'One was caught in the gutter just above Thipps's bathroom window, another in a crack of the stone parapet just over it, and the rest came from the chimney-stack behind, where they had caught in an iron stanchion. What do you make of them?'

Lord Peter scrutinized them very carefully through his lens.

'Interesting,' he said, 'damned interesting. Have you developed those plates, Bunter?' he added, as that discreet assistant came in with the post.

'Yes, my lord.'

'Caught anything?'

'I don't know whether to call it anything or not, my lord,' said Bunter, dubiously. 'I'll bring the prints in.'

'Do,' said Wimsey. 'Hallo! here's our advertisement about the gold chain in the *Times*—very nice it looks: "Write, 'phone or call 110, Piccadilly." Perhaps it would have been safer to put a box number, though I always think that the franker you are with people, the more you're likely to deceive 'em; so unused is the modern world to the open hand and the guileless heart, what?'

'But you don't think the fellow who left that chain on the body is going to give himself away by coming here and inquiring about it?'

'I don't, fathead,' said Lord Peter, with the easy politeness of the real aristocracy; 'that's why I've tried to get hold of the jeweller who originally sold the chain. See?' He pointed to the paragraph. 'It's not an old chain—hardly worn at all. Oh, thanks, Bunter. Now, see here, Parker, these are the finger-marks you noticed yesterday on the window-sash and on the far edge of the bath. I'd overlooked them; I give you full credit for the discovery, I crawl, I grovel, my name is Watson, and you need not say what you were just going to say, because I admit it all. Now we shall—Hullo, hullo, hullo!'

The three men stared at the photographs.

'The criminal,' said Lord Peter, bitterly, 'climbed over the roofs in the wet and not unnaturally got soot on his fingers. He arranged the body in the bath, and wiped away all traces of himself except two, which he obligingly left to show us how to do our job. We learn from a smudge on the floor that he wore india rubber boots, and from this admirable set of finger-prints on the edge of the bath that he had the usual number of

fingers and wore rubber gloves. That's the kind of man he is. Take the fool away, gentlemen.'

He put the prints aside, and returned to an examination of the shreds of material in his hand. Suddenly he whistled softly.

'Do you make anything of these, Parker?'

'They seemed to me to be ravellings of some coarse cotton stuff—a sheet, perhaps, or an improvised rope.'

'Yes,' said Lord Peter—'yes. It may be a mistake—it may be *our* mistake. I wonder. Tell me, d'you think these tiny threads are long enough and strong enough to hang a man?'

He was silent, his long eyes narrowing into slits behind the smoke of his pipe.

'What do you suggest doing this morning?' asked Parker.

'Well,' said Lord Peter, 'it seems to me it's about time I took a hand in your job. Let's go round to Park Lane and see what larks Sir Reuben Levy was up to in bed last night.'

'And now, Mrs Pemming, if you would be so kind as to give me a blanket,' said Mr Bunter, coming down into the kitchen, 'and permit of me hanging a sheet across the lower part of this window, and drawing the screen across here, so—so as to shut off any reflections, if you understand me, we'll get to work.'

Sir Reuben Levy's cook, with her eye upon Mr Bunter's gentlemanly and well-tailored appearance, hastened to produce what was necessary. Her visitor placed on the table a basket, containing a water-bottle, a silver-backed hair-brush, a pair of boots, a small roll of linoleum, and the 'Letters of a Self-made Merchant to His Son,' bound in polished morocco. He drew an umbrella from beneath his arm and added it to the collection. He then advanced a ponderous photographic machine and set it up in the neighbourhood of the kitchen range; then, spreading a newspaper over the fair, scrubbed surface of the table, he began to roll up his sleeves and insinuate himself into a pair of surgical gloves. Sir Reuben Levy's valet, entering at the moment and finding him thus engaged, put aside the kitchenmaid, who was staring from a front-row position, and inspected the apparatus critically. Mr Bunter nodded brightly to him, and uncorked a small bottle of grey powder.

'Odd sort of fish, your employer, isn't he?' said the valet, carelessly.

'Very singular, indeed,' said Mr Bunter. 'Now, my dear,' he added, ingratiatingly, to the kitchen-maid, 'I wonder if you'd just pour a little of this grey powder over the edge of the bottle while I'm holding it—and the same with this boot—here, at the top—thank you, Miss—what is your name? Price? Oh, but you've got another name besides Price, haven't you? Mabel, eh? That's a name I'm uncommonly partial to—that's very nicely done, you've a steady hand, Miss Mabel—see that? That's the finger marks—three there, and two here, and smudged over in both places. No, don't you touch 'em, my dear, or you'll rub the bloom off. We'll stand 'em up here till they're ready to have their portraits taken. Now then, let's take the hair-brush next. Perhaps, Mrs Pemming, you'd like to lift him up very carefully by the bristles.'

'By the bristles, Mr Bunter?'

'If you please, Mrs Pemming—and lay him here. Now, Miss Mabel, another little exhibition of your skill, *if* you please. No—we'll try lamp-black this time. Perfect. Couldn't have done it better myself. Ah! there's a beautiful set. No smudges this time. That'll interest his lordship. Now the little book—no, I'll pick that up myself—with these gloves, you see, and by the edges—I'm a careful criminal, Mrs Pemming, I don't want to leave any traces. Dust the cover all over, Miss Mabel; now this side—that's the way to do it. Lots of prints and no smudges. All according to plan. Oh, please, Mr Graves, you mustn't touch it—it's as much as my place is worth to have it touched.'

'D'you have to do much of this sort of thing?' inquired Mr Graves, from a superior standpoint.

'Any amount,' replied Mr Bunter, with a groan calculated to appeal to Mr Graves's heart and unlock his confidence. 'If you'd kindly hold one end of this bit of linoleum, Mrs Pemming, I'll hold up this end while Miss Mabel operates. Yes, Mr Graves, it's a hard life, valeting by day and developing by night—morning tea at any time from 6.30 to 11, and criminal investigation at all hours. It's wonderful, the ideas these rich men with nothing to do get into their heads.'

'I wonder you stand it,' said Mr Graves. 'Now there's none of that here. A quiet, orderly, domestic life, Mr Bunter, has much to be said for it. Meals at regular hours; decent, respectable families to dinner—none of your painted women—and no valeting at night, there's *much* to be said

Chapter 4

'—So there it is, Parker,' said Lord Peter, pushing his coffee-cup aside and lighting his after-breakfast pipe; 'you may find it leads you to something, though it don't seem to get me any further with my bathroom problem. Did you do anything more at that after I left?'

'No; but I've been on the roof this morning.'

'The deuce you have—what an energetic devil you are! I say, Parker, I think this co-operative scheme is an uncommonly good one. It's much easier to work on someone else's job than one's own—gives one that delightful feelin' of interferin' and bossin' about, combined with the glorious sensation that another fellow is takin' all one's own work off one's hands. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, what? Did you find anything?'

'Not very much. I looked for any footmarks of course, but naturally, with all this rain, there wasn't a sign. Of course, if this were a detective story, there'd have been a convenient shower exactly an hour before the crime and a beautiful set of marks which could only have come there between two and three in the morning, but this being real life in a London November, you might as well expect footprints in Niagara. I searched the roofs right along—and came to the jolly conclusion that any person in any blessed flat in the blessed row might have done it. All the staircases open on to the roof and the leads are quite flat; you can walk along as easy as along Shaftesbury Avenue. Still, I've got some evidence that the body did walk along there.'

'What's that?'

Parker brought out his pocketbook and extracted a few shreds of material, which he laid before his friend.

I know everybody always said they were a model couple. In fact it was a proverb that Sir Reuben was as well loved at home as he was hated abroad. I don't mean in foreign countries, you know, dear—just the proverbial way of putting things—like "a saint abroad and a devil at home"—only the other way on, reminding one of the *Pilgrim's Progress*.'

'Yes,' said Peter, 'I daresay the old man made one or two enemies.'

'Dozens, dear—such a dreadful place, the City, isn't it? Everybody Ishmaels together—though I don't suppose Sir Reuben would like to be called that, would he? Doesn't it mean illegitimate, or not a proper Jew, anyway? I always did get confused with those Old Testament characters.'

Lord Peter laughed and yawned.

'I think I'll turn in for an hour or two,' he said. 'I must be back in town at eight—Parker's coming to breakfast.'

The Duchess looked at the clock, which marked five minutes to three.

'I'll send up your breakfast at half-past six, dear,' she said. 'I hope you'll find everything all right. I told them just to slip a hot-water bottle in; those linen sheets are so chilly; you can put it out if it's in your way.'

for it. I don't hold with Hebrews as a rule, Mr Bunter, and of course I understand that you may find it to your advantage to be in a titled family, but there's less thought of that these days, and I will say, for a self-made man, no one could call Sir Reuben vulgar, and my lady at any rate is county—Miss Ford, she was, one of the Hampshire Fords, and both of them always most considerate.'

'I agree with you, Mr Graves—his lordship and me have never held with being narrow-minded—why, yes, my dear, of course it's a footmark, this is the washstand linoleum. A good Jew can be a good man, that's what I've always said. And regular hours and considerate habits have a great deal to recommend them. Very simple in his tastes, now, Sir Reuben, isn't he? for such a rich man, I mean.'

'Very simple indeed,' said the cook; 'the meals he and her ladyship have when they're by themselves with Miss Rachel—well, there now—if it wasn't for the dinners, which is always good when there's company, I'd be wastin' my talents and education here, if you understand me, Mr Bunter.'

Mr Bunter added the handle of the umbrella to his collection, and began to pin a sheet across the window, aided by the housemaid.

'Admirable,' said he. 'Now, if I might have this blanket on the table and another on a towel-horse or something of that kind by way of a background—you're very kind, Mrs Pemming.... Ah! I wish his lordship never wanted valeting at night. Many's the time I've sat up till three and four, and up again to call him early to go off Sherlocking at the other end of the country. And the mud he gets on his clothes and his boots!'

'I'm sure it's a shame, Mr Bunter,' said Mrs Pemming, warmly. 'Low, I calls it. In my opinion, police-work ain't no fit occupation for a gentleman, let alone a lordship.'

'Everything made so difficult, too,' said Mr Bunter nobly sacrificing his employer's character and his own feelings in a good cause; 'boots chucked into a corner, clothes hung up on the floor, as they say— '

'That's often the case with these men as are born with a silver spoon in their mouths,' said Mr Graves. 'Now, Sir Reuben, he's never lost his good old-fashioned habits. Clothes folded up neat, boots put out in his dressing-room, so as a man could get them in the morning, everything made easy.'

'He forgot them the night before last, though.'

'The clothes, not the boots. Always thoughtful for others, is Sir Reuben. Ah! I hope nothing's happened to him.'

'Indeed, no, poor gentleman,' chimed in the cook, 'and as for what they're sayin', that he'd 'ave gone out surrepshous-like to do something he didn't ought, well, I'd never believe it of him, Mr Bunter, not if I was to take my dying oath upon it.'

'Ah!' said Mr Bunter, adjusting his arc-lamps and connecting them with the nearest electric light, 'and that's more than most of us could say of them as pays us.'

'Five foot ten,' said Lord Peter, 'and not an inch more.' He peered dubiously at the depression in the bed clothes, and measured it a second time with the gentleman-scout's vade-mecum. Parker entered this particular in a neat pocketbook.

'I suppose,' he said, 'a six-foot-two man *might* leave a five-foot-ten depression if he curled himself up.'

'Have you any Scotch blood in you, Parker?' inquired his colleague, bitterly.

'Not that I know of,' replied Parker. 'Why?'

'Because of all the cautious, ungenerous, deliberate and cold-blooded devils I know,' said Lord Peter, 'you are the most cautious, ungenerous, deliberate and cold-blooded. Here am I, sweating my brains out to introduce a really sensational incident into your dull and disreputable little police investigation, and you refuse to show a single spark of enthusiasm.'

'Well, it's no good jumping at conclusions.'

'Jump? You don't even crawl distantly within sight of a conclusion. I believe if you caught the cat with her head in the cream-jug you'd say it was conceivable that the jug was empty when she got there.'

'Well, it would be conceivable, wouldn't it?'

'Curse you,' said Lord Peter. He screwed his monocle into his eye, and bent over the pillow, breathing hard and tightly through his nose. 'Here, give me the tweezers,' he said presently. 'Good heavens, man, don't blow like that, you might be a whale.' He nipped up an almost invisible object from the linen.

'What is it?' asked Parker.

'Very curious, dear. But so sad about poor Sir Reuben. I must write a few lines to Lady Levy; I used to know her quite well, you know, dear, down in Hampshire, when she was a girl. Christine Ford, she was then, and I remember so well the dreadful trouble there was about her marrying a Jew. That was before he made his money, of course, in that oil business out in America. The family wanted her to marry Julian Freke, who did so well afterwards and was connected with the family, but she fell in love with this Mr Levy and eloped with him. He was very handsome, then, you know, dear, in a foreign-looking way, but he hadn't any means, and the Fords didn't like his religion. Of course we're all Jews nowadays, and they wouldn't have minded so much if he'd pretended to be something else, like that Mr Simons we met at Mrs Porchester's, who always tells everybody that he got his nose in Italy at the Renaissance, and claims to be descended somehow or other from La Bella Simonetta—so foolish, you know, dear—as if anybody believed it; and I'm sure some Jews are very good people, and personally I'd much rather they believed something, though of course it must be very inconvenient, what with not working on Saturdays and circumcising the poor little babies and everything depending on the new moon and that funny kind of meat they have with such a slang-sounding name, and never being able to have bacon for breakfast. Still, there it was, and it was much better for the girl to marry him if she was really fond of him, though I believe young Freke was really devoted to her, and they're still great friends. Not that there was ever a real engagement, only a sort of understanding with her father, but he's never married, you know, and lives all by himself in that big house next to the hospital, though he's very rich and distinguished now, and I know ever so many people have tried to get hold of him—there was Lady Mainwaring wanted him for that eldest girl of hers, though I remember saying at the time it was no use expecting a surgeon to be taken in by a figure that was all padding—they have so many opportunities of judging, you know, dear.'

'Lady Levy seems to have had the knack of makin' people devoted to her,' said Peter. 'Look at the pea-green incorruptible Levy.'

'That's quite true, dear; she was a most delightful girl, and they say her daughter is just like her. I rather lost sight of them when she married, and you know your father didn't care much about business people, but

owing to implications of story, but girl vouches for what was said. She thought no more about it till the milkman brought news this morning of the excitement at Queen Caroline Mansions; then she went round, though not likin' the police as a rule, and asked the man there whether the dead gentleman had a beard and glasses. Told he had glasses but no beard, she incautiously said: "Oh, then, it isn't him," and the man said: "Isn't who?" and collared her. That's her story. Sugg's delighted, of course, and quodded Thipps on the strength of it.'

'Dear me,' said the Duchess, 'I hope the poor girl won't get into trouble.'

'Shouldn't think so,' said Lord Peter. 'Thipps is the one that's going to get it in the neck. Besides, he's done a silly thing. I got that out of Sugg, too, though he was sittin' tight on the information. Seems Thipps got into a confusion about the train he took back from Manchester. Said first he got home at 10.30. Then they pumped Gladys Horrocks, who let out he wasn't back till after 11.45. Then Thipps, bein' asked to explain the discrepancy, stammers and bungles and says, first, that he missed the train. Then Sugg makes inquiries at St Pancras and discovers that he left a bag in the cloakroom there at ten. Thipps, again asked to explain, stammers worse an' says he walked about for a few hours—met a friend—can't say who—didn't meet a friend—can't say what he did with his time—can't explain why he didn't go back for his bag—can't say what time he *did* get in—can't explain how he got a bruise on his forehead. In fact, can't explain himself at all. Gladys Horrocks interrogated again. Says, this time, Thipps came in at 10.30. Then admits she didn't hear him come in. Can't say why she didn't hear him come in. Can't say why she said first of all that she *did* hear him. Bursts into tears. Contradicts herself. Everybody's suspicion roused. Quod 'em both.'

'As you put it, dear,' said the Duchess, 'it all sounds very confusing, and not quite respectable. Poor little Mr Thipps would be terribly upset by anything that wasn't respectable.'

'I wonder what he did with himself,' said Lord Peter thoughtfully. 'I really don't think he was committing a murder. Besides, I believe the fellow has been dead a day or two, though it don't do to build too much on doctors' evidence. It's an entertainin' little problem.'

'It's a hair,' said Wimsey grimly, his hard eyes growing harder. 'Let's go and look at Levy's hats, shall we? And you might just ring for that fellow with the churchyard name, do you mind?'

Mr Graves, when summoned, found Lord Peter Wimsey squatting on the floor of the dressing-room before a row of hats arranged upside down before him.

'Here you are,' said that nobleman cheerfully. 'Now, Graves, this is a guessin' competition—a sort of three-hat trick, to mix metaphors. Here are nine hats, including three top-hats. Do you identify all these hats as belonging to Sir Reuben Levy? You do? Very good. Now I have three guesses as to which hat he wore the night he disappeared, and if I guess right, I win; if I don't, you win. See? Ready? Go. I suppose you know the answer yourself, by the way?'

'Do I understand your lordship to be asking which hat Sir Reuben wore when he went out on Monday night, your lordship?'

'No, you don't understand a bit,' said Lord Peter. 'I'm asking if *you* know—don't tell me, I'm going to guess.'

'I do know, your lordship,' said Mr Graves, reprovingly.

'Well,' said Lord Peter, 'as he was dinin' at the Ritz he wore a topper. Here are three toppers. In three guesses I'd be bound to hit the right one, wouldn't I? That don't seem very sportin'. I'll take one guess. It was this one.'

He indicated the hat next the window.

'Am I right, Graves—have I got the prize?'

'That *is* the hat in question, my lord,' said Mr Graves, without excitement.

'Thanks,' said Lord Peter, 'that's all I wanted to know. Ask Bunter to step up, would you?'

Mr Bunter stepped up with an aggrieved air, and his usually smooth hair ruffled by the focussing cloth.

'Oh, there you are, Bunter,' said Lord Peter; 'look here— '

'Here I am, my lord,' said Mr Bunter, with respectful reproach, 'but if you'll excuse me saying so, downstairs is where I ought to be, with all those young women about—they'll be fingering the evidence, my lord.'

'I cry your mercy,' said Lord Peter, 'but I've quarrelled hopelessly with Mr Parker and distracted the estimable Graves, and I want you to tell me

what finger-prints you have found. I shan't be happy till I get it, so don't be harsh with me, Bunter.'

'Well, my lord, your lordship understands I haven't photographed them yet, but I won't deny that their appearance is interesting, my lord. The little book off the night table, my lord, has only the marks of one set of fingers—there's a little scar on the right thumb which makes them easy recognised. The hair-brush, too, my lord, has only the same set of marks. The umbrella, the toothglass and the boots all have two sets: the hand with the scarred thumb, which I take to be Sir Reuben's, my lord, and a set of smudges superimposed upon them, if I may put it that way, my lord, which may or may not be the same hand in rubber gloves. I could tell you better when I've got the photographs made, to measure them, my lord. The linoleum in front of the washstand is very gratifying indeed, my lord, if you will excuse my mentioning it. Besides the marks of Sir Reuben's boots which your lordship pointed out, there's the print of a man's naked foot—a much smaller one, my lord, not much more than a ten-inch sock, I should say if you asked me.'

Lord Peter's face became irradiated with almost a dim, religious light.

'A mistake,' he breathed, 'a mistake, a little one, but he can't afford it. When was the linoleum washed last, Bunter?'

'Monday morning, my lord. The housemaid did it and remembered to mention it. Only remark she's made yet, and it's to the point. The other domestics— '

His features expressed disdain.

'What did I say, Parker? Five-foot-ten and not an inch longer. And he didn't dare to use the hair-brush. Beautiful. But he *had* to risk the top-hat. Gentleman can't walk home in the rain late at night without a hat, you know, Parker. Look! what do you make of it? Two sets of finger-prints on everything but the book and the brush, two sets of feet on the linoleum, and two kinds of hair in the hat!'

He lifted the top-hat to the light, and extracted the evidence with tweezers.

'Think of it, Parker—to remember the hair-brush and forget the hat—to remember his fingers all the time, and to make that one careless step on the tell-tale linoleum. Here they are, you see, black hair and tan hair—black hair in the bowler and the panama, and black and tan in last night's topper.

'Have you got the old lady to bed?' asked Lord Peter.

'Oh, yes, dear. Such a striking old person, isn't she? And very courageous. She tells me she has never been in a motor-car before. But she thinks you a very nice lad, dear—that careful of her, you remind her of her own son. Poor little Mr Thipps—whatever made your friend the inspector think he could have murdered anybody?'

'My friend the inspector—no, no more, thank you, Mother—is determined to prove that the intrusive person in Thipps's bath is Sir Reuben Levy, who disappeared mysteriously from his house last night. His line of reasoning is: We've lost a middle-aged gentleman without any clothes on in Park Lane; we've found a middle-aged gentleman without any clothes on in Battersea. Therefore they're one and the same person, Q.E.D., and put little Thipps in quod.'

'You're very elliptical, dear,' said the Duchess, mildly. 'Why should Mr Thipps be arrested even if they are the same?'

'Sugg must arrest somebody,' said Lord Peter, 'but there is one odd little bit of evidence come out which goes a long way to support Sugg's theory, only that I know it to be no go by the evidence of my own eyes. Last night at about 9.15 a young woman was strollin' up the Battersea Park Road for purposes best known to herself, when she saw a gentleman in a fur coat and top-hat saunterin' along under an umbrella, lookin' at the names of all the streets. He looked a bit out of place, so, not bein' a shy girl, you see, she walked up to him, and said: "Good-evening." "Can you tell me, please," says the mysterious stranger, "whether this street leads into Prince of Wales Road?" She said it did, and further asked him in a jocular manner what he was doing with himself and all the rest of it, only she wasn't altogether so explicit about that part of the conversation, because she was unburdenin' her heart to Sugg, d'you see, and he's paid by a grateful country to have very pure, high-minded ideals, what? Anyway, the old boy said he couldn't attend to her just then as he had an appointment. "I've got to go and see a man, my dear," was how she said he put it, and he walked on up Alexandra Avenue towards Prince of Wales Road. She was starin' after him, still rather surprised, when she was joined by a friend of hers, who said: "It's no good wasting your time with him—that's Levy—I knew him when I lived in the West End, and the girls used to call him Peagreen Incorruptible"—friend's name suppressed,

'Ah, yes,' she said, 'I believe you are distantly related to my late cousin, the Bishop of Carisbrooke. Poor man! He was always being taken in by impostors; he died without ever learning any better. I imagine you take after him, Lord Peter.'

'I doubt it,' said Lord Peter. 'So far as I know he is only a connection, though it's a wise child that knows its own father. I congratulate you, dear lady, on takin' after the other side of the family. You'll forgive my buttin' in upon you like this in the middle of the night, though, as you say, it's all in the family, and I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you, and for permittin' me to admire that awfully fetchin' thing you've got on. Now, don't you worry, Mr Appledore. I'm thinkin' the best thing I can do is to trundle the old lady down to my mother and take her out of your way, otherwise you might be findin' your Christian feelin's gettin' the better of you some fine day, and there's nothin' like Christian feelin's for upsettin' a man's domestic comfort. Good-night, sir—good-night, dear lady—it's simply rippin' of you to let me drop in like this.'

'Well!' said Mrs Appledore, as the door closed behind him.

And—

'

> I thank the goodness and the grace
> That on my birth have smiled,

,

said Lord Peter, 'and taught me to be bestially impertinent when I choose. Cat!'

Two A.M. saw Lord Peter Wimsey arrive in a friend's car at the Dower House, Denver Castle, in company with a deaf and aged lady and an antique portmanteau.

'It's very nice to see you, dear,' said the Dowager Duchess, placidly. She was a small, plump woman, with perfectly white hair and exquisite hands. In feature she was as unlike her second son as she was like him in character; her black eyes twinkled cheerfully, and her manners and movements were marked with a neat and rapid decision. She wore a charming wrap from Liberty's, and sat watching Lord Peter eat cold beef and cheese as though his arrival in such incongruous circumstances and company were the most ordinary event possible, which with him, indeed, it was.

And then, just to make certain that we're on the right track, just one little auburn hair on the pillow, on this pillow, Parker, which isn't quite in the right place. It almost brings tears to my eyes.'

'Do you mean to say— ' said the detective, slowly.

'I mean to say,' said Lord Peter, 'that it was not Sir Reuben Levy whom the cook saw last night on the doorstep. I say that it was another man, perhaps a couple of inches shorter, who came here in Levy's clothes and let himself in with Levy's latchkey. Oh, he was a bold, cunning devil, Parker. He had on Levy's boots, and every stitch of Levy's clothing down to the skin. He had rubber gloves on his hands which he never took off, and he did everything he could to make us think that Levy slept here last night. He took his chances, and won. He walked upstairs, he undressed, he even washed and cleaned his teeth, though he didn't use the hair-brush for fear of leaving red hairs in it. He had to guess what Levy did with boots and clothes; one guess was wrong and the other right, as it happened. The bed must look as if it had been slept in, so he gets in, and lies there in his victim's very pyjamas. Then, in the morning sometime, probably in the deadest hour between two and three, he gets up, dresses himself in his own clothes that he has brought with him in a bag, and creeps downstairs. If anybody wakes, he is lost, but he is a bold man, and he takes his chance. He knows that people do not wake as a rule—and they don't wake. He opens the street door which he left on the latch when he came in—he listens for the stray passer-by or the policeman on his beat. He slips out. He pulls the door quietly to with the latchkey. He walks briskly away in rubber-soled shoes—he's the kind of criminal who isn't complete without rubber-soled shoes. In a few minutes he is at Hyde Park Corner. After that— '

He paused, and added:

'He did all that, and unless he had nothing at stake, he had everything at stake. Either Sir Reuben Levy has been spirited away for some silly practical joke, or the man with the auburn hair has the guilt of murder upon his soul.'

'Dear me!' ejaculated the detective, 'you're very dramatic about it.'

Lord Peter passed his hand rather wearily over his hair.

'My true friend,' he murmured in a voice surcharged with emotion, 'You recall me to the nursery rhymes of my youth—the sacred duty of flippancy:

> There was an old man of Whitehaven
> Who danced a quadrille with a raven,
> But they said: It's absurd
> To encourage that bird—
> So they smashed that old man of Whitehaven.

That's the correct attitude, Parker. Here's a poor old buffer spirited away—such a joke—and I don't believe he'd hurt a fly himself—that makes it funnier. D'you know, Parker, I don't care frightfully about this case after all.'

'Which, this or yours?'

'Both. I say, Parker, shall we go quietly home and have lunch and go to the Coliseum?'

'You can if you like,' replied the detective; 'but you forget I do this for my bread and butter.'

'And I haven't even that excuse,' said Lord Peter; 'well, what's the next move? What would you do in my case?'

'I'd do some good, hard grind,' said Parker. 'I'd distrust every bit of work Sugg ever did, and I'd get the family history of every tenant of every flat in Queen Caroline Mansions. I'd examine all their box-rooms and rooftraps, and I would inveigle them into conversations and suddenly bring in the words "body" and "pince-nez," and see if they wriggled, like those modern psyo-what's-his-names.'

'You would, would you?' said Lord Peter with a grin. 'Well, we've exchanged cases, you know, so just you toddle off and do it. I'm going to have a jolly time at Wyndham's.'

Parker made a grimace.

'Well,' he said, 'I don't suppose you'd ever do it, so I'd better. You'll never become a professional till you learn to do a little work, Wimsey. How about lunch?'

'I'm invited out,' said Lord Peter, magnificently. 'I'll run around and change at the club. Can't feed with Freddy Arbuthnot in these bags; Bunter!'

see what it is, if that old catamaran will let you into the room. Shutting herself up there and screaming,' said the Inspector, 'it's enough to make a man give up crime and take to hedging and ditching.'

The constable came back:

'It's from the Yard, sir,' he said, coughing apologetically; 'the Chief says every facility is to be given to Lord Peter Wimsey, sir. Um!' He stood apart noncommittally, glazing his eyes.

'Five aces,' said Lord Peter, cheerfully. 'The Chief's a dear friend of my mother's. No go, Sugg, it's no good buckin'; you've got a full house. I'm goin' to make it a bit fuller.'

He walked in with his followers.

The body had been removed a few hours previously, and when the bathroom and the whole flat had been explored by the naked eye and the camera of the competent Bunter, it became evident that the real problem of the household was old Mrs Thipps. Her son and servant had both been removed, and it appeared that they had no friends in town, beyond a few business acquaintances of Thipps's, whose very addresses the old lady did not know. The other flats in the building were occupied respectively by a family of seven, at present departed to winter abroad, an elderly Indian colonel of ferocious manners, who lived alone with an Indian man-servant, and a highly respectable family on the third floor, whom the disturbance over their heads had outraged to the last degree. The husband, indeed, when appealed to by Lord Peter, showed a little human weakness, but Mrs Appledore, appearing suddenly in a warm dressing-gown, extricated him from the difficulties into which he was carelessly wandering.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'I'm afraid we can't interfere in any way. This is a very unpleasant business, Mr— I'm afraid I didn't catch your name, and we have always found it better not to be mixed up with the police. Of course, *if* the Thippses are innocent, and I am sure I hope they are, it is very unfortunate for them, but I must say that the circumstances seem to me most suspicious, and to Theophilus too, and I should not like to have it said that we had assisted murderers. We might even be supposed to be accessories. Of course you are young, Mr— '

'This is Lord Peter Wimsey, my dear,' said Theophilus mildly.

She was unimpressed.