—Lady Levy—remarkably clear evidence—yes—most shocking case—ah, here's Mr Parker—you and Lord Peter Wimsey entirely justified—do I really understand—? Really? I can hardly believe it—so distinguished a man—as you say, when a great brain turns to crime—yes—look here! Marvellous work—marvellous—somewhat obscured by this time, of course—but the most beautiful sections—here, you see, the left hemisphere—and here—through the corpus striatum—here again—the very track of the damage done by the blow—wonderful—guessed it—saw the effect of the blow as he struck it, you know—ah, I should like to see *his* brain, Mr Parker—and to think that—heavens, Lord Peter, you don't know what a blow you have struck at the whole profession—the whole civilized world! Oh, my dear sir! Can you ask me? My lips are sealed of course—all our lips are sealed.'

The way back through the burial ground. Fog again, and the squeal of wet gravel.

'Are your men ready, Charles?'

'They have gone. I sent them off when I saw Lady Levy to the car.'

'Who is with them?'

Chapter 12

THE vile, raw fog tore your throat and ravaged your eyes. You could not see your feet. You stumbled in your walk over poor men's graves.

The feel of Parker's old trench-coat beneath your fingers was comforting. You had felt it in worse places. You clung on now for fear you should get separated. The dim people moving in front of you were like Brocken spectres.

'Take care, gentlemen,' said a toneless voice out of the yellow darkness, 'there's an open grave just hereabouts.'

You bore away to the right, and floundered in a mass of freshly turned clay.

'Hold up, old man,' said Parker.

'Where is Lady Levy?'

'In the mortuary; the Duchess of Denver is with her. Your mother is wonderful, Peter.'

'Isn't she?' said Lord Peter.

A dim blue light carried by somebody ahead wavered and stood still.

'Here you are,' said a voice.

Two Dantesque shapes with pitchforks loomed up.

'Have you finished?' asked somebody.

'Nearly done, sir.' The demons fell to work again with the pitchforks—no, spades.

Somebody sneezed. Parker located the sneezer and introduced him.

'Mr Levett represents the Home Secretary. Lord Peter Wimsey. We are sorry to drag you out on such a day, Mr Levett.'

'It's all in the day's work,' said Mr Levett, hoarsely. He was muffled to the eyes.

The sound of the spades for many minutes. An iron noise of tools thrown down. Demons stooping and straining.

A black-bearded spectre at your elbow. Introduced. The Master of the Workhouse.

'Sugg.'

'Sugg?'

'Yes—poor devil. They've had him up on the mat at headquarters for bungling the case. All that evidence of Thipps's about the night club was corroborated, you know. That girl he gave the gin-and-bitters to was caught, and came and identified him, and they decided their case wasn't good enough, and let Thipps and the Horrocks girl go. Then they told Sugg he had overstepped his duty and ought to have been more careful. So he ought, but he can't help being a fool. I was sorry for him. It may do him some good to be in at the death. After all, Peter, you and I had special advantages.'

'Yes. Well, it doesn't matter. Whoever goes won't get there in time. Sugg's as good as another.'

But Sugg—an experience rare in his career—was in time.

Parker and Lord Peter were at 110 Piccadilly. Lord Peter was playing Bach and Parker was reading Origen when Sugg was announced.

'We've got our man, sir,' said he.

'Good God!' said Peter. 'Alive?'

'We were just in time, my lord. We rang the bell and marched straight up past his man to the library. He was sitting there doing some writing. When we came in, he made a grab for his hypodermic, but we were too quick for him, my lord. We didn't mean to let him slip through our hands, having got so far. We searched him thoroughly and marched him off.'

'He is actually in gaol, then?'

'Oh, yes—safe enough—with two warders to see he doesn't make away with himself.'

'You surprise me, Inspector. Have a drink.'

'Thank you, my lord. I may say that I'm very grateful to you—this case was turning out a pretty bad egg for me. If I was rude to your lordship— '

'Oh, it's all right, Inspector,' said Lord Peter, hastily. 'I don't see how you could possibly have worked it out. I had the good luck to know something about it from other sources.'

'That's what Freke says.' Already the great surgeon was a common criminal in the inspector's eyes—a mere surname. 'He was writing a full confession when we got hold of him, addressed to your lordship. The police will have to

have it, of course, but seeing it's written for you, I brought it along for you to see first. Here it is.'

He handed Lord Peter a bulky document.

'Thanks,' said Peter. 'Like to hear it, Charles?'

'Rather.'

Accordingly Lord Peter read it aloud.

the other day at that Battersea inquest. You should have been there. It would have interested you.'

Sir Julian got up and went into a small surgery leading out of the consulting-room. Lord Peter watched him moving about—boiling something and writing. Presently he returned with a paper and a hypodermic syringe.

'Here is the prescription. And now, if you will just roll up your sleeve, I will deal with the necessity of the immediate moment.'

Lord Peter obediently rolled up his sleeve. Sir Julian Freke selected a portion of his forearm and anointed it with iodine.

'What's that you're goin' to stick into me. Bugs?'

The surgeon laughed.

'Not exactly,' he said. He pinched up a portion of flesh between his finger and thumb. 'You've had this kind of thing before, I expect.'

'Oh, yes,' said Lord Peter. He watched the cool fingers, fascinated, and the steady approach of the needle. 'Yes—I've had it before—and, d'you know—I don't care frightfully about it.'

He had brought up his right hand, and it closed over the surgeon's wrist like a vice.

The silence was like a shock. The blue eyes did not waver; they burned down steadily upon the heavy white lids below them. Then these slowly lifted; the grey eyes met the blue—coldly, steadily—and held them.

When lovers embrace, there seems no sound in the world but their own breathing. So the two men breathed face to face.

'As you like, of course, Lord Peter,' said Sir Julian, courteously.

'Afraid I'm rather a silly ass,' said Lord Peter, 'but I never could abide these little gadgets. I had one once that went wrong and gave me a rotten bad time. They make me a bit nervous.'

'In that case,' replied Sir Julian, 'it would certainly be better not to have the injection. It might rouse up just those sensations which we are desirous of avoiding. You will take the prescription, then, and do what you can to lessen the immediate strain as far as possible.'

'Oh, yes—I'll take it easy, thanks,' said Lord Peter. He rolled his sleeve down neatly. 'I'm much obliged to you. If I have any further trouble I'll look in again.'

'Do—do—' said Sir Julian, cheerfully. 'Only make an appointment another time. I'm rather rushed these days. I hope your mother is quite well. I saw her

Chapter 13

Dear Lord Peter—When I was a young man I used to play chess with an old friend of my father's. He was a very bad, and a very slow, player, and he could never see when a checkmate was inevitable, but insisted on playing every move out. I never had any patience with that kind of attitude, and I will freely admit now that the game is yours. I must either stay at home and be hanged or escape abroad and live in an idle and insecure obscurity. I prefer to acknowledge defeat.

If you have read my book on *Criminal Lunacy,* you will remember that I wrote: 'In the majority of cases, the criminal betrays himself by some abnormality attendant upon this pathological condition of the nervous tissues. His mental instability shows itself in various forms: an overweening vanity, leading him to brag of his achievement; a disproportionate sense of the importance of the offence, resulting from the hallucination of religion, and driving him to confession; egomania, producing the sense of horror or conviction of sin, and driving him to headlong flight without covering his tracks; a reckless confidence, resulting in the neglect of the most ordinary precautions, as in the case of Henry Wainwright, who left a boy in charge of the murdered woman's remains while he went to call a cab, or on the other hand, a nervous distrust of apperceptions in the past, causing him to revisit the scene of the crime to assure himself that all traces have been as safely removed as *his own judgment knows them to be.* I will not hesitate to assert that a perfectly sane man, not intimidated by religious or other delusions, could always render himself perfectly secure from detection, provided, that is, that the crime were sufficiently premeditated and that he were not pressed for time or thrown out in his calculations by purely fortuitous coincidence.'

You know as well as I do, how far I have made this assertion good in practice. The two accidents which betrayed me, I could not by any possibility have foreseen. The first was the chance recognition of Levy by the girl in the Battersea Park Road, which suggested a connection between the two problems. The second was that Thipps should have arranged to go down to Denver on

the Tuesday morning, thus enabling your mother to get word of the matter through to you before the body was removed by the police and to suggest a motive for the murder out of what she knew of my previous personal history. If I had been able to destroy these two accidentally forged links of circumstance, I will venture to say that you would never have so much as suspected me, still less obtained sufficient evidence to convict.

Of all human emotions, except perhaps those of hunger and fear, the sexual appetite produces the most violent, and, under some circumstances, the most persistent reactions; I think, however, I am right in saying that at the time when I wrote my book, my original sensual impulse to kill Sir Reuben Levy had already become profoundly modified by my habits of thought. To the animal lust to slay and the primitive human desire for revenge, there was added the rational intention of substantiating my own theories for the satisfaction of myself and the world. If all had turned out as I had planned, I should have deposited a sealed account of my experiment with the Bank of England, instructing my executors to publish it after my death. Now that accident has spoiled the completeness of my demonstration, I entrust the account to you, whom it cannot fail to interest, with the request that you will make it known among scientific men, in justice to my professional reputation.

The really essential factors of success in any undertaking are money and opportunity, and as a rule, the man who can make the first can make the second. During my early career, though I was fairly well-off, I had not absolute command of circumstance. Accordingly I devoted myself to my profession, and contented myself with keeping up a friendly connection with Reuben Levy and his family. This enabled me to remain in touch with his fortunes and interests, so that, when the moment for action should arrive, I might know what weapons to use.

Meanwhile, I carefully studied criminology in fiction and fact—my work on *Criminal Lunacy* was a side-product of this activity—and saw how, in every murder, the real crux of the problem was the disposal of the body. As a doctor, the means of death were always ready to my hand, and I was not likely to make any error in that connection. Nor was I likely to betray myself on account of any illusory sense of wrong-doing. The sole difficulty would be that of destroying all connection between my personality and that of the corpse. You will remember that Michael Finsbury, in Stevenson's entertaining

'Yes. The old wounds are nearly healed, but not quite. The ordinary exercise of your mental faculties has no bad effect. It is only when you excite the injured part of your brain.'

'Yes, I see.'

'Yes. You must avoid these occasions. You must learn to be irresponsible, Lord Peter.'

'My friends say I'm only too irresponsible already.'

'Very likely. A sensitive nervous temperament often appears so, owing to its mental nimbleness.'

'Oh!'

'Yes. This particular responsibility you were speaking of still rests upon you?'

'Yes, it does.'

'You have not yet completed the course of action on which you have decided?'

'Not yet.'

'You feel bound to carry it through?'

'Oh, yes—I can't back out of it now.'

'No. You are expecting further strain?'

'A certain amount.'

'Do you expect it to last much longer?'

'Very little longer now.'

'Ah! Your nerves are not all they should be.'

'No?'

'No. Nothing to be alarmed about, but you must exercise care while undergoing this strain, and afterwards you should take a complete rest. How about a voyage in the Mediterranean or the South Seas or somewhere?'

'Thanks. I'll think about it.'

'Meanwhile, to carry you over the immediate trouble I will give you something to strengthen your nerves. It will do you no permanent good, you understand, but it will tide you over the bad time. And I will give you a prescription.'

'Thank you.'

'What's it do?'

'Well—it tells me about your nervous reactions. Will you sit here?'

The examination that followed was purely medical. When it was concluded, Sir Julian said:

'Now, Lord Peter, I'll tell you about yourself in quite untechnical language— '

'Thanks,' said Peter, 'that's kind of you. I'm an awful fool about long words.'

'Yes. Are you fond of private theatricals, Lord Peter?'

'Not particularly,' said Peter, genuinely surprised. 'Awful bore as a rule. Why?'

'I thought you might be,' said the specialist, drily. 'Well, now. You know quite well that the strain you put on your nerves during the war has left its mark on you. It has left what I may call old wounds in your brain. Sensations received by your nerve-endings sent messages to your brain, and produced minute physical changes there—changes we are only beginning to be able to detect, even with our most delicate instruments. These changes in their turn set up sensations; or I should say, more accurately, that sensations are the names we give to these changes of tissue when we perceive them: we call them horror, fear, sense of responsibility and so on.'

'Yes, I follow you.'

'Very well. Now, if you stimulate those damaged places in your brain again, you run the risk of opening up the old wounds. I mean, that if you get nerve-sensations of any kind producing the reactions which we call horror, fear, and sense of responsibility, they may go on to make disturbance right along the old channel, and produce in their turn physical changes which you will call by the names you were accustomed to associate with them—dread of German mines, responsibility for the lives of your men, strained attention and the inability to distinguish small sounds through the overpowering noise of guns.'

'I see.'

'This effect would be increased by extraneous circumstances producing other familiar physical sensations—night, cold or the rattling of heavy traffic, for instance.'

'Yes.'

romance, observes: 'What hangs people is the unfortunate circumstance of guilt.' It became clear to me that the mere leaving about of a superfluous corpse could convict nobody, provided that nobody was guilty in connection *with that particular corpse*. Thus the idea of substituting the one body for the other was early arrived at, though it was not till I obtained the practical direction of St Luke's Hospital that I found myself perfectly unfettered in the choice and handling of dead bodies. From this period on, I kept a careful watch on all the material brought in for dissection.

My opportunity did not present itself until the week before Sir Reuben's disappearance, when the medical officer at the Chelsea workhouse sent word to me that an unknown vagrant had been injured that morning by the fall of a piece of scaffolding, and was exhibiting some very interesting nervous and cerebral reactions. I went round and saw the case, and was immediately struck by the man's strong superficial resemblance to Sir Reuben. He had been heavily struck on the back of the neck, dislocating the fourth and fifth cervical vertebrae and heavily bruising the spinal cord. It seemed highly unlikely that he could ever recover, either mentally or physically, and in any case there appeared to me to be no object in indefinitely prolonging so unprofitable an existence. He had obviously been able to support life until recently, as he was fairly well nourished, but the state of his feet and clothing showed that he was unemployed, and under present conditions he was likely to remain so. I decided that he would suit my purpose very well, and immediately put in train certain transactions in the City which I had already sketched out in my own mind. In the meantime, the reactions mentioned by the workhouse doctor were interesting, and I made careful studies of them, and arranged for the delivery of the body to the hospital when I should have completed my preparations.

On the Thursday and Friday of that week I made private arrangements with various brokers to buy the stock of certain Peruvian Oil-fields, which had gone down almost to waste-paper. This part of my experiment did not cost me very much, but I contrived to arouse considerable curiosity, and even a mild excitement. At this point I was of course careful not to let my name appear. The incidence of Saturday and Sunday gave me some anxiety lest my man should after all die before I was ready for him, but by the use of saline

injections I contrived to keep him alive and, late on Sunday night, he even manifested disquieting symptoms of at any rate a partial recovery.

On Monday morning the market in Peruvians opened briskly. Rumours had evidently got about that somebody knew something, and this day I was not the only buyer in the market. I bought a couple of hundred more shares in my own name, and left the matter to take care of itself. At lunch time I made my arrangements to run into Levy accidentally at the corner of the Mansion House. He expressed (as I expected) his surprise at seeing me in that part of London. I simulated some embarrassment and suggested that we should lunch together. I dragged him to a place a bit off the usual beat, and there ordered a good wine and drank of it as much as he might suppose sufficient to induce a confidential mood. I asked him how things were going on 'Change. He said, 'Oh, all right,' but appeared a little doubtful, and asked me whether I did anything in that way. I said I had a little flutter occasionally, and that, as a matter of fact, I'd been put on to rather a good thing. I glanced round apprehensively at this point, and shifted my chair nearer to his.

'I suppose you don't know anything about Peruvian Oil, do you?' he said.

I started and looked round again, and leaning across to him, said, dropping my voice:

'Well, I do, as a matter of fact, but I don't want it to get about. I stand to make a good bit on it.'

'But I thought the thing was hollow,' he said; 'it hasn't paid a dividend for umpteen years.'

'No,' I said, 'it hasn't, but it's going to. I've got inside information.' He looked a bit unconvinced, and I emptied off my glass, and edged right up to his ear.

'Look here,' I said, 'I'm not giving this away to everyone, but I don't mind doing you and Christine a good turn. You know, I've always kept a soft place in my heart for her, ever since the old days. You got in ahead of me that time, and now it's up to me to heap coals of fire on you both.'

I was a little excited by this time, and he thought I was drunk.

'It's very kind of you, old man,' he said, 'but I'm a cautious bird, you know, always was. I'd like a bit of proof.'

And he shrugged up his shoulders and looked like a pawnbroker.

'I don't know that that was in my mind at the time.'

'No—it was a case in which you could not possibly consider yourself.'

'If you like to put it that way.'

'Quite so. Yes. You had these attacks frequently in 1918?'

'Yes—I was very ill for some months.'

'Quite. Since then they have recurred less frequently?'

'Much less frequently.'

'Yes—when did the last occur?'

'About nine months ago.'

'Under what circumstances?'

'I was being worried by certain family matters. It was a question of deciding about some investments, and I was largely responsible.'

'Yes. You were interested last year, I think, in some police case?'

'Yes—in the recovery of Lord Attenbury's emerald necklace.'

'That involved some severe mental exercise?'

'I suppose so. But I enjoyed it very much.'

'Yes. Was the exertion of solving the problem attended by any bad results physically?'

'None.'

'No. You were interested, but not distressed.'

'Exactly.'

'Yes. You have been engaged in other investigations of the kind?'

'Yes. Little ones.'

'With bad results for your health?'

'Not a bit of it. On the contrary. I took up these cases as a sort of distraction. I had a bad knock just after the war, which didn't make matters any better for me, don't you know.'

'Ah! you are not married?'

'No.'

'No. Will you allow me to make an examination? Just come a little nearer to the light. I want to see your eyes. Whose advice have you had till now?'

'Sir James Hodges'.'

'Ah! yes—he was a sad loss to the medical profession. A really great man—a true scientist. Yes. Thank you. Now I should like to try you with this little invention.'