## Chapter 1

In the comer of a firstclass smoking carriage, Mr. Justice Wargrave, lately retired from the bench, puffed at a cigar and ran an interested eye through the

political news in the Times.

He laid the paper down and glanced out of the window. They were running now

through Somerset. He glanced at his watch another two hours to go.

He went over in his mind all that had appeared in the papers about Indian

Island. There had been its original purchase by an American millionaire who was

crazy about yachting and an account of the luxurious modern house he had built

on this little island off the Devon coast. The unfortunate fact that the new third wife of the American millionaire was a bad sailor had led to the subsequent

putting up of the house and island for sale. Various glowing advertisements of it

had appeared in the papers. Then came the first bald statement that it had been

bought by a Mr. Owen. After that the rumours of the gossip writers had started.

Indian Island had really been bought by Miss Gabrielle Turl, the Hollywood film

star! She wanted to spend some months there free from all publicity! Busy Bee

had hinted delicately that it was to be an abode for Royalty??! Mr. Merryweather

had had it whispered to him that it had been bought for a honeymoon Young

Lord L... had surrendered to Cupid at last! Jones knew for a fact that it had been purchased by the Admiralty with a view to carrying out some very hush hush

experiments!

Definitely, Indian Island was news!

From his pocket Mr. Justice Wargrave drew out a letter. The handwriting was

practically illegible but words here and there stood out with unexpected clarity.

Dearest Lawrence... such years since I heard anything of you... must come to

Indian Island... the most enchanting place... so much to talk over... old days...

communion with Nature... bask in sunshine... 12:40 from Paddington... meet you at Oakbridge... and his correspondent signed herself with a flourish his ever

Constance Culmington.

Mr. Justice Wargrave cast back in his mind to remember when exactly he had

last seen Lady Constance Culmington. It must be seven no, eight years ago. She

had then been going to Italy to bask in the sun and be at one with Nature and

the contadini. Later, he had heard, she had proceeded to Syria where she proposed to bask in yet stronger sun and live at one with Nature and the bedouin.

Constance Culmington, he reflected to himself, was exactly the sort of woman

who would buy an island and surround herself with mystery! Nodding his head

in gentle approval of his logic, Mr. Justice Wargrave allowed his head to nod...

He slept...

Ш

Vera Claythorne, in a thirdclass carriage with five other travellers in it, leaned her head back and shut her eyes. How hot it was travelling by train today! It

would be nice to get to the sea! Really a great piece of luck getting this job.
When you wanted a holiday post it nearly always meant looking after a swarm of
children secretarial holiday posts were much more difficult to get. Even the
agency hadn't held out much hope.
And then the letter had come.
"I have received your name from the Skilled Women's Agency together with
their recommendation. I understand they know you personally. I shall be glad to
pay
you the salary you ask and shall expect you to take up your duties on August 8th.
The train is the 12:40 from Paddington and you will be met at Oakbridge station.
I enclose five pound notes for expenses.
Yours truly,
Una Nancy Owen.
And at the top was the stamped address Indian Island. Sticklehaven. Devon

hints and interesting rumours. Though probably that was mostly untrue. But the

house had certainly been built by a millionaire and was said to be absolutely the

last word in luxury.

Vera Claythorne, tired by a recent strenuous term at school, thought to herself

"Being a games mistress in a thirdclass school isn't much of a catch... If only I could get a job at some decent school."

And then, with a cold feeling round her heart, she thought: "But I'm lucky to have even this. After all, people don't like a Coroner's Inquest, even if the Coroner did acquit me of all blame!"

He had even complimented her on her presence of mind and courage, she remembered. For an inquest it couldn't have gone better. And Mrs. Hamilton had

been kindness itself to her only Hugo (but she wouldn't think of Hugo!)

Suddenly, in spite of the heat in the carriage she shivered and wished she wasn't

going to the sea. A picture rose clearly before her mind. Cyril's head, bobbing up and down, swimming to the rock... Up and down up and down... And herself,

swimming in easy practised strokes after him cleaving her way through the water but knowing, only too surely, that she wouldn't be in time...

The sea its deep warm blue mornings spent lying out on the sands Hugo
Hugo who had said he loved her
She must not think of Hugo
She opened her eyes and frowned across at the man opposite her. A tall man with a brown face, light eyes set rather close together and an arrogant almost cruel
mouth.
She thought to herself:
"I bet he's been to some interesting parts of the world and seen some interesting things"
III
Philip Lombard, summing up the girl opposite in a mere flash of his quick moving eyes thought to himself:
"Quite attractive a bit schoolmistressy perhaps"

A cool customer, he should imagine and one who could hold her own in love or war. He'd rather like to take her on... He frowned. No, cut out all that kind of stuff. This was business. He'd got to keep his mind on the job. What exactly was up, he wondered? That little Jew had been damned mysterious. "Take it or leave it, Captain Lombard." He had said thoughtfully: "A hundred guineas, eh?" He had said it in a casual way as though a hundred guineas was nothing to him. A hundred guineas when he was literally down to his last square meal! He had fancied, though, that the little Jew had not been deceived that was the damnable part about Jews, you couldn't deceive them about money they knew! He had said in the same casual tone:

"And you can't give me any further information?"

Mr. Isaac Morris had shaken his little bald head very positively. "No, Captain Lombard, the matter rests there. It is understood by my client that your reputation is that of a good man in a tight place. I am empowered to hand you one hundred guineas in return for which you will travel to Sticklehaven, Devon. The nearest station is Oakbridge, you will be met there and motored to Sticklehaven where a motor launch will convey you to Indian Island. There you will hold yourself at the disposal of my client." Lombard had said abruptly: "For how long?" "Not longer than a week at most." Fingering his small moustache, Captain Lombard said: "You understand I can't undertake anything illegal?" He had darted a very sharp glance at the other as he had spoken. There had been

a very faint smile on the thick Semitic lips of Mr. Morris as he answered gravely:

"If anything illegal is proposed, you will, of course, be at perfect liberty to withdraw."

Damn the smooth little brute, he had smiled! It was as though he knew very well that in Lombard's past actions legality had not always been a sine qua non...

Lombard's own lips parted in a grin.

By Jove, he'd sailed pretty near the wind once or twice! But he'd always got away

with it! There wasn't much he drew the line at really...

No, there wasn't much he'd draw the line at. He fancied that he was going to enjoy himself at Indian Island...

IV

In a nonsmoking carriage Miss Emily Brent sat very upright as was her custom.

She was sixtyfive and she did not approve of lounging. Her father, a Colonel of the old school, had been particular about deportment.

The present generation was shamelessly lax in their carriage, and in every other way...

Enveloped in an aura of righteousness and unyielding principles, Miss Brent sat in her crowded thirdclass carriage and triumphed over its discomfort and its

heat. Every one made such a fuss over things nowadays! They wanted injections

before they had teeth pulled they took drugs if they couldn't sleep they wanted easy chairs and cushions and the girls allowed their figures to slop about anyhow

and lay about half naked on the beaches in summer.

Miss Brent's lips set closely. She would like to make an example of certain people.

She remembered last year's summer holiday. This year, however, it would be quite different. Indian Island...

Mentally she reread the letter which she had already read so many times.

Dear Miss Brent.

I do hope you remember me? We were together at Bellhaven Guest House in August some years ago, and we seemed to have so much in common.

I am starting a guest house of my own on an island off the coast of Devon. I

think there is really an opening for a place where there is good plain cooking and a nice oldfashioned type of person. None of this nudity and gramophones half the night. I shall be very glad if you could see your way to spending your summer

holiday on Indian Island quite free as my guest. Would early in August suit you? Perhaps the 8th.

Yours sincerely.

U.N.

What was the name? The signature was rather difficult to read. Emily Brent

thought impatiently: "So many people write their signatures quite illegibly."

She let her mind run back over the people at Bellhaven. She had been there two

summers running. There had been that nice middleaged woman Mrs. Mrs.

now what was her name? her father had been a Canon. And there had been a

Miss Olton Ormen No, surely it was Oliver! Yes Oliver.

Indian Island! There had been things in the paper about Indian Island

something about a film star or was it an American millionaire?

Of course often those places went very cheap islands didn't suit everybody. They thought the idea was romantic but when they came to live there they realized the

Emily Brent thought to herself: "I shall be getting a free holiday at any rate."

With her income so much reduced and so many dividends not being paid, that was indeed something to take into consideration. If only she could remember a

little more about Mrs. or was it Miss Oliver?

disadvantages and were only too glad to sell.

V

General Macarthur looked out of the carriage window. The train was just coming

into Exeter where he had to change. Damnable, these slow branch line trains!

This place, Indian Island, was really no distance at all as the crow flies.

He hadn't got it clear who this fellow Owen was. A friend of Spoof Leggard's, apparently and of Johnny Dyer's.

One or two of your old cronies are coming would like to have a talk over old

times.

Well, he'd enjoy a chat about old times. He'd had a fancy lately that fellows were rather lighting shy of him. All owing to that damned rumour! By God, it was

pretty hard nearly thirty years ago now! Armstrong had talked, he supposed.

Damned young pup! What did he know about it? Oh, well, no good brooding about

these things! One fancied things sometimes fancied a fellow was looking at you queerly.

This Indian Island now, he'd be interested to see it. A lot of gossip flying about.

Looked as though there might be something in the rumour that the Admiralty or the War Office or the Air Force had got hold of it...

Young Elmer Robson, the American millionaire, had actually built the place. Spent thousands on it, so it was said. Every mortal luxury...

Exeter! And an hour to wait! And he didn't want to wait. He wanted to get on...

Dr. Armstrong was driving his Morris across Salisbury Plain. He was very tired...

Success had its penalties. There had been a time when he had sat in his consulting room in Harley Street, correctly apparelled, surrounded with the most

uptodate appliances and the most luxurious furnishings and waited waited

through the empty days for his venture to succeed or fail...

Well, it had succeeded! He'd been lucky! Lucky and skillful of course. He was a good man at his job but that wasn't enough for success. You had to have luck as

well. And he'd had it! An accurate diagnosis, a couple of grateful women patients

women with money and position and word had got about. "You ought to try Armstrong quite a young man but so clever Pam had been to all sorts of people for years and he put his finger on the trouble at once!" The ball had started rolling.

And now Dr. Armstrong had definitely arrived. His days were full. He had little

leisure. And so, on this August morning, he was glad that he was leaving London

and going to be for some days on an island off the Devon coast. Not that it was

exactly a holiday. The letter he had received had been rather vague in its terms,

but there was nothing vague about the accompanying cheque. A whacking fee.

These Owens must be rolling in money. Some little difficulty, it seemed, a husband who was worried about his wife's health and wanted a report on it

without her being alarmed. She wouldn't hear of seeing a doctor. Her nerves

Nerves! The doctor's eyebrows went up. These women and their nerves! Well, it was good for business, after all. Half the women who consulted him had nothing the matter with them but boredom, but they wouldn't thank you for telling them so! And one could usually find something.

"A slightly uncommon condition of the some long word nothing at all serious but it just needs putting right. A simple treatment."

Well, medicine was mostly faithhealing when it came to it. And he had a good manner he could inspire hope and belief.

Lucky that he'd managed to pull himself together in time after that business ten

no, fifteen years ago. It had been a near thing, that! He'd been going to pieces.

The shock had pulled him together. He'd cut out drink altogether. By Jove, it had been a near thing though...

With a devastating carsplitting blast on the horn an enormous Super Sports

Dalmain car rushed past him at eighty miles an hour. Dr. Armstrong nearly went into the hedge. One of these young fools who tore round the country. He hated them. That had been a near shave, too. Damned young fool!

VII

Tony Marston, roaring down into Mere, thought to himself:

"The amount of cars crawling about the roads is frightful. Always something blocking your way. And they will drive in the middle of the road! Pretty hopeless driving in England, anyway... Not like France where you really could let out..."

Should he stop here for a drink, or push on? Heaps of time! Only another hundred miles and a bit to go. He'd have a gin and gingerbeer. Fizzing hot day!

This island place ought to be rather good fun if the weather lasted. Who were

these Owens, he wondered? Rich and stinking, probably. Badger was rather good

at nosing people like that out. Of course, he had to, poor old chap, with no money of his own...

Hope they'd do one well in drinks. Never knew with these fellows who'd made their money and weren't born to it. Pity that story about Gabrielle Turl having bought Indian Island wasn't true. He'd like to have been in with that film star crowd.

Oh, well, he supposed there'd be a few girls there...

Coming out of the Hotel, he stretched himself, yawned, looked up at the blue sky and climbed into the Dalmain.

Several young women looked at him admiringly his six feet of wellproportioned body, his crisp hair, tanned face, and intensely blue eyes.

He let in the clutch with a roar and leapt up the narrow street. Old men and errand boys jumped for safety. The latter looked after the car admiringly.

Anthony Marston proceeded on his triumphal progress.

VIII

Mr. Blore was in the slow train from Plymouth. There was only one other person in his carriage, an elderly seafaring gentleman with a bleary eye. At the present moment he had dropped off to sleep.

Mr. Blore was writing carefully in a little notebook.

"That's the lot," he muttered to himself. "Emily Brent, Vera Claythorne, Dr.

Armstrong, Anthony Marston, old Justice Wargrave, Philip Lombard, General

Macarthur, C.M.G., D.S.O. Manservant and wife: Mr. and Mrs. Rogers."

He closed the notebook and put it back in his pocket. He glanced over at the corner and the slumbering man.

"Had one over the eight." diagnosed Mr. Blore accurately. He went over things carefully and conscientiously in his mind.

"Job ought to be easy enough," he ruminated. "Don't see how I can slip up on it.

Hope I look all right."

He stood up and scrutinized himself anxiously in the glass. The face reflected there was of a slightly military cast with a moustache. There was very little expression in it. The eyes were grey and set rather close together.

"Might be a Major," said Mr. Blore. "No, I forgot. There's that old military gent. He'd spot me at once.

"South Africa," said Mr. Blore, "that's my line! None of these people have anything to do with South Africa, and I've just been reading that travel folder so I can talk about it all right."

Fortunately there were all sorts and types of colonials. As a man of means from

South Africa, Mr. Blore felt that he could enter into any society unchallenged.
Indian Island. He remembered Indian Island as a boy Smelly sort of rock covered with gulls stood about a mile from the coast. It had got its name from
its resemblance to a man's head an American Indian profile.
Funny idea to go and build a house on it! Awful in bad weather! But millionaires were full of whims!
The old man in the corner woke up and said:
"You can't never tell at sea never!"
Mr. Blore said soothingly, "That's right. You can't."
The old man hiccuped twice and said plaintively:
"There's a squall coming."
Mr. Blore said:
"No, no, mate, it's a lovely day."
The old man said angrily:

"There's a squall ahead. I can smell it."
"Maybe you're right," said Mr. Blore pacifically.
The train stopped at a station and the old fellow rose unsteadily.
"Thish where I get out." He fumbled with the window. Mr. Blore helped him.
The old man stood in the doorway. He raised a solemn hand and blinked his bleary eyes.
"Watch and pray," he said. "Watch and pray. The day of judgement is at hand."
He collapsed through the doorway onto the platform. From a recumbent position he looked up at Mr. Blore and said with immense dignity:
"I'm talking to you, young man. The day of judgement is very close at hand." Subsiding onto his seat Mr. Blore thought to himself:
"He's nearer the day of judgement than I am!"
But there, as it happens, he was wrong

Chapter 2

Outside Oakbridge station a little group of people stood in momentary uncertainty. Behind them stood porters with suitcases. One of these called "Jim!"

The driver of one of the taxis stepped forward.

"You'm for Indian Island, maybe? he asked in a soft Devon voice. Four voices gave assent and then immediately afterwards gave quick surreptitious glances at each other.

The driver said, addressing his remarks to Mr. Justice Wargrave as the senior member of the party:

"There are two taxis here, sir. One of them must wait till the slow train from Exeter gets in a matter of five minutes there's one gentleman coming by that.

Perhaps one of you wouldn't mind waiting? You'd be more comfortable that way."

Vera Claythorne, her own secretarial position clear in her mind, spoke at once.

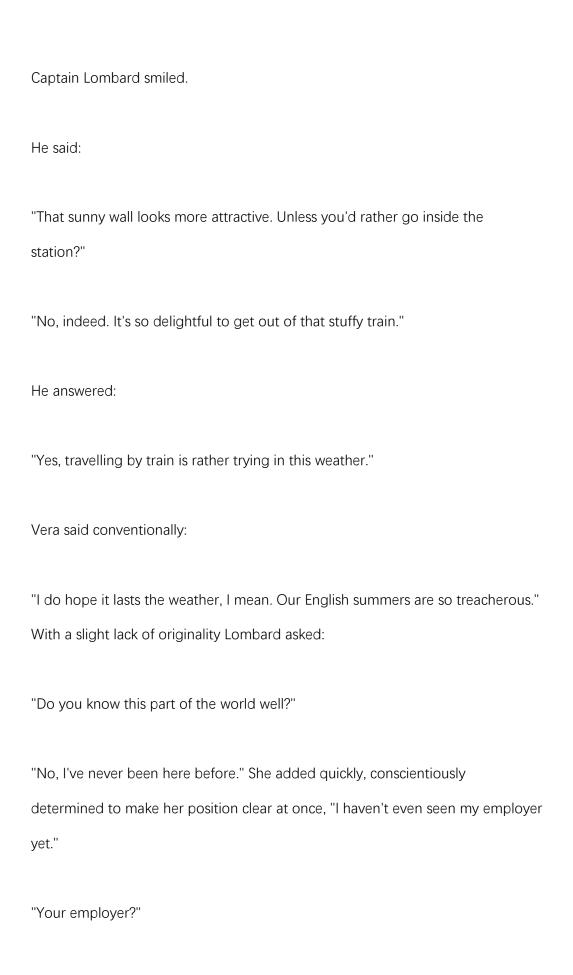
"I'll wait," she said, "if you will go on?" She looked at the other three, her glance and voice had that slight suggestion of command in it that comes from having

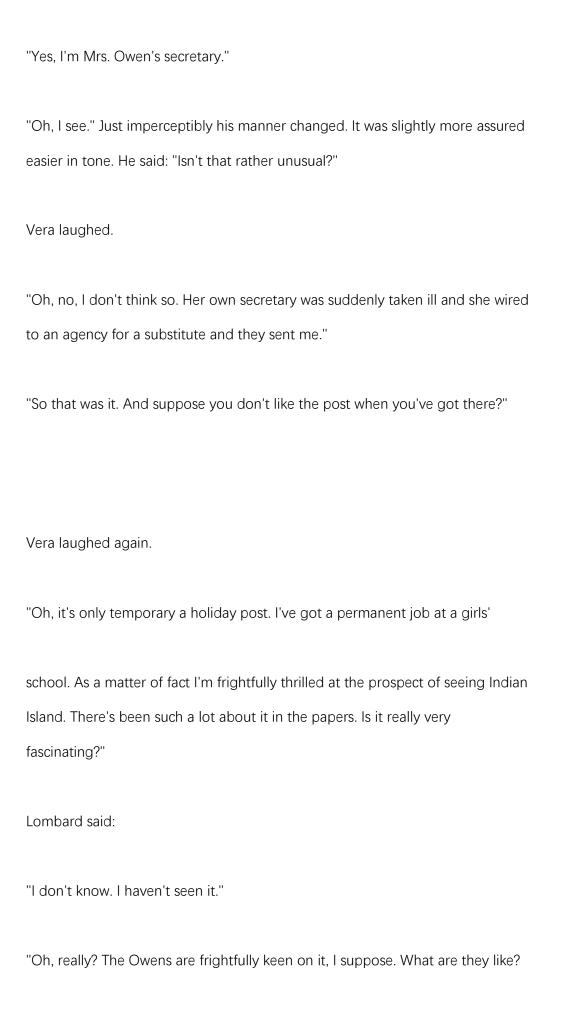
occupied a position of authority. She might have been directing which tennis sets

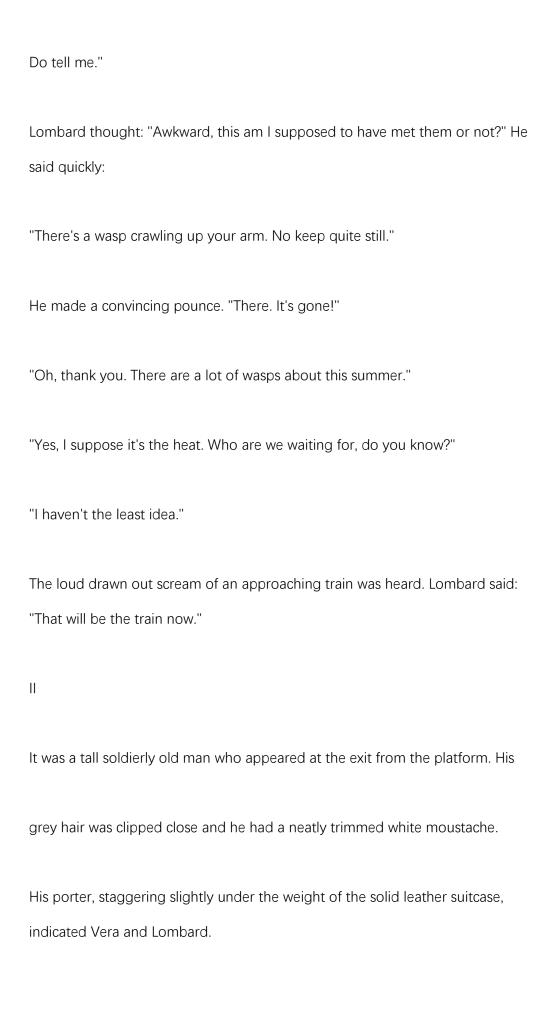
the girls were to play in.



usual type of man in seaside guest houses. Evidently Mrs. or Miss Oliver had
good connections
Mr. Justice Wargrave inquired:
"Do you know this part of the world well?"
"I have been to Cornwall and to Torquay, but this is my first visit to this part of
Devon."
The judge said:
"I also am unacquainted with this part of the world."
The taxi drove off.
The driver of the second taxi said:
The driver of the second taxi said.
"Like to sit inside while you're waiting?"
Vera said decisively:
"Not at all "
"Not at all."







Vera came forward in a competent manner. She said:
"I am Mrs. Owen's secretary. There is a car here waiting." She added: "This is Mr. Lombard."
The faded blue eyes, shrewd in spite of their age, sized up Lombard. For a moment a judgement showed in them had there been any one to read it.
"Goodlooking fellow. Something just a little wrong about him"
The three of them got into the waiting taxi. They drove through the sleepy streets of little Oakbridge and continued about a mile on the main Plymouth
road. Then they plunged into a maze of cross country lanes, steep, green and
narrow.
General Macarthur said:
"Don't know this part of Devon at all. My little place is in East Devon just on the borderline of Dorset."
Vera said:
"It really is lovely here. The hills and the red earth and everything so green and





Mr. Justice Wargrave looked at him with active malevolence. He seemed to be wishing that he could order the court to be cleared. Miss Emily Brent was clearly

not sure if she liked colonials.

"Any one care for a little nip before we embark?" asked Mr. Davis hospitably.

Nobody assenting to this proposition, Mr. Davis turned and held up a finger.

"Mustn't delay, then. Our good host and hostess will be expecting us," he said.

He might have noticed that a curious constraint came over the other members of the party. It was as though the mention of their host and hostess had a curiously paralyzing effect upon the guests.

In response to Davis' beckoning finger, a man detached himself from a nearby

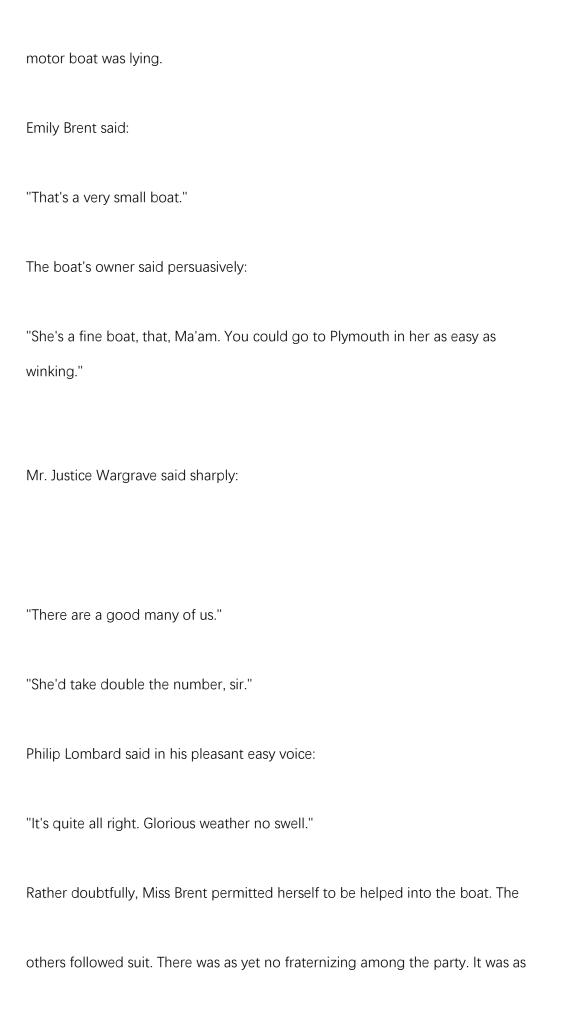
wall against which he was leaning and came up to them. His rolling gait proclaimed him a man of the sea. He had a weatherbeaten face and dark eyes

with a slightly evasive expression. He spoke in his soft Devon voice.

"Will you be ready to be starting for the island, ladies and gentlemen? The boat's waiting. There's two gentlemen coming by car, but Mr. Owen's orders was not to

wait for them as they might arrive at any time."

The party got up. Their guide led them along a small stone jetty. Alongside it a



though each member of it was puzzled by the other members.

They were just about to cast loose when their guide paused, boathook in hand.

Down the steep track into the village a car was coming. A car so fantastically powerful, so superlatively beautiful that it had all the nature of an apparition. At the wheel sat a young man, his hair blown back by the wind. In the blaze of the

evening light he looked, not a man, but a young God, a Hero God out of some

Northern Saga.

He touched the horn and a great roar of sound echoed from the rocks of the bay.

It was a fantastic moment. In it, Anthony Marston seemed to be something more

than mortal. Afterwards, more than one of those present remembered that moment.

IV

Fred Narracott sat by the engine thinking to himself that this was a queer lot.

Not at all his idea of what Mr. Owen's guests were likely to be. He'd expected something altogether more classy. Togged up women and gentlemen in yachting costume and all very rich and important looking.

Not at all like Mr. Elmer Robson's parties. A faint grin came to Fred Narracott's lips as he remembered the millionaire's guests. That had been a party if you like and the drink they'd got through!

This Mr. Owen must be a very different sort of gentleman. Funny it was, thought Fred, that he'd never yet set eyes on Owen or his Missus either. Never been down here yet, he hadn't. Everything ordered and paid for by that Mr. Morris. Instructions always very clear and payment prompt, but it was odd, all the same. The papers said there was some mystery about Owen. Mr. Narracott agreed with them.

Perhaps, after all, it was Miss Gabrielle Turl who had bought the island. But that theory departed from him as he surveyed his passengers. Not this lot none

of them looked likely to have anything to do with a film star.

He summed them up dispassionately.

One old maid the sour kind he knew them well enough. She was a Tartar, he could bet. Old military gentleman real Army by the look of him. Nice looking young lady but the ordinary kind, not glamourous no Hollywood touch about her. That bluff cheery gent he wasn't a real gentleman. Retired tradesman, that's what he is, thought Fred Narracott. The other gentleman, the lean hungry looking gentleman with the quick eyes, he was a queer one, he was. Just possible

he might have something to do with the pictures.

No, there was only one satisfactory passenger in the boat. The last gentleman,

the one who had arrived in the car (and what a car! A car such as had never been seen in Sticklehaven before. Must have cost hundreds and hundreds, a car like that).

He was the right kind. Born to money, he was. If the party had been all like him... he'd understand it...

Queer business when you came to think of it the whole thing was queer very queer...

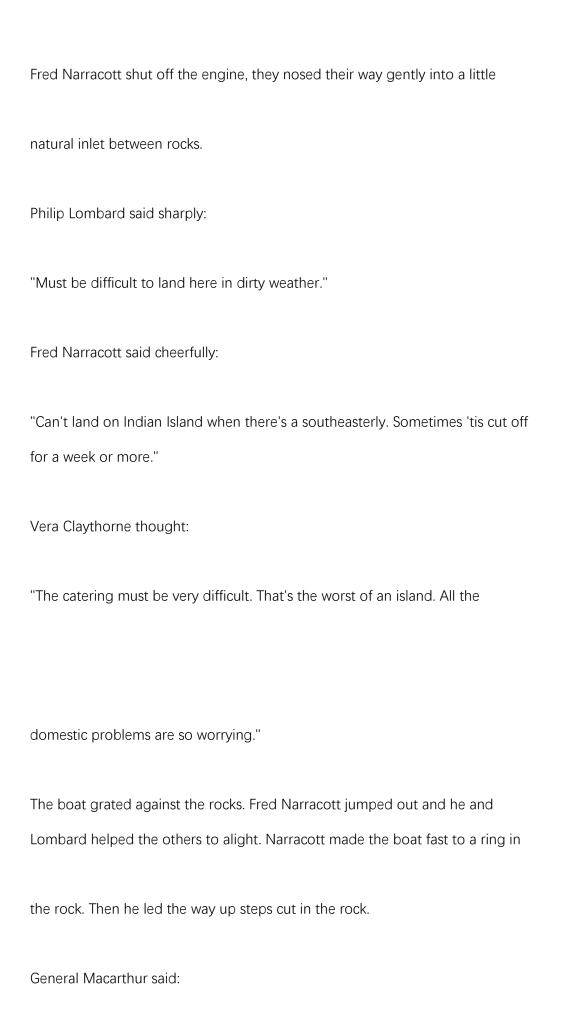
٧

The boat churned its way round the rock. Now at last the house came into view.

The south side of the island was quite different It shelved gently down to the sea.

The house was there facing south low and square and modernlooking with rounded windows letting in all the light.

An exciting house a house that lived up to expectation!



"Ha, delightful spot!"

But he felt uneasy. Damned odd sort of place.

As the party ascended the steps, and came out on a terrace above, their spirits revived. In the open doorway of the house a correct butler was awaiting them,

and something about his gravity reassured them. And then the house itself was

really most attractive, the view from the terrace magnificent...

The butler came forward bowing slightly. He was a tall lank man, greyhaired

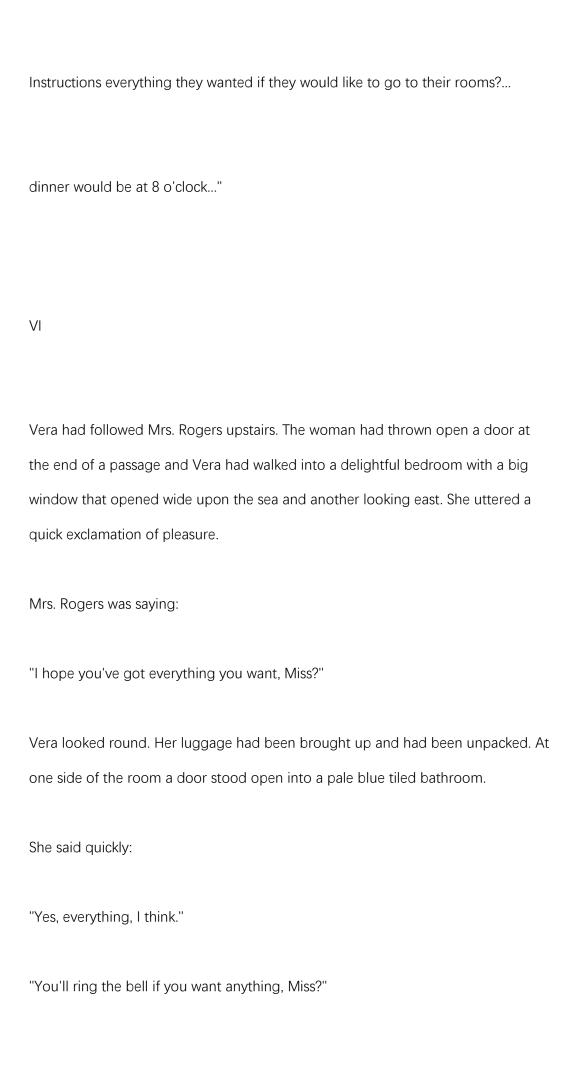
and very respectable. He said:

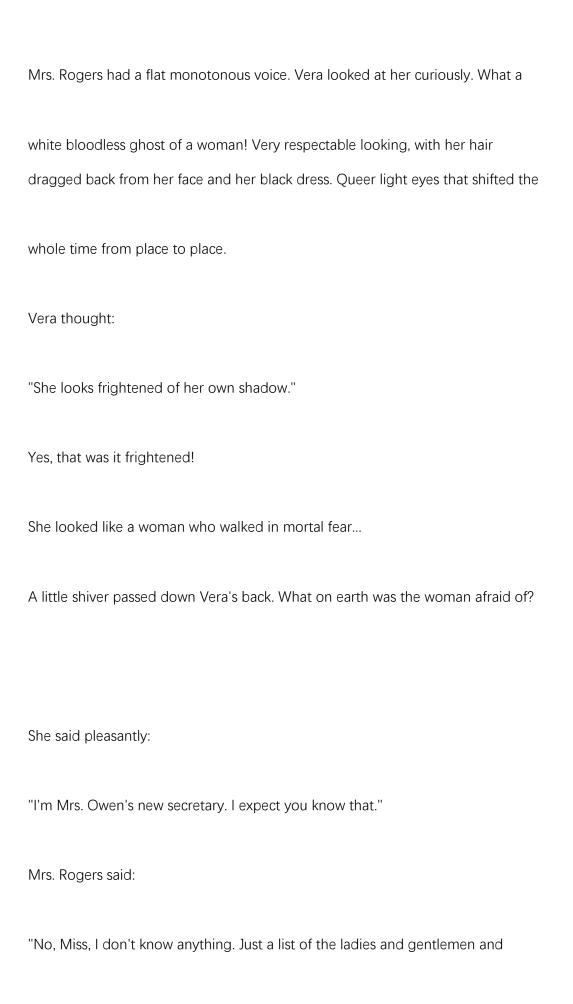
"Will you come this way, please?"

In the wide hall drinks stood ready. Rows of bottles. Anthony Marston's spirits cheered up a little. He'd just been thinking this was a rum kind of show. None of his lot! What could old Badger have been thinking about to let him in for this? However the drinks were all right. Plenty of ice, too.

What was it the butler chap was saying?

"Mr. Owen unfortunately delayed unable to get here till tomorrow.







"Oh, yes, Miss, I can manage. If there's to be large parties often perhaps Mrs.

Owen could get extra help in."

Vera said, "I expect so."

Mrs. Rogers turned to go. Her feet moved noiselessly over the ground. She drifted

from the room like a shadow.

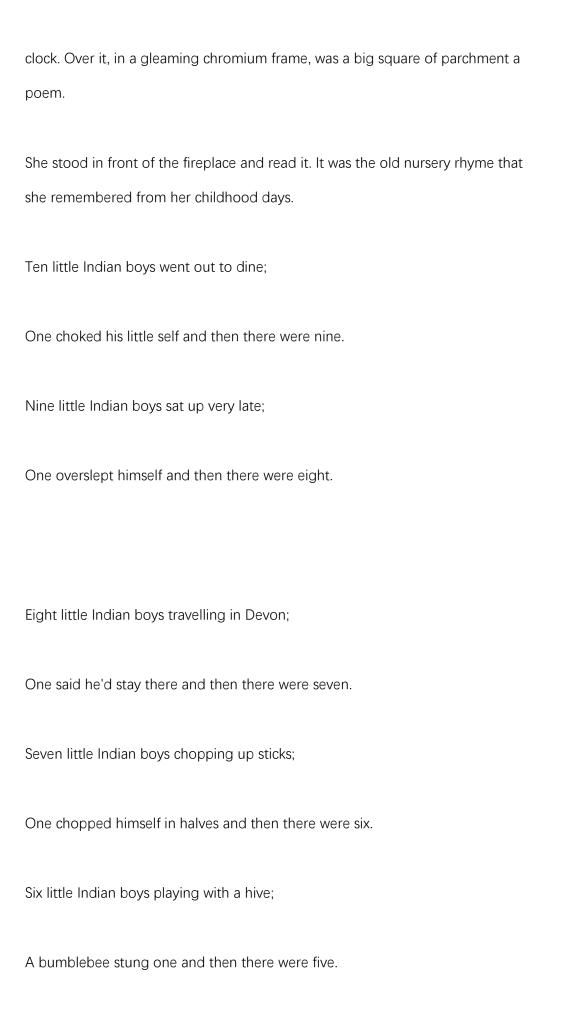
Vera went over to the window and sat down on the window seat. She was faintly disturbed. Everything somehow was a little queer. The absence of the Owens, the pale ghostlike Mrs. Rogers. And the guests! Yes, the guests were queer too. An oddly assorted party.

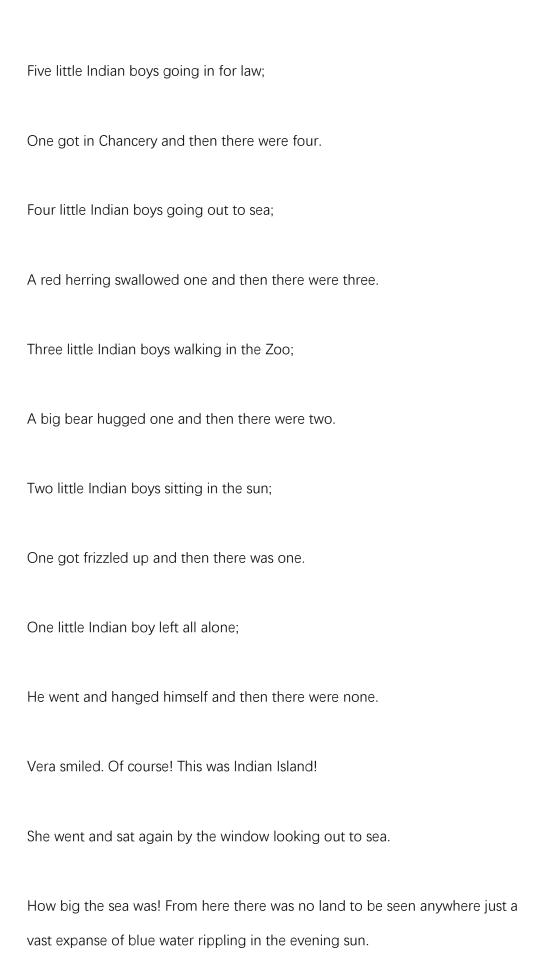
Vera thought:

"I wish I'd seen the Owens... I wish I knew what they were like."

She got up and walked restlessly about the room.

A perfect bedroom decorated throughout in the modern style. Offwhite rugs on the gleaming parquet floor faintly tinted walls a long mirror surrounded by lights. A mantelpiece bare of ornaments save for an enormous block of white marble shaped like a bear, a piece of modern sculpture in which was inset a





The sea... So peaceful today sometimes so cruel... The sea that dragged you down to its depths. Drowned... Found drowned... Drowned at sea... Drowned drowned drowned... No, she wouldn't remember... She would not think of it! All that was over... VII Dr. Armstrong came to Indian Island just as the sun was sinking into the sea. On the way across he had chatted to the boatman a local man. He was anxious to find out a little about these people who owned Indian Island, but the man Narracott seemed curiously ill informed, or perhaps unwilling to talk. So Dr. Armstrong chatted instead of the weather and of fishing. He was tired after his long motor drive. His eyeballs ached. Driving west you were driving against the sun.

Yes, he was very tired. The sea and perfect peace that was what he needed. He
would like, really, to take a long holiday. But he couldn't afford to do that. He
could afford it financially, of course, but he couldn't afford to drop out. You were soon forgotten nowadays. No, now that he had arrived, he must keep his nose to
the grindstone.
He thought:
"All the same, this evening, I'll imagine to myself that I'm not going back that I've done with London and Harley Street and all the rest of it."
There was something magical about an island the mere word suggested fantasy.
You lost touch with the world an island was a world of its own. A world,
perhaps, from which you might never return.
He thought:
"I'm leaving my ordinary life behind me."
And, smiling to himself, he began to make plans, fantastic plans for the future.

He was still smiling when he walked up the rock cut steps.

In a chair on the terrace an old gentleman was sitting and the sight of him was vaguely familiar to Dr. Armstrong. Where had he seen that froglike face, that tortoiselike neck, that hunched up attitude yes, and those pale shrewd little eyes? Of course old Wargrave. He'd given evidence once before him. Always looked half asleep, but was shrewd as could be when it came to a point of law. Had great power with a jury it was said he could make their minds up for them any day of the week. He'd got one or two unlikely convictions out of them. A hanging judge, some people said.

Funny place to meet him... here out of the world.

VIII

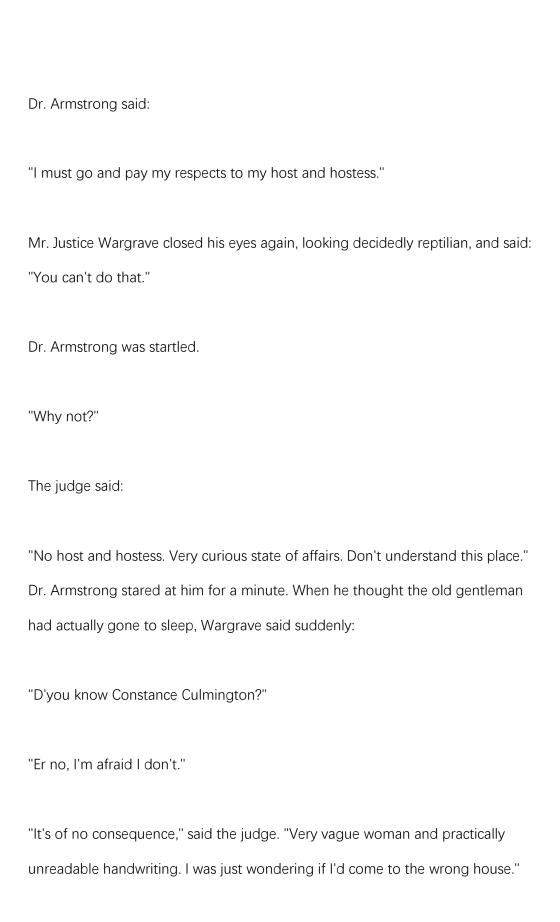
Mr. Justice Wargrave thought to himself:

"Armstrong? Remember him in the witness box. Very correct and cautious. All

doctors are damned fools. Harley Street ones are the worst of the lot." And his mind dwelt malevolently on a recent interview he had had with a suave personage in that very street.

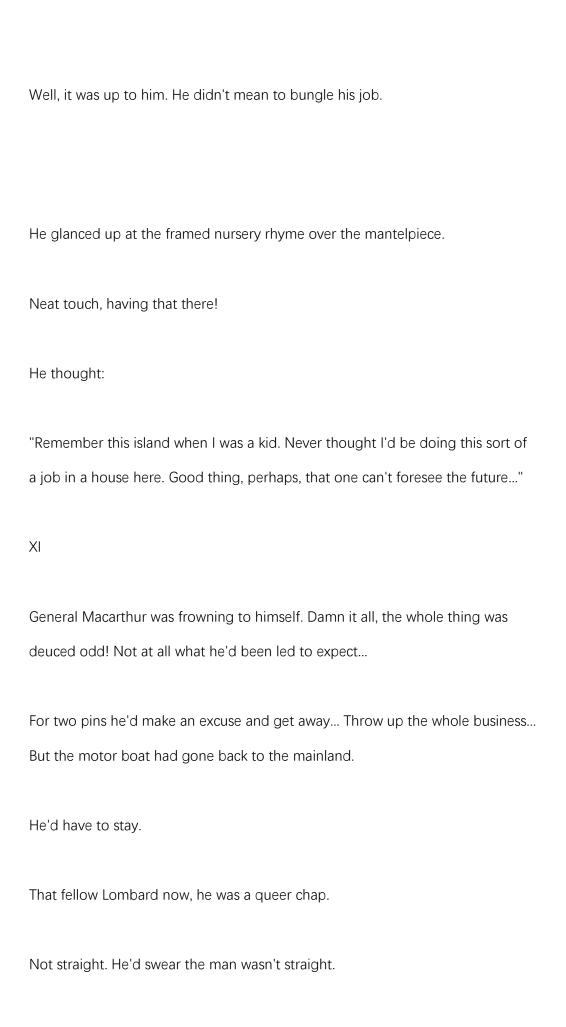
Aloud he grunted:

"Drinks are in the hall."



Dr. Armstrong shook his head and went on up to the house.
Mr. Justice Wargrave reflected on the subject of Constance Culmington.
Undependable like all women.
His mind went on to the two women in the house, the tightlipped old maid and
the girl. He didn't care for the girl, coldblooded young hussy. No, three women, if you counted the Rogers woman. Odd creature, she looked scared to death.
Respectable pair and knew their job
Rogers coming out on the terrace that minute, the Judge asked him:
"Is Lady Constance Culmington expected, do you know?"
Rogers stared at him.
"No, sir, not to my knowledge."
The judge's eyebrows rose. But he only grunted.
He thought:





As the gong sounded, Philip Lombard came out of his room and walked to the head of the stairs. He moved like a panther, smoothly and noiselessly. There was something of the panther about him altogether. A beast of prey pleasant to the eye.

He was smiling to himself.

A week eh?

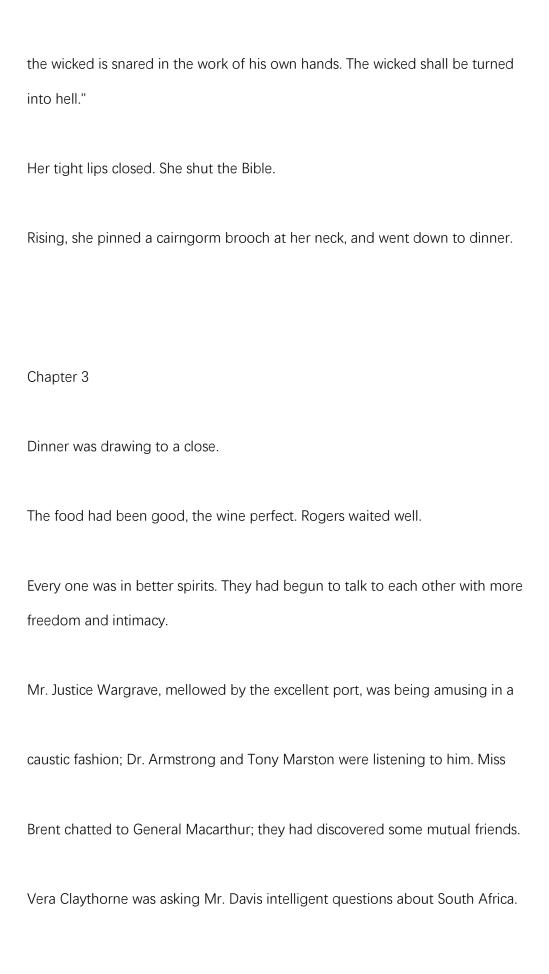
He was going to enjoy that week.

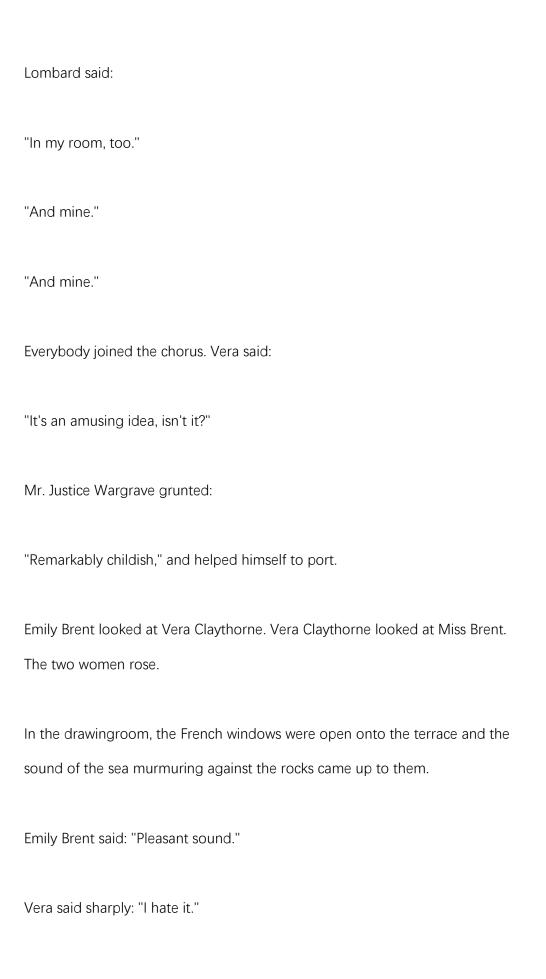
XIII

In her bedroom, Emily Brent, dressed in black silk ready for dinner, was reading her Bible.

Her lips moved as she followed the words:

"The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgement which he executeth:





Miss Brent's eyes looked at her in surprise. Vera flushed. She said, more
composedly:
"I don't think this place would be very agreeable in a storm."
Emily Brent agreed.
"I've no doubt the house is shut up in winter," she said. "You'd never get servants
to stay here for one thing."
to stay here for one thing.
Vera murmured:
"It must be difficult to get servants anyway."
Emily Brent said:
"Mrs. Oliver has been lucky to get these two. The woman's a good cook."
Vera thought:
"Funny how elderly people always get names wrong."
She said:

"Yes, I think Mrs. Owen has been very lucky indeed."
Emily Brent had brought a small piece of embroidery out of her bag. Now, as she was about to thread her needle, she paused.
She said sharply:
"Owen? Did you say Owen?"
"Yes."
Emily Brent said sharply:
"I've never met any one called Owen in my life."
Vera stared.
"But surely"
She did not finish her sentence. The door opened and the men joined them.
Rogers followed them into the room with the coffee tray.
The judge came and sat down by Emily Brent. Armstrong came up to Vera. Tony
Marston strolled to the open window. Blore studied with nanve surprise a

statuette in brass wondering perhaps if its bizarre angularities were really supposed to be the female figure. General Macarthur stood with his back to the mantelpiece. He pulled at his little white moustache. That had been a damned good dinner! His spirits were rising. Lombard turned over the pages of Punch that lay with other papers on a table by the wall.

Rogers went round with the coffee tray. The coffee was good really black and very hot.

The whole party had dined well. They were satisfied with themselves and with life. The hands of the clock pointed to twenty minutes past nine. There was a silence a comfortable replete silence.

Into that silence came The Voice. Without warning, inhuman, penetrating...
"Ladies and gentlemen! Silence, please!"

Every one was startled. They looked round at each other, at the walls. Who was speaking?

The Voice went on a high clear voice.

You are charged with the following indictments:

Edward George Armstrong, that you did upon the 14th day of March, 1925, cause the death of Louisa Mary Clees.

Emily Caroline Brent, that upon the 5th November, 1931, you were responsible

for the death of Beatrice Taylor.

William Henry Blore, that you brought about the death of James Stephen Landor

on October 10th, 1928.

Vera Elizabeth Claythorne, that on the 11th day of August, 1935, you killed Cyril

Ogilvie Hamilton.

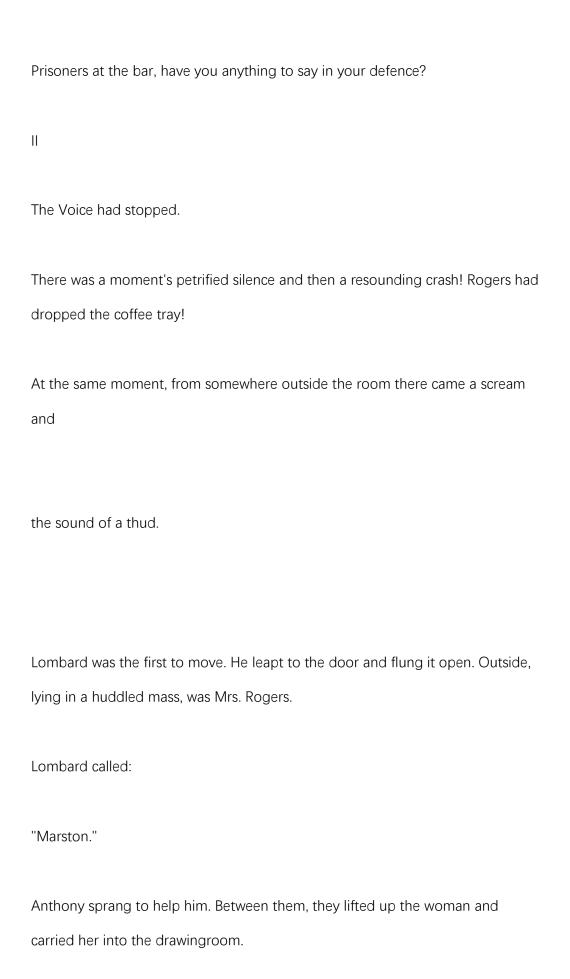
Philip Lombard, that upon a date in February, 1932, you were guilty of the death of twentyone men, members of an East African tribe.

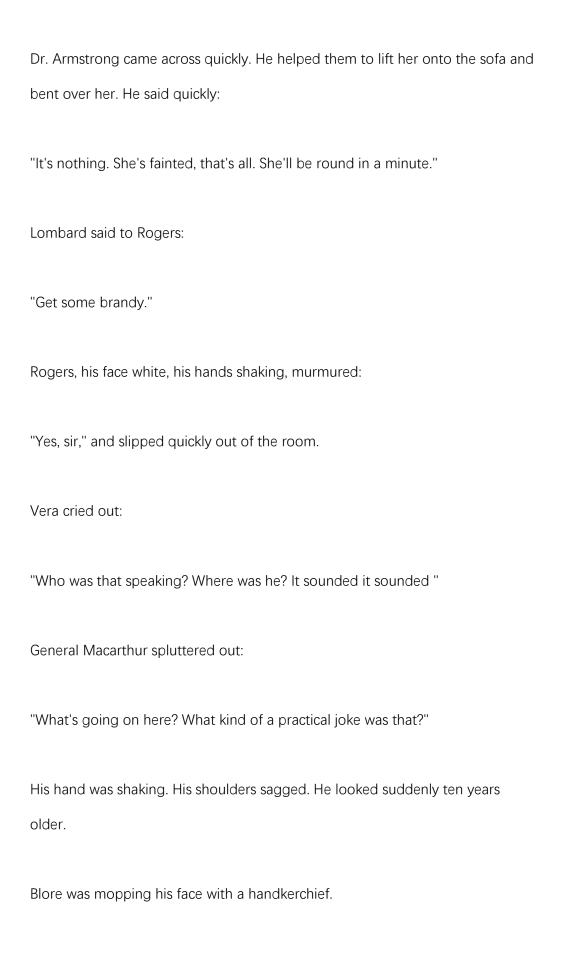
John Gordon Macarthur, that on the 4th of January, 1917, you deliberately sent your wife's lover, Arthur Richmond, to his death.

Anthony James Marston, that upon the 14th day of November last, you were guilty of the murder of John and Lucy Combes.

Thomas Rogers and Ethel Rogers, that on the 6th of May, 1929, you brought about the death of Jennifer Brady.

Lawrence John Wargrave, that upon the 10th day of June, 1930, you were guilty of the murder of Edward Seton.

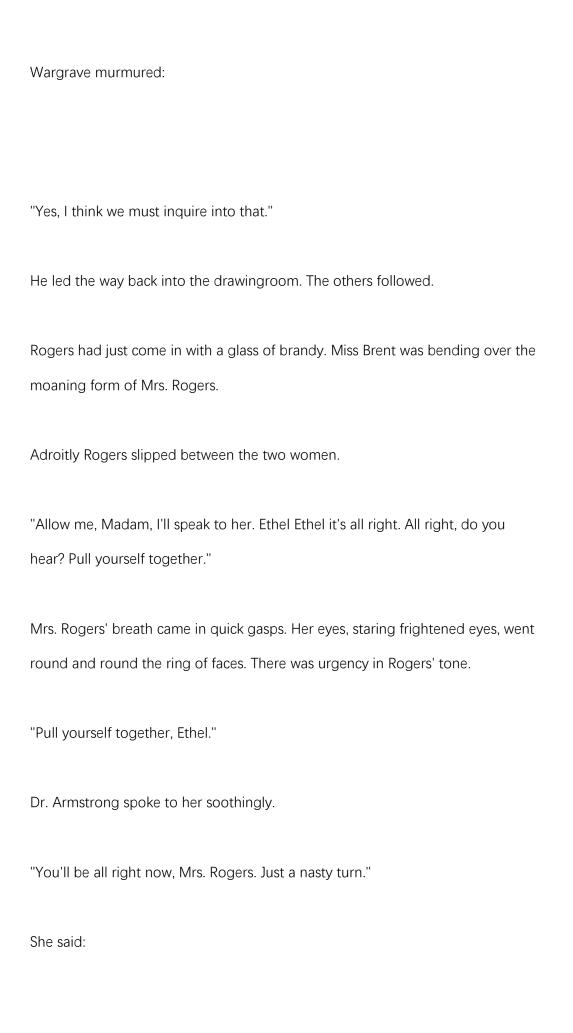


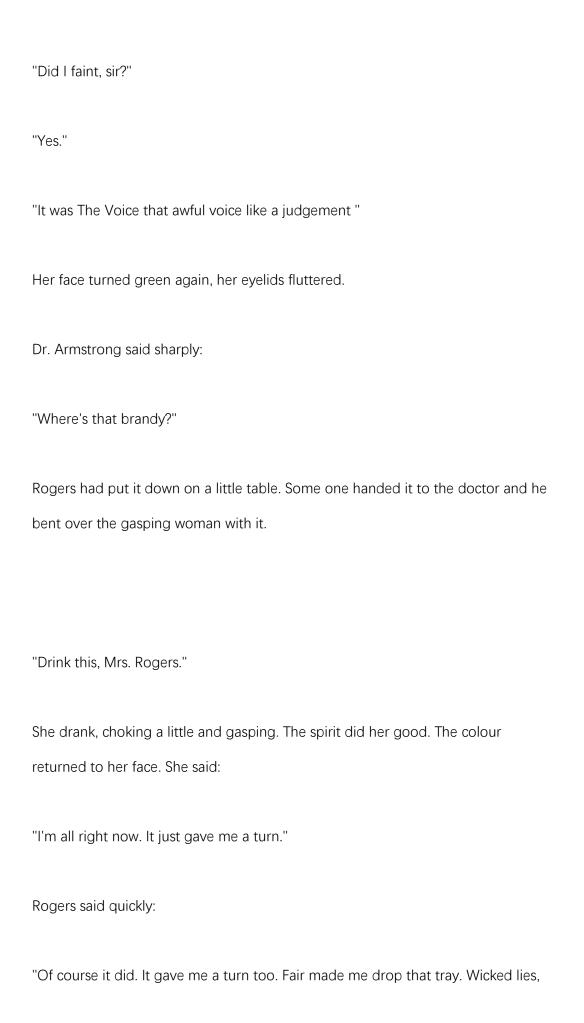


Only Mr. Justice Wargrave and Miss Brent seemed comparatively unmoved.
Emily Brent sat upright, her head held high. In both cheeks was a spot of hard
colour. The judge sat in his habitual pose, his head sunk down into his neck.
With one hand he gently scratched his ear. Only his eyes were active, darting
With one hand he gently scratched his car. Only his eyes were active, darting
round and round the room, puzzled elect with intelligence
round and round the room, puzzled, alert with intelligence.
Again it was Lombard who acted. Armstrong being busy with the collapsed
woman, Lombard was free once more to take the initiative.
He said:
"That voice? It sounded as though it were in the room."
Vera cried:
"Who was it? Who was it? It wasn't one of us."
Like the judge, Lombard's eyes wandered slowly round the room. They rested a
minute on the open window, then he shook his head decisively. Suddenly his
eyes
lighted up. He moved forward swiftly to where a door near the fireplace led into

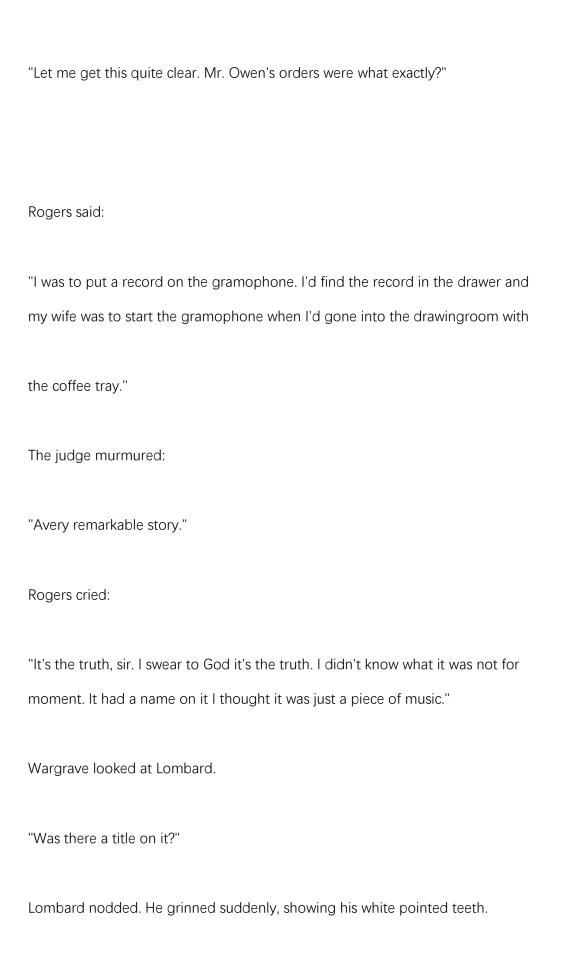
an adjoining room.
With a swift gesture, he caught the handle and flung the door open. He passed through and immediately uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.
He said:
"Ah, here we are."
The others crowded after him. Only Miss Brent remained alone sitting erect in her chair.
Inside the second room a table had been brought up close to the wall which adjoined the drawingroom. On the table was a gramophone an oldfashioned
type with a large trumpet attached. The mouth of the trumpet was against the wall, and Lombard, pushing it aside, indicated where two or three small holes had been unobtrusively bored through the wall.
Adjusting the gramophone he replaced the needle on the record and immediately they heard again: "You are charged with the following indictments "
Vera cried:
"Turn it off! Turn it off! It's horrible!"

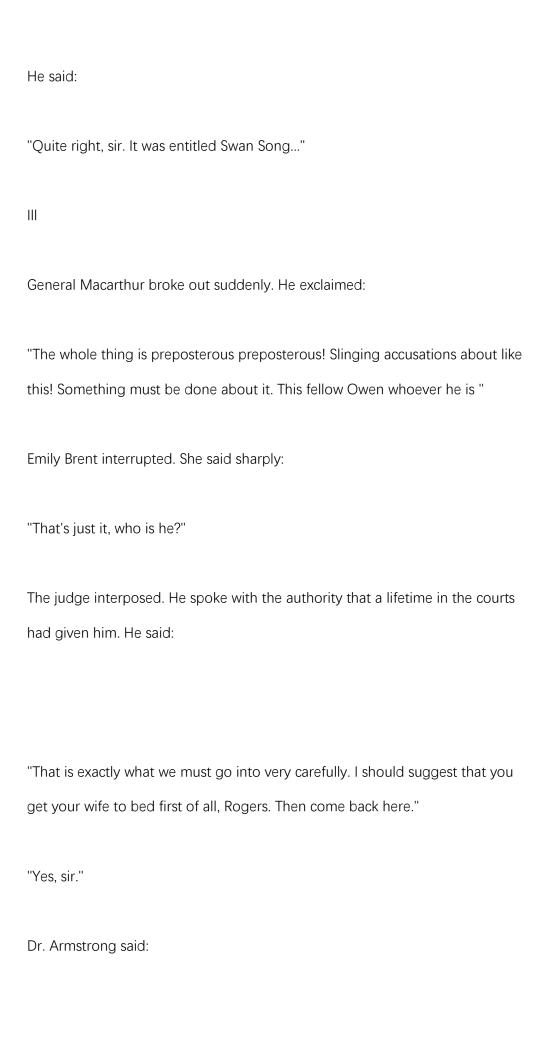
Lombard obeyed.
Dr. Armstrong said, with a sigh of relief:
"A disgraceful and heartless practical joke, I suppose."
The small clear voice of Mr. Justice Wargrave murmured:
"So you think it's a joke, do you?"
The doctor stared at him.
"What else could it be?"
The hand of the judge gently stroked his upper lip.
He said:
"At the moment I'm not prepared to give an opinion."
Anthony Marston broke in. He said:
"Look here, there's one thing you've forgotten. Who the devil turned the thing on and set it going?"



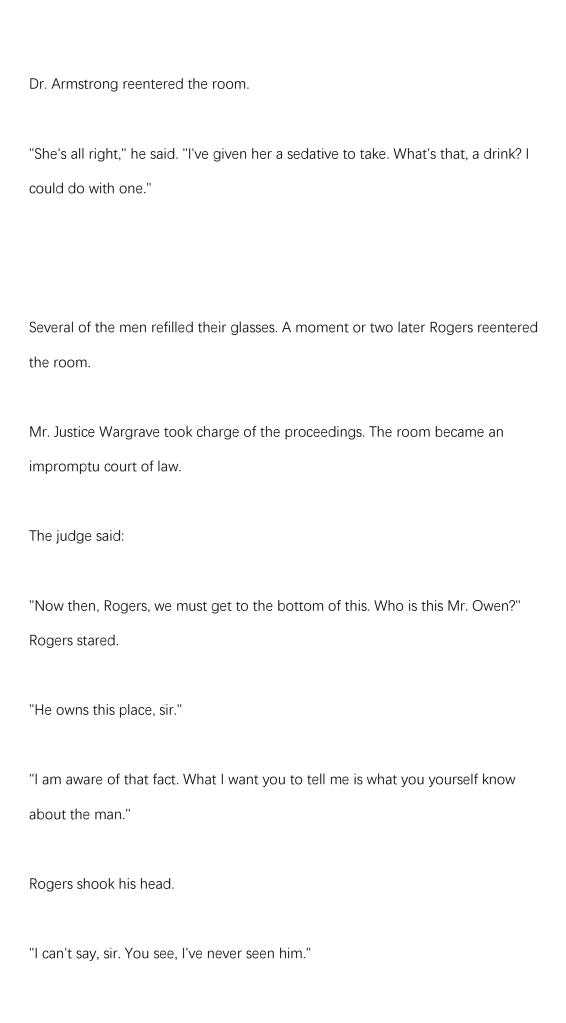


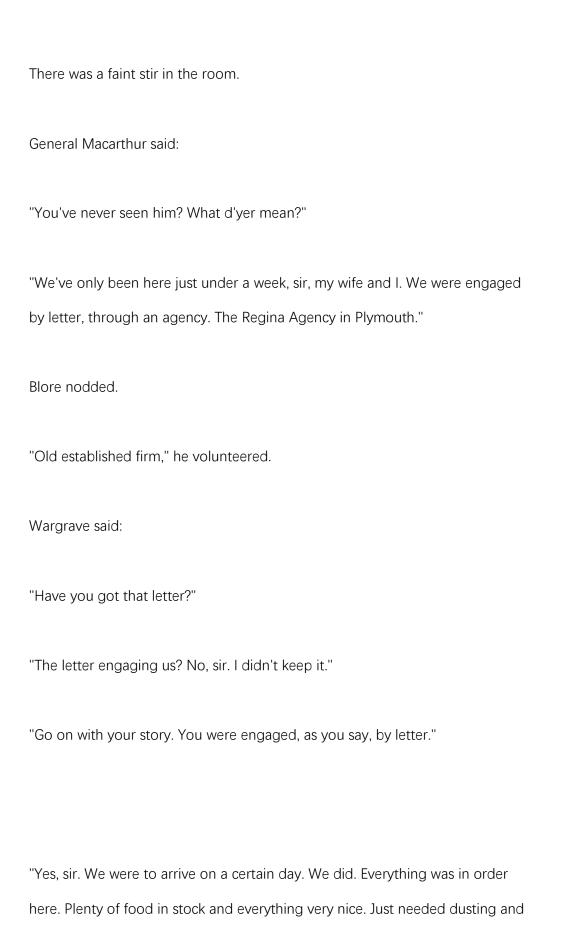




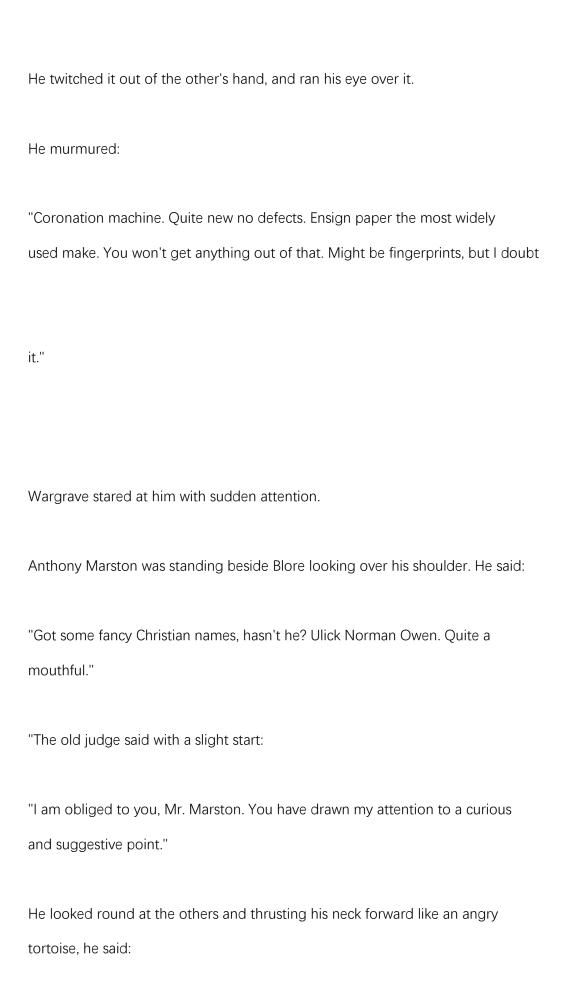












"I think the time has come for us all to pool our information. It would be well, I think, for everybody to come forward with all the information they have regarding the owner of this house." He paused and then went on. "We are all his guests. I think it would be profitable if each one of us were to explain exactly how that came about."

There was a moment's pause and then Emily Brent spoke with decision.

"There's something very peculiar about all this," she said. "I received a letter with a signature that was not very easy to read. It purported to be from a woman

I had met at a certain summer resort two or three years ago. I took the name to

be either Ogden or Oliver. I am acquainted with a Mrs. Oliver and also with a

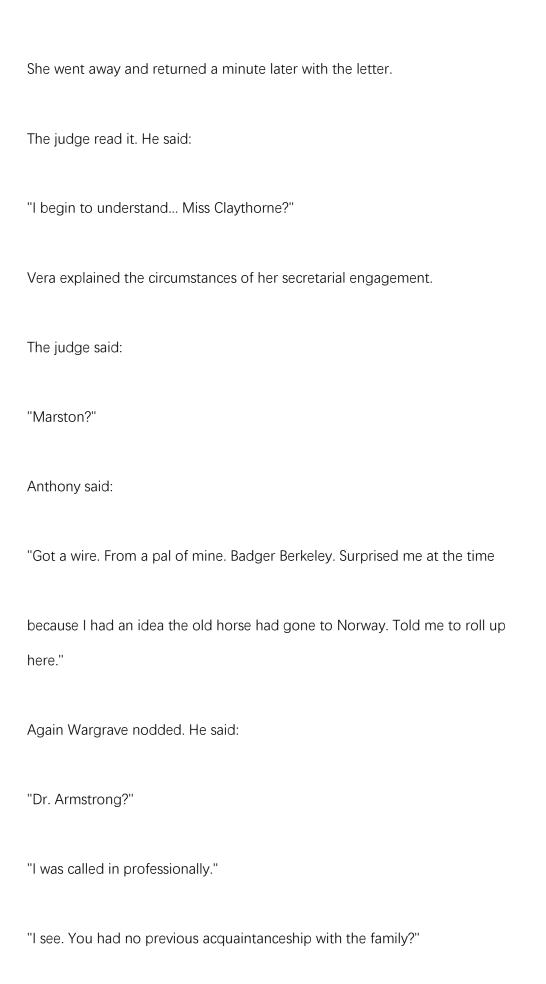
Miss Ogden. I am quite certain that I have never met, or become friendly with,

any one of the name of Owen."

Mr. Justice Wargrave said:

"You have that letter, Miss Brent?"

"Yes, I will fetch it for you."





Macarthur?" Pulling at his

Pulling at his moustache, the General muttered:

"Got a letter from this fellow Owen mentioned some old pals of mine who were to be here hoped I'd excuse informal invitation. Haven't kept the letter. I'm

afraid."

Wargrave said:

"Mr. Lombard?"

Lombard's brain had been active. Was he to come out in the open, or not? He made up his mind.

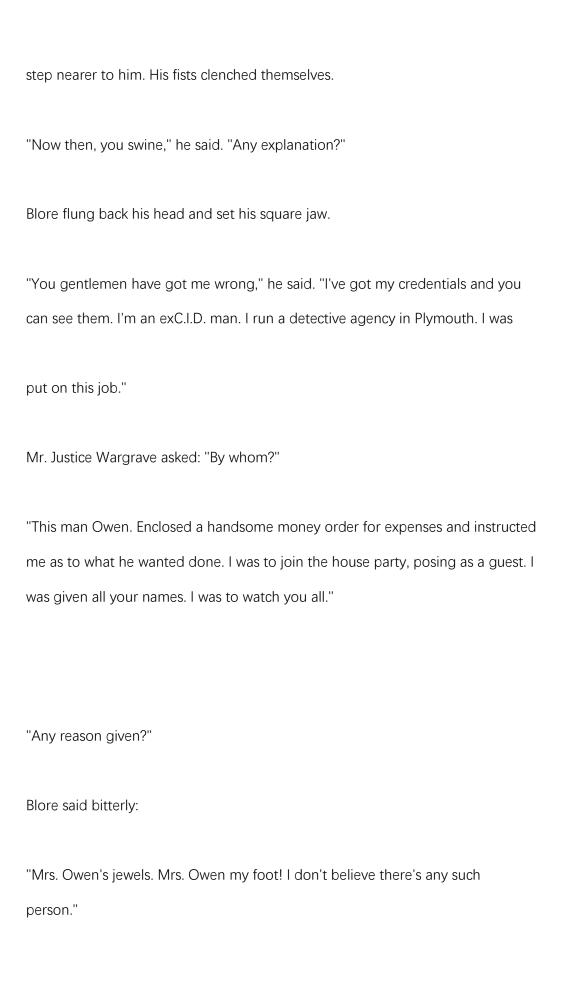
"Same sort of thing," he said. "Invitation, mention of mutual friends I fell for it all right. I've torn up the letter."

Mr. Justice Wargrave turned his attention to Mr. Blore. His forefinger stroked his upper lip and his voice was dangerously polite.

He said: "Just now we had a somewhat disturbing experience. An apparently disembodied voice spoke to us all by name, uttering certain precise accusations against us. We will deal with those accusations presently. At the moment I am interested in a minor point Amongst the names recited was that of William

Henry Blore. But as far as we know there is no one named Blore amongst us.
The
name of Davis was not mentioned. What have you to say about that, Mr. Davis?"
Blore said sulkily:
"Cat's out of the bag, it seems I suppose I'd botter admit that my name isn't
"Cat's out of the bag, it seems. I suppose I'd better admit that my name isn't
Davis."
"You are William Henry Blore?"
"That's right."
"I will add something," said Lombard. "Not only are you here under a false
name, Mr. Blore, but in addition I've noticed this evening that you're a firstclass
liar.
You claim to have come from Natal, South Africa. I know South Africa and
Natal
and I'm prepared to swear that you've never set foot in South Africa in your life."
All eyes were turned on Blore. Angry suspicious eyes. Anthony Marston moved

а



Again the forefinger of the judge stroked his lip, this time appreciatively. "Your conclusions are, I think, justified," he said. "Ulick Norman Owen! In Miss Brent's letter, though the signature of the surname is a mere scrawl the Christian names are reasonably clear Una Nancy in either case, you notice, the same initials. Ulick Norman Owen Una Nancy Owen each time, that is to say, U.N. Owen. Or by a slight stretch of fancy, UNKNOWN!" Vera cried: "But this is fantastic mad!" The judge nodded gently. He said: "Oh, yes. I've no doubt in my own mind that we have been invited here by a madman probably a dangerous homicidal lunatic." Chapter 4 There was a moment's silence a silence of dismay and bewilderment. Then the

judge's small clear voice took up the thread once more.

"We will now proceed to the next stage of our inquiry. First, however, I will just add my own credentials to the list."

He took a letter from his pocket and tossed it onto the table.

"This purports to be from an old friend of mine, Lady Constance Culmington. I hove not seen her for some years. She went to the East. It is exactly the kind of

vague incoherent letter she would write, urging me to join her here and referring

to her host and hostess in the vaguest of terms. The same technique, you will

observe. I only mention it because it agrees with the other evidence from all of which emerges one interesting point. Whoever it was who enticed us here, that

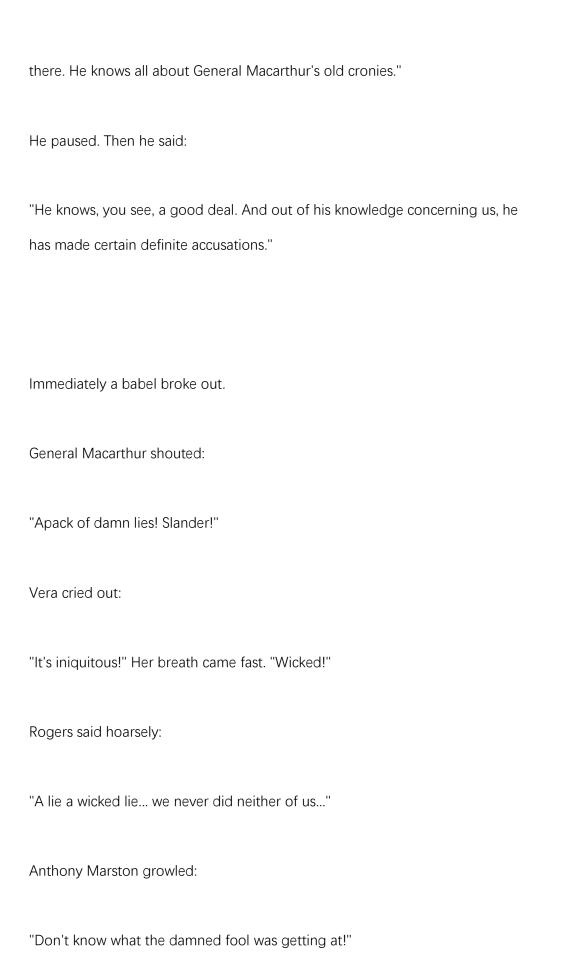
person knows or has taken the trouble to find out a good deal about us all. He,

whoever he may be, is aware of my friendship for Lady Constance and is familiar with her epistolary style. He knows something about Dr. Armstrong's

colleagues and their present whereabouts. He knows the nickname of Mr.

Marston's friend and the kind of telegrams he sends. He knows exactly where

Miss Brent was two years ago for her holiday and the kind of people she met



The upraised hand of Mr. Justice Wargrave calmed the tumult.

He said, picking his words with care:

"I wish to say this. Our unknown friend accuses me of the murder of one Edward Seton. I remember Seton perfectly well. He came up before me for trial in June of

the year 1930. He was charged with the murder of an elderly woman. He was

very ably defended and made a good impression on the jury in the witness box.

Nevertheless, on the evidence, he was certainly guilty. I summed up accordingly,

and the jury brought in a verdict of Guilty. In passing sentence of death I concurred with the verdict. An appeal was lodged on the grounds of misdirection.

The appeal was rejected and the man was duly executed. I wish to say before you

all that my conscience is perfectly clear on the matter. I did my duty and nothing more. I passed sentence on a rightly convicted murderer."

Armstrong was remembering now. The Seton case! The verdict had come as a

great surprise. He had met Matthews, K.C., on one of the days of the trial dining

at a restaurant. Matthews had been confident. "Not a doubt of the verdict.

Acquittal practically certain." And then afterwards he had heard comments:

"Judge was dead against him. Turned the jury right round and they brought him in guilty. Quite legal, though. Old Wargrave knows his law." "It was almost as though he had a private down on the fellow."

All these memories rushed through the doctor's mind. Before he could consider the wisdom of the question he had asked impulsively:

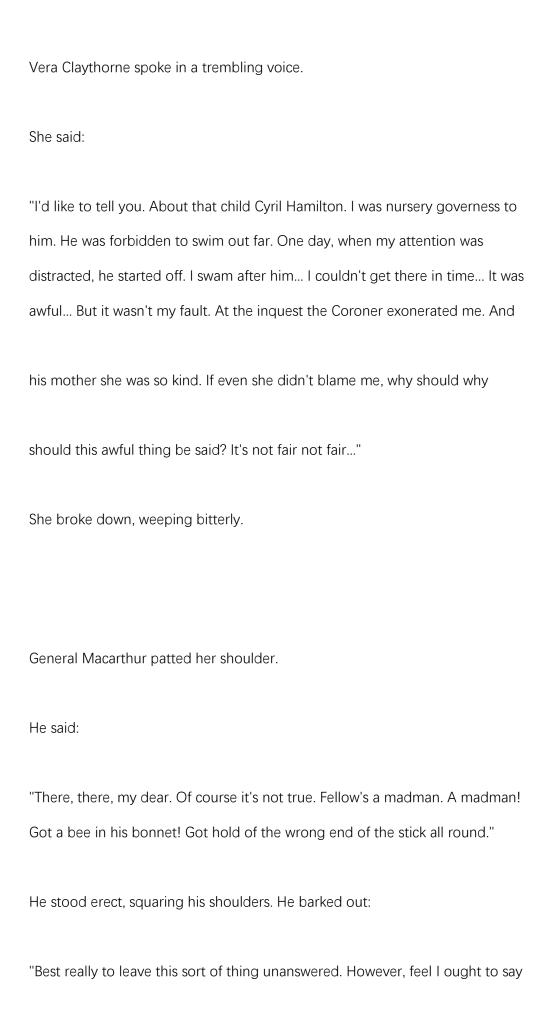
"Did you know Seton at all? I mean previous to the case."

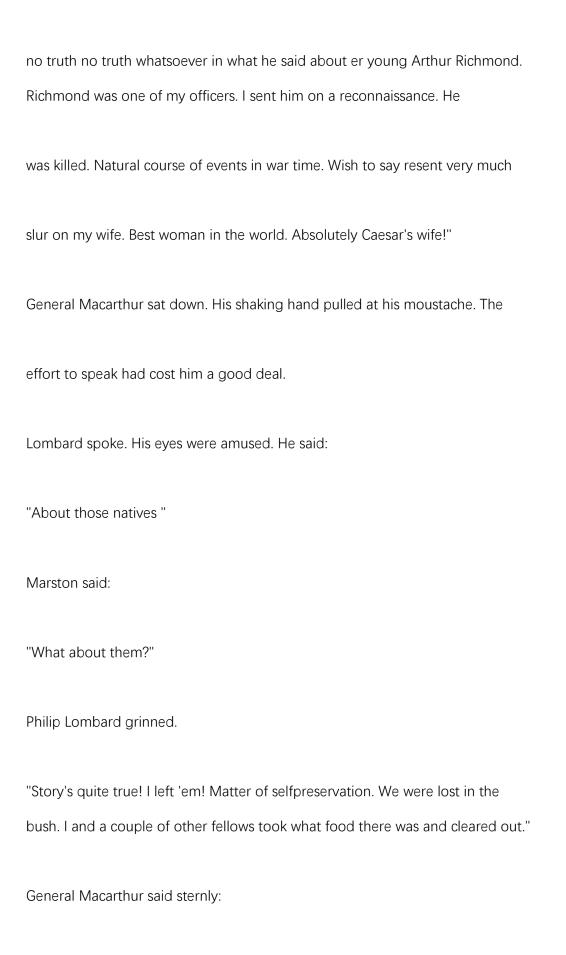
The hooded reptilian eyes met his. In a clear cold voice the judge said:

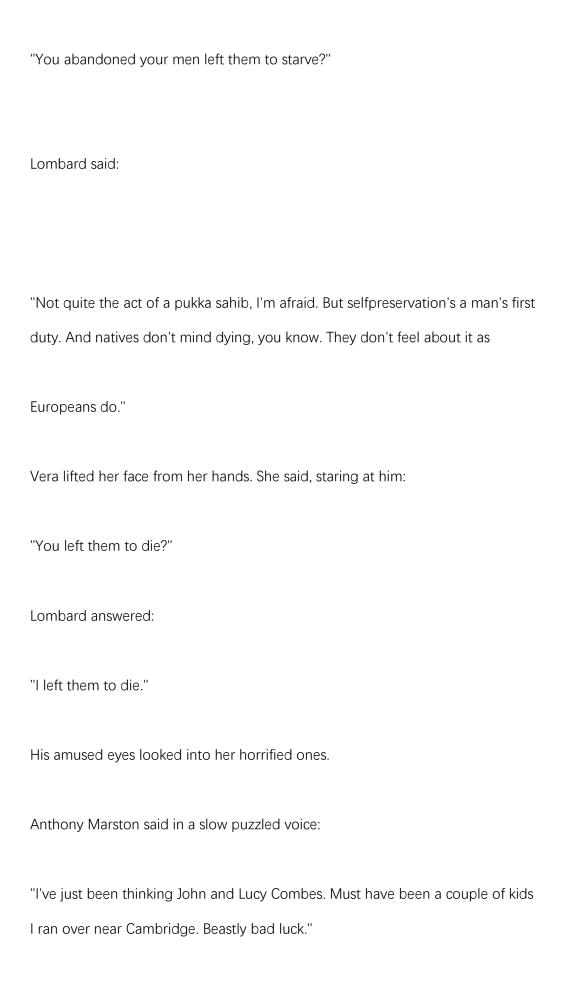
"I knew nothing of Seton previous to the case."

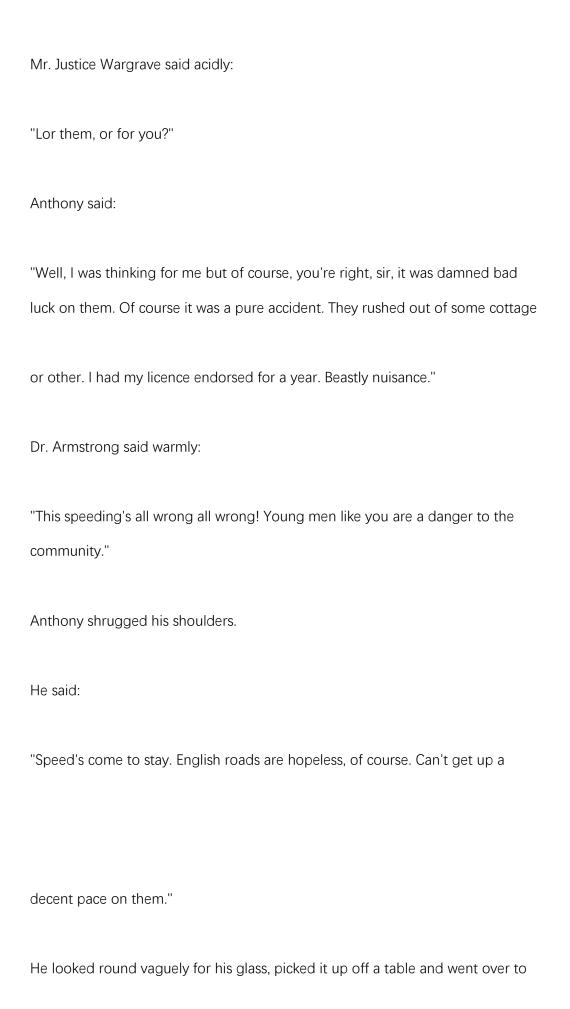
Armstrong said to himself:

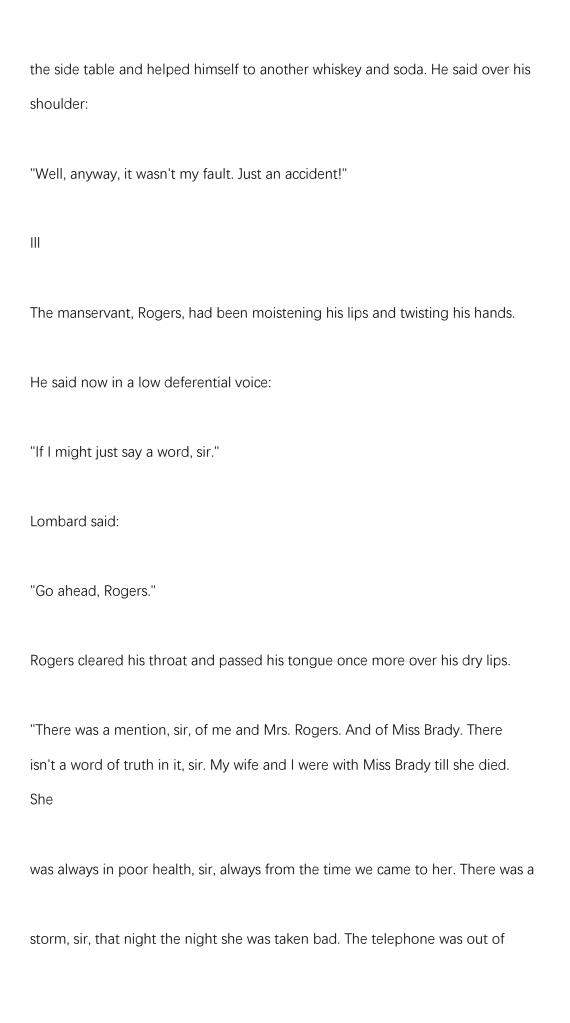
"The fellow's lying I know he's lying."



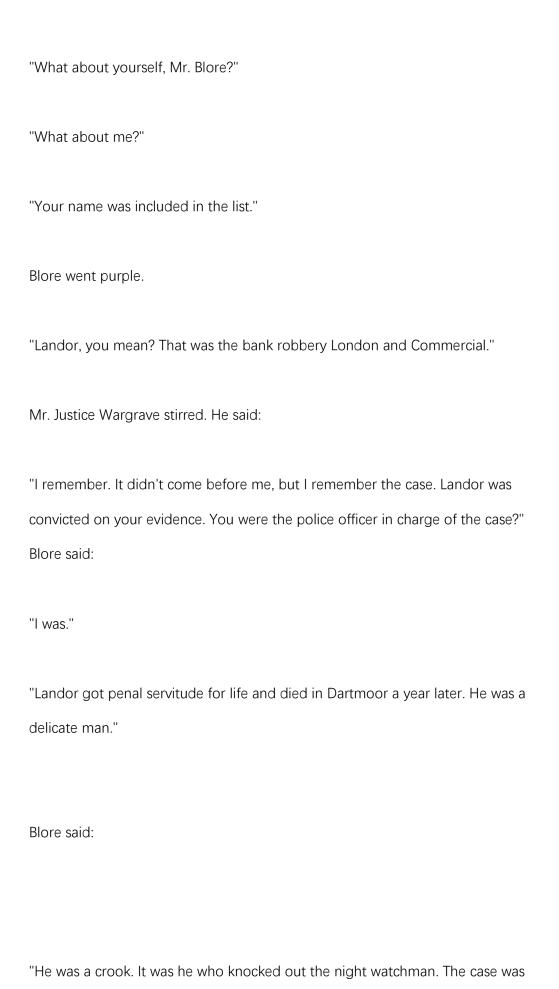


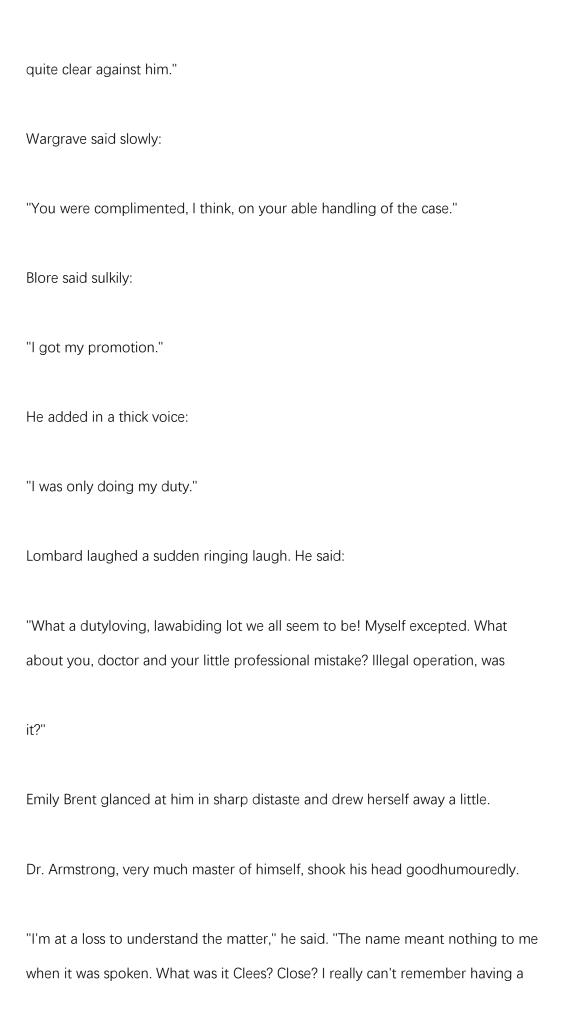






order. We couldn't get the doctor to her. I went for him, sir, on foot. But he got
there too late. We'd done everything possible for her, sir. Devoted to her, we
were. Any one will tell you the same. There was never a word said against us.
Not a word."
Lombard looked thoughtfully at the man's twitching face, his dry lips, the fright
in his eyes. He remembered the crash of the falling coffee tray. He thought, but did not say, "Oh, yea?"
Blore spoke in his hearty bullying official manner.
He said:
"Came into a little something at her death, though? Eh?"
Rogers drew himself up. He said stiffly:
"Miss Brady left us a legacy in recognition of our faithful services. And why not,
I'd like to know?"
Lombard said:





patient of that name, or being connected with a death in any way. The thing's a complete mystery to me. Of course, it's a long time ago. It might possibly be one of my operation cases in hospital. They come too late, so many of these people.

Then, when the patient dies, they always consider it's the surgeon's fault."

He sighed, shaking his head.

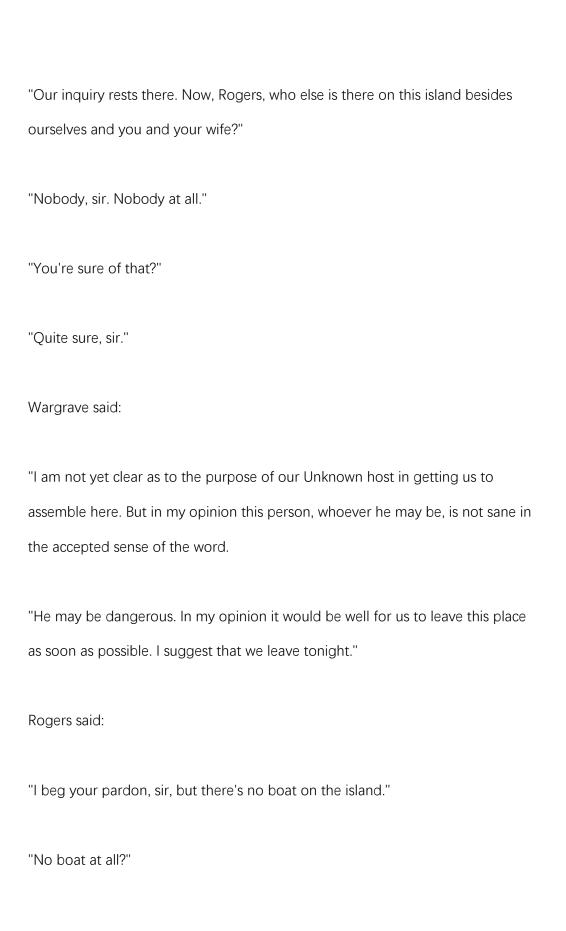
He thought:

"Drunk that's what it was drunk... And I operated! Nerves all to pieces hands shaking. I killed her, all right. Poor devil elderly woman simple job if I'd been sober. Lucky for me there's loyalty in our profession. The Sister knew, of course but she held her tongue, God, it gave me a shock! Pulled me up. But who could have known about it after all these years?"

IV

There was a silence in the room. Everybody was looking, covertly or openly, at







"The legal life's narrowing! I'm all for crime! Here's to it."

He picked up his drink and drank it off at a gulp.

Too quickly, perhaps. He choked choked badly. His face contorted, turned purple. He gasped for breath then slid down off his chair, the glass falling from his hand.

Chapter 5

It was so sudden and so unexpected that it took every one's breath away. They remained stupidly staring at the crumpled figure on the ground.

Then Dr. Armstrong jumped up and went over to him, kneeling beside him.

When he raised his head his eyes were bewildered.

He said in a low awestruck whisper:

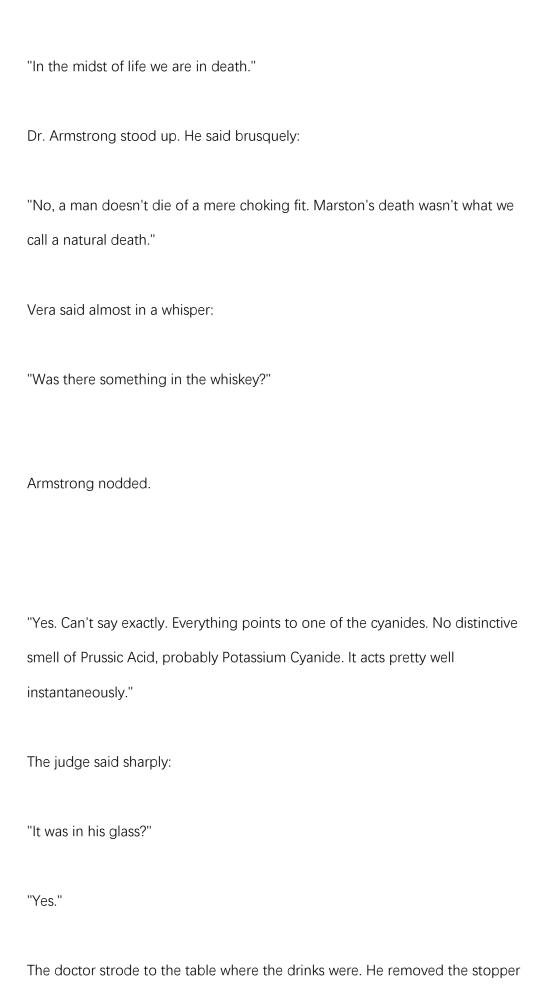
"My God! he's dead!"

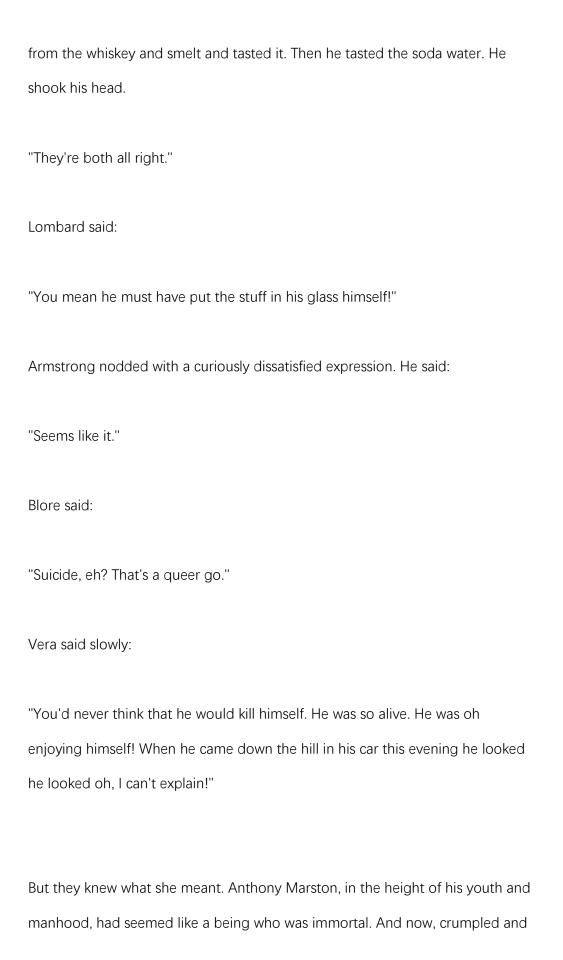
They didn't take it in. Not at once.

Dead? Dead? That young Norse God in the prime of his health and strength.

Struck down all in a moment. Healthy young men didn't die like that, choking over a whiskey and soda...

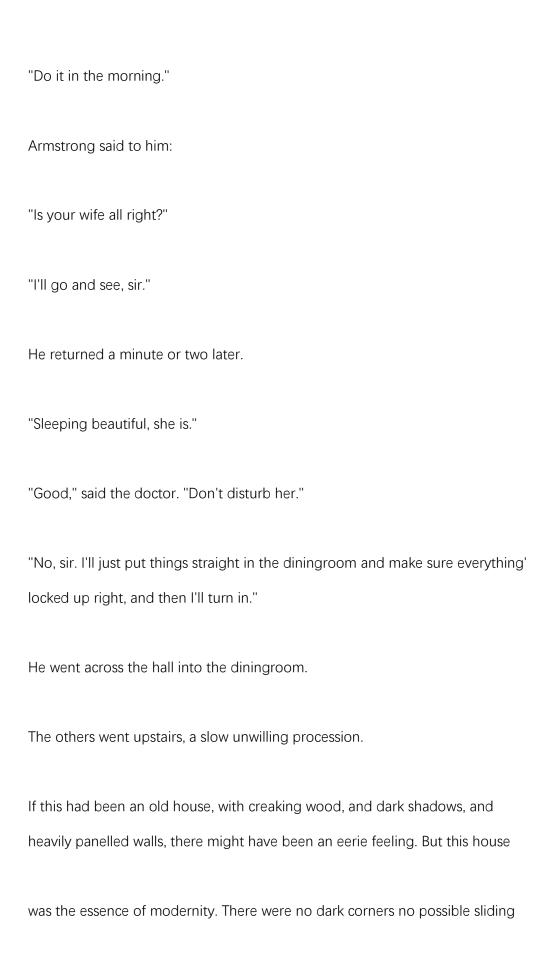
No, they couldn't take it in.
Dr. Armstrong was peering into the dead man's face. He sniffed at the blue twisted lips. Then he picked up the glass from which Anthony Marston had been drinking.
General Macarthur said:
"Dead: D'you mean the fellow just choked and and died?"
The physician said:
"You can call it choking if you like. He died of asphyxiation right enough."
He was sniffing now at the glass. He dipped a finger into the dregs and very cautiously just touched the finger with the tip of his tongue.
His expression altered.
General Macarthur said:
"Never knew a man could die like that just of a choking fit!"
Emily Brent said in a clear voice:





broken, he lay on the floor.
Dr. Armstrong said:
"Is there any possibility other than suicide?"
Slowly every one shook his head. There could be no other explanation. The drinks
themselves were untampered with. They had all seen Anthony Marston go across and help himself. It followed therefore that any Cyanide in the drink must have been put there by Anthony Marston himself.
And yet why should Anthony Marston commit suicide?
Blore said thoughtfully:
"You know, doctor, it doesn't seem right to me. I shouldn't have said Mr. Marston was a suicidal type of gentleman."
Armstrong answered:
"I agree."

They had left it like that. What else was there to say?
Together Armstrong and Lombard had carried the inert body of Anthony  Marston to his bedroom and had laid him there covered over with a sheet.
When they came downstairs again, the others were standing in a group, shivering a little, though the night was not cold.
Emily Brent said:
"We'd better go to bed. It's late."
It was past twelve o'clock. The suggestion was a wise one yet every one
hesitated. It was as though they clung to each other's company for reassurance.  The judge said:
"Yes, we must get some sleep."
Rogers said:
"I haven't cleared yet in the diningroom."
Lombard said curtly:



panels it was flooded with electric light everything was new and bright and
shining. There was nothing hidden in this house, nothing concealed. It had no
atmosphere about it.
Somehow, that was the most frightening thing of all
They exchanged goodnights on the upper landing. Each of them went into his or
her own room, and each of them automatically, almost without conscious thought, locked the door
111
In his pleasant softly tinted room, Mr. Justice Wargrave removed his garments and prepared himself for bed.
He was thinking about Edward Seton.
He remembered Seton very well. His fair hair, his blue eyes, his habit of looking you straight in the face with a pleasant air of straightforwardness. That was
what had made so good an impression on the jury.

Llewellyn, for the Crown, had bungled it a bit. He had been overvehement, had tried to prove too much.

Matthews, on the other hand, for the Defence, had been good. His points had told. His crossexaminations had been deadly. His handling of his client in the witness box had been masterly.

And Seton had come through the ordeal of crossexamination well. He had not got excited or overvehement. The jury had been impressed. It had seemed to Matthews, perhaps, as though everything had been over bar the shouting.

The judge wound up his watch carefully and placed it by the bed.

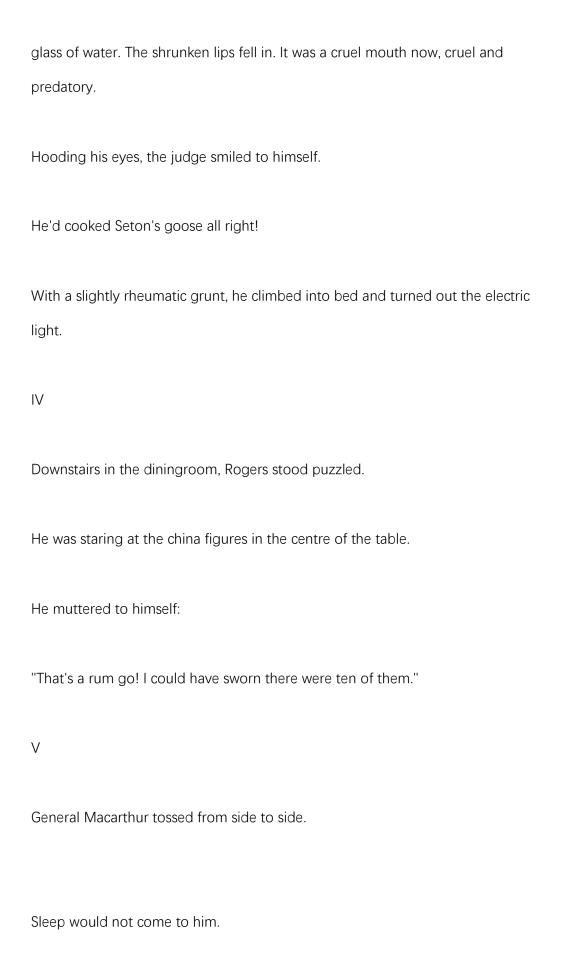
He remembered exactly how he had felt sitting there listening, making notes,

appreciating everything, tabulating every scrap of evidence that told against the prisoner.

He'd enjoyed that case! Matthews' final speech had been firstclass. Llewellyn, coming after it, had failed to remove the good impression that the defending counsel had made.

And then had come his own summing up...

Carefully, Mr. Justice Wargrave removed his false teeth and dropped them into a



In the darkness he kept seeing Arthur Richmond's face.

He'd liked Arthur he'd been damned fond of Arthur. He'd been pleased that Leslie liked him too.

Leslie was so capricious. Lots of good fellows that Leslie would turn up her nose at and pronounce dull. "Dull!" Just like that.

But she hadn't found Arthur Richmond dull. They'd got on well together from the

beginning. They'd talked of plays and music and pictures together. She'd teased him, made fun of him, ragged him. And he, Macarthur, had been delighted at the thought that Leslie took quite a motherly interest in the boy.

Motherly indeed! Damn fool not to remember that Richmond was twentyeight to Leslie's twentynine.

He'd loved Leslie. He could see her now. Her heartshaped face, and her dancing deep grey eyes, and the brown curling mass of her hair. He'd loved Leslie and he'd believed in her absolutely.

Out there in France, in the middle of all the hell of it, he'd sat thinking of her, taken her picture out of the breast pocket of his tunic.

And then he'd found out!

It had come about exactly in the way things happened in books. The letter in the wrong envelope. She'd been writing to them both and she'd put her letter to Richmond in the envelope addressed to her husband. Even now, all these years later, he could feel the shock of it the pain...

God, it had hurt!

And the business had been going on some time. The letter made that clear.

Weekends! Richmond's last leave...

Leslie Leslie and Arthur!

God damn the fellow! Damn his smiling face, his brisk "Yes, sir." Liar and hypocrite! Stealer of another man's wife!

It had gathered slowly that cold murderous rage.

He'd managed to carry on as usual to show nothing. He'd tried to make his manner to Richmond just the same.

Had he succeeded? He thought so. Richmond hadn't suspected. Inequalities of temper were easily accounted for out there, where men's nerves were continually snapping under the strain.

Only young Armitage had looked at him curiously once or twice. Quite a young chap, but he'd had perceptions, that boy.

Armitage, perhaps, had guessed when the time came.

He'd sent Richmond deliberately to death. Only a miracle could have brought him

through unhurt. That miracle didn't happen. Yes, he'd sent Richmond to his death and he wasn't sorry. It had been easy enough. Mistakes were being made all the time, officers being sent to death needlessly. All was confusion, panic. People might say afterwards, "Old Macarthur lost his nerve a bit, made some colossal blunders, sacrificed some of his best men." They couldn't say more.

But young Armitage was different. He'd looked at his commanding officer very

oddly. He'd known, perhaps, that Richmond was being deliberately sent to death.

(And after the War was over had Armitage talked?)

Leslie hadn't known. Leslie had wept for her lover (he supposed) but her weeping was over by the time he'd come back to England. He'd never told her that he'd

found her out. They'd gone on together only, somehow, she hadn't seemed very real any more. And then, three or four years later, she'd got double pneumonia and died.

That had been a long time ago. Fifteen years sixteen years?

And he'd left the Army and come to live in Devon bought the sort of little place he'd always meant to have. Nice neighbours pleasant part of the world. There

was a bit of shooting and fishing. He'd gone to church on Sundays. (But not the

day that the lesson was read about David putting Uriah in the forefront of the

battle. Somehow he couldn't face that. Gave him an uncomfortable feeling.)

Everybody had been very friendly. At first, that is. Later, he'd had an uneasy

feeling that people were talking about him behind his back. They eyed him differently, somehow. As though they'd heard something some lying rumour...

(Armitage? Supposing Armitage had talked?)

He'd avoided people after that withdrawn into himself. Unpleasant to feel that people were discussing you.

And all so long ago. So so purposeless now. Leslie had faded into the distance and Arthur Richmond, too. Nothing of what had happened seemed to matter any

It made life lonely, though. He'd taken to shunning his old Army friends.

(If Armitage had talked, they'd know about it.)

And now this evening a hidden voice had blared out that old hidden story.

Had he dealt with it all right? Kept a stiff upper lip? Betrayed the right amount of feeling indignation, disgust but no guilt, no discomfiture? Difficult to tell.

Surely nobody could have taken the accusation seriously. There had been a pack of other nonsense, just as farfetched. That charming girl the voice had accused

Emily Brent, too actually a niece of old Tom Brent of the Regiment. It had accused her of murder! Any one could see with half an eye that the woman was as pious as could be the kind that was hand and glove with parsons.

her of drowning a child! Idiotic! Some madman throwing crazy accusations

about!

Damned curious business the whole thing! Crazy, nothing less.

Ever since they had got there when was that? Why, damn it, it was only this

afternoon! Seemed a good bit longer than that.

He thought: "I wonder when we shall get away again."

Tomorrow, of course, when the motor boat came from the mainland.

Funny, just this minute he didn't want much to get away from the island... To go

back to the mainland, back to his little house, back to all the troubles and worries. Through the open window he could hear the waves breaking on the rocks

a little louder now than earlier in the evening. Wind was getting up, too.

He thought: "Peaceful sound. Peaceful place..."

He thought: "Best of an island is once you get there you can't go any further... you've come to the end of things..."

He knew, suddenly, that he didn't want to leave the island.

Vera Claythorne lay in bed, wide awake, staring up at the ceiling.

The light beside her was on. She was frightened of the dark.

She was thinking:

"Hugo... Hugo... Why do I feel you're so near to me tonight?... Somewhere quite close...

"Where is he really? I don't know. I never shall know. He just went away right away out of my life!"

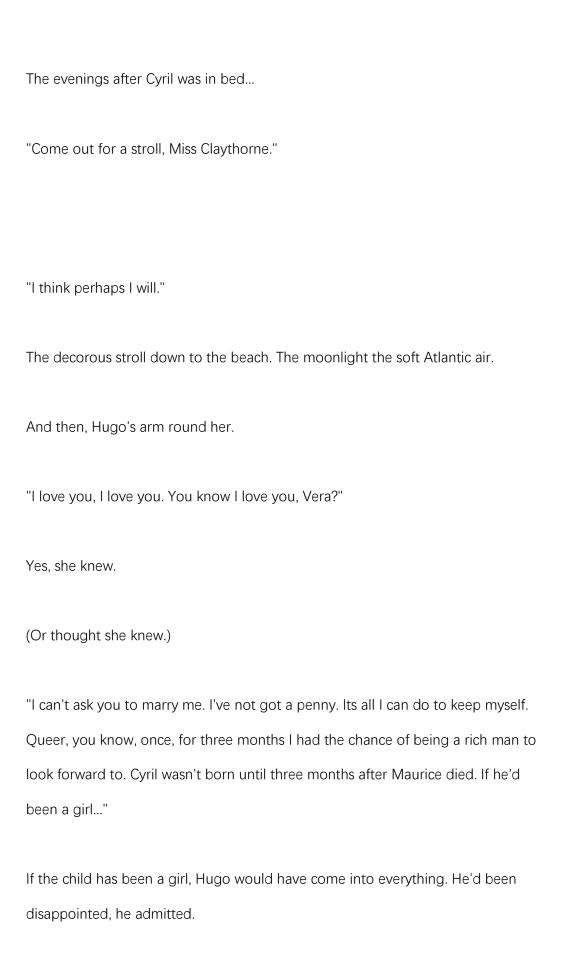
It was no good trying not to think of Hugo. He was close to her. She had to think of him to remember...

Cornwall...

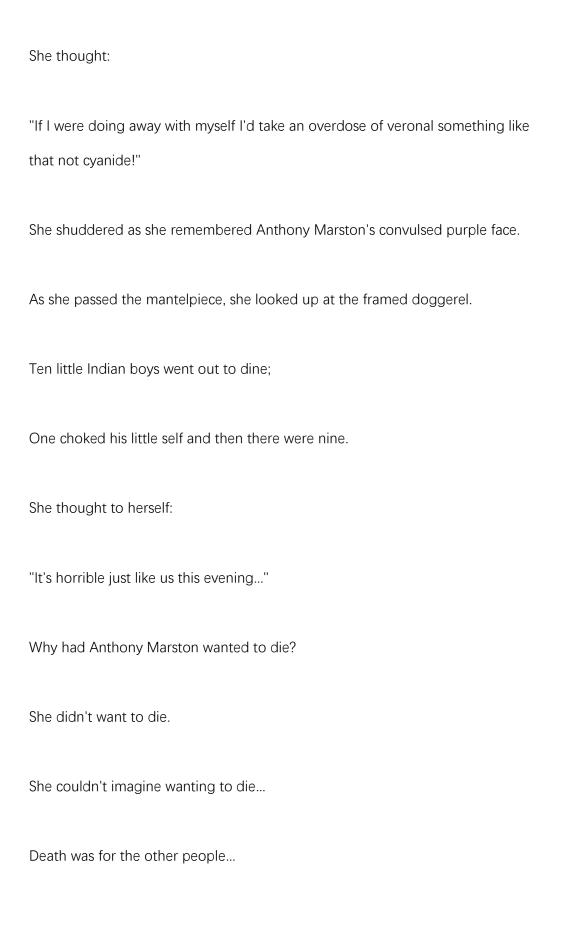
The black rocks, the smooth yellow sand. Mrs. Hamilton, stout, goodhumoured. Cyril, whining a little always, pulling at her hand.

"I want to swim out to the rock. Miss Claythorne. Why can't I swim out to the rock?"

Looking up meeting Hugo's eyes watching her.







Chapter 6
Dr. Armstrong was dreaming
It was very hot in the operating room
Surely they'd got the temperature too high? The sweat was rolling down his face.  His hands were clammy. Difficult to hold the scalpel firmly
How beautifully sharp it was
Easy to do a murder with a knife like that. And of course he was doing a murder
The woman's body looked different. It had been a large unwieldy body. This was a spare meagre body. And the face was hidden.
Who was it that he had to kill?
He couldn't remember. But he must know! Should he ask Sister?
Sister was watching him. No, he couldn't ask her. She was suspicious, he could see that.
But who was it on the operating table?

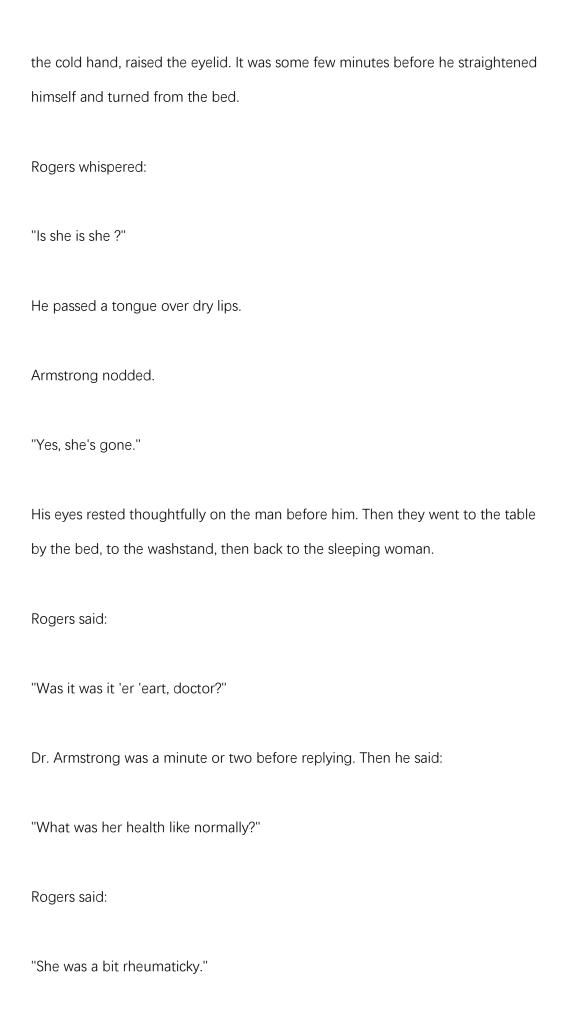
They shouldn't have covered up the face like that... If he could only see the face... Ah! that was better. A young probationer was pulling off the handkerchief. Emily Brent, of course. It was Emily Brent that he had to kill. How malicious her eyes were! Her lips were moving. What was she saying? "In the midst of life we are in death..." She was laughing now. No, nurse, don't put the handkerchief back. I've got to see. I've got to give the anaesthetic. Where's the ether? I must have brought the ether with me. What have you done with the ether, Sister? ChBteau Neuf du Pape? Yes, that will do quite as well.

Take the handkerchief away, nurse.

Of course! I knew it all the time! It's Anthony Marston! His face is purple and convulsed. But he's not dead he's laughing. I tell you he's laughing! He's shaking the operating table.

Look out, man, look out. Nurse, steady it steady it

With a start Dr. Armstrong woke up. It was morning. Sunlight was pouring into
the room.
And some one was leaning over him shaking him. It was Rogers. Rogers, with a
white face, saying: "Doctor doctor!"
Dr. Armstrong woke up completely.
He sat up in bed. He said sharply:
"What is it?"
"It's the wife, doctor. I can't get her to wake. My God! I can't get her to wake.  And
and she don't look right to me."
Dr. Armstrong was quick and efficient. He wrapped himself in his dressinggown and followed Rogers.
He bent over the bed where the woman was lying peacefully on her side. He lifted





Armstrong went over to the washstand.

There were a certain number of bottles on it. Hair lotion, lavender water, cascara, glycerine of cucumber for the hands, a mouthwash, toothpaste and some

Elliman's.

Rogers helped by pulling out the drawers of the dressingtable. From there they moved on to the chest of drawers. But there was no sign of sleeping draughts or tablets.

Rogers said:

"She didn't have nothing last night, sir, except what you gave her..."

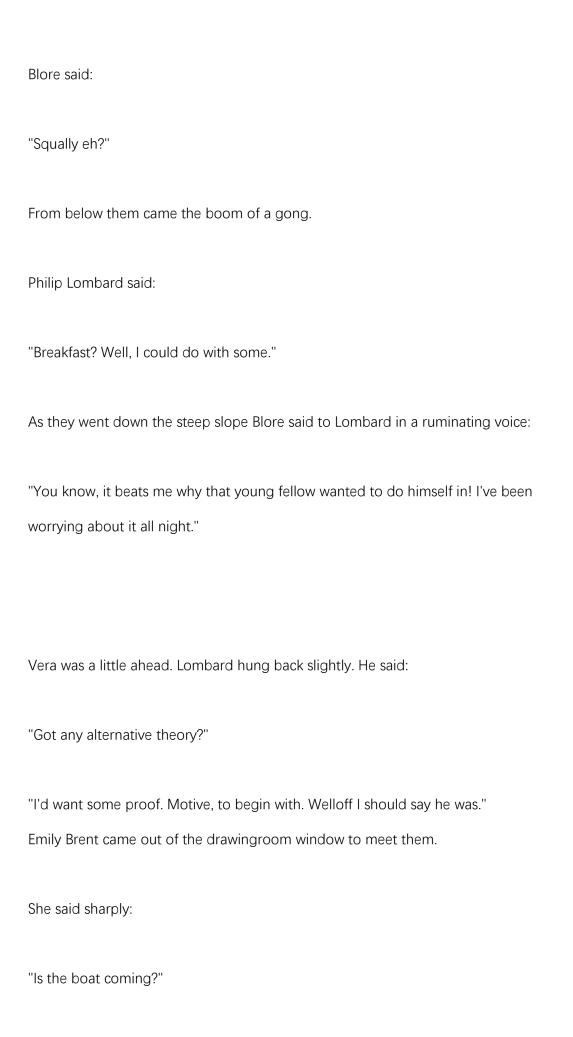
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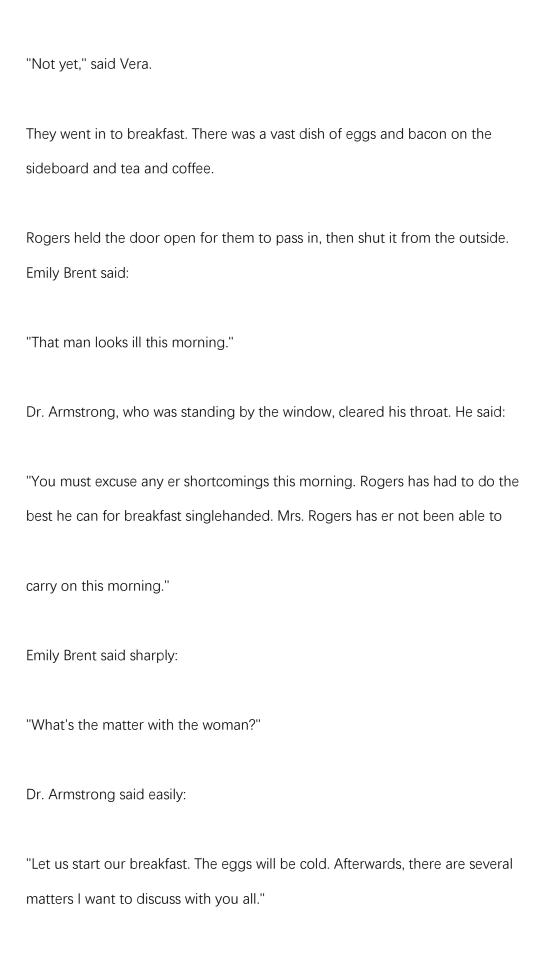
When the gong sounded for breakfast at nine o'clock it found every one up and awaiting the summons.

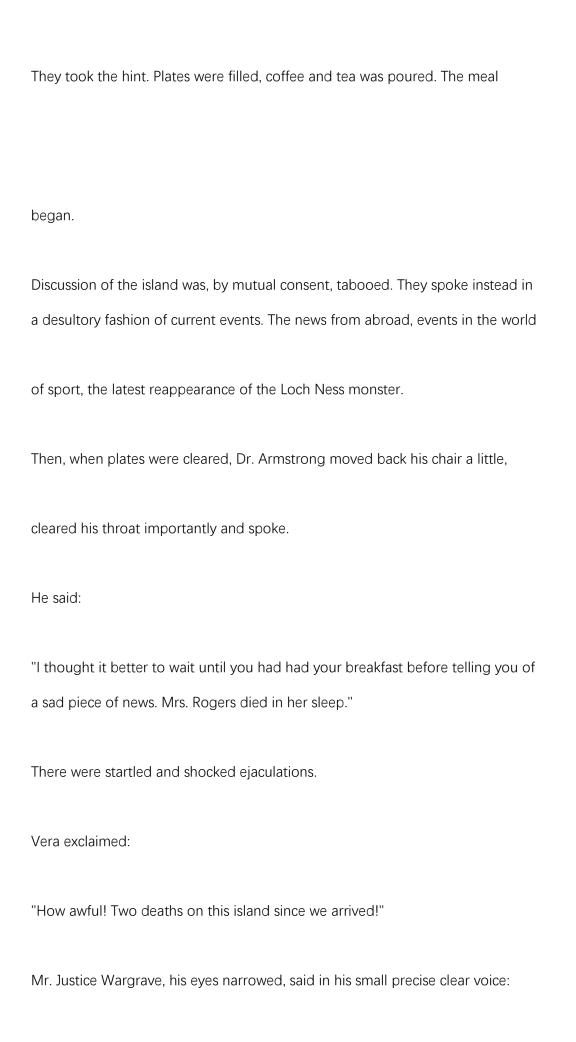
General Macarthur and the judge had been pacing the terrace outside, exchanging desultory comments on the political situation.

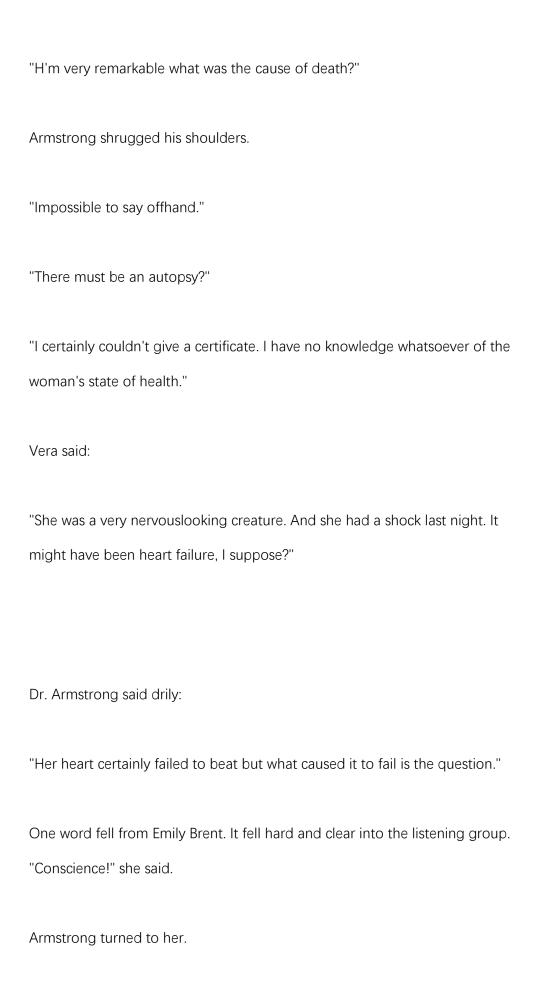
Vera Claythorne and Philip Lombard had been up to the summit of the island

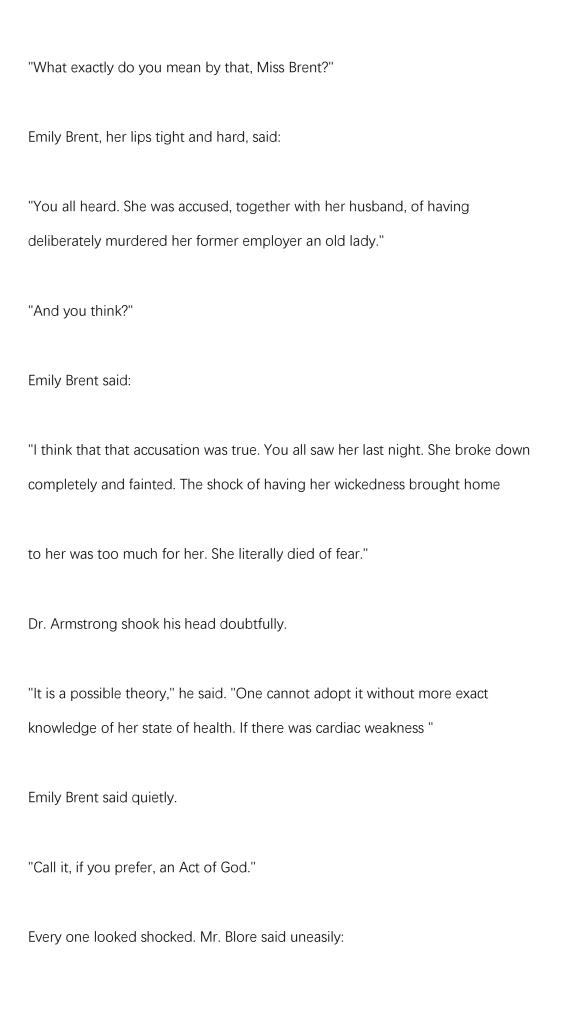


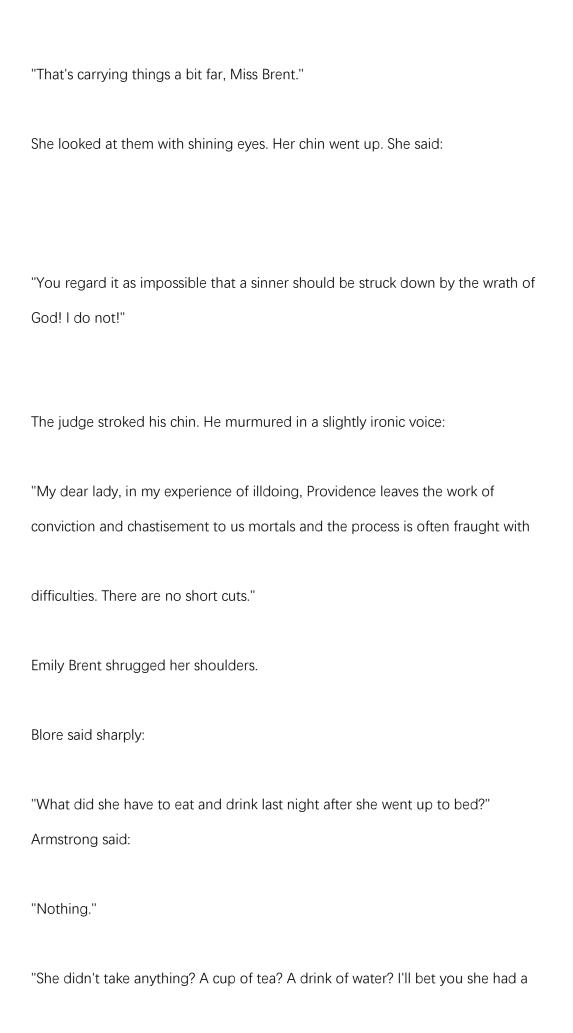














Blore looked slightly annoyed at the interruption. "Just like a woman," his glance said.

He resumed:

"That's as may be. Anyway there's no active danger to them as far as they know.

Then, last night, some unknown lunatic spills the beans. What happens? The

woman cracks she goes to pieces. Notice how her husband hung over her as she

was coming round. Not all husbandly solicitude! Not on your life! He was like a

cat on hot bricks. Scared out of his life as to what she might say.

"And there's the position for you! They've done a murder and got away with it.

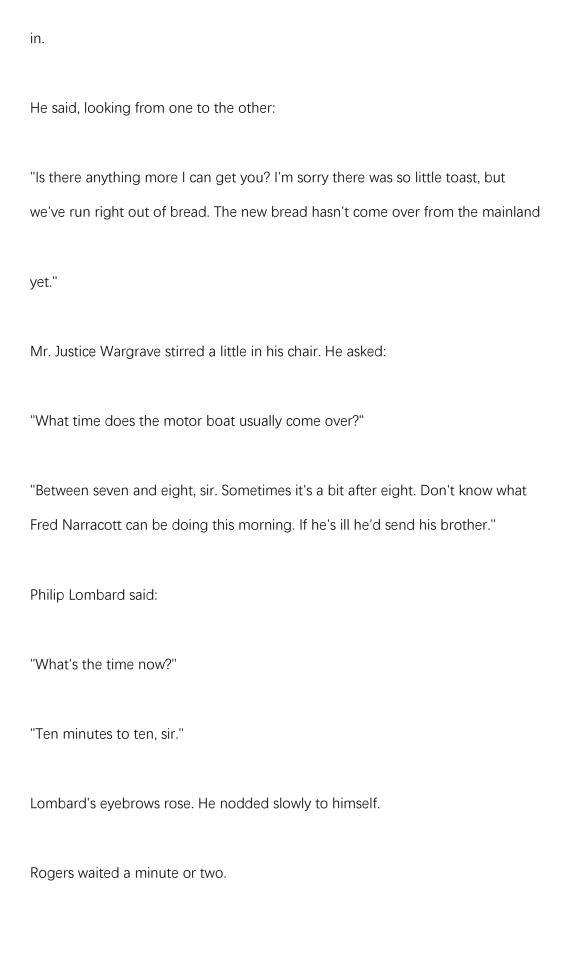
But if the whole thing's going to be raked up, what's going to happen? Ten to one, the woman will give the show away. She hasn't got the nerve to stand up and

brazen it out. She's a living danger to her husband, that's what she is. He's all

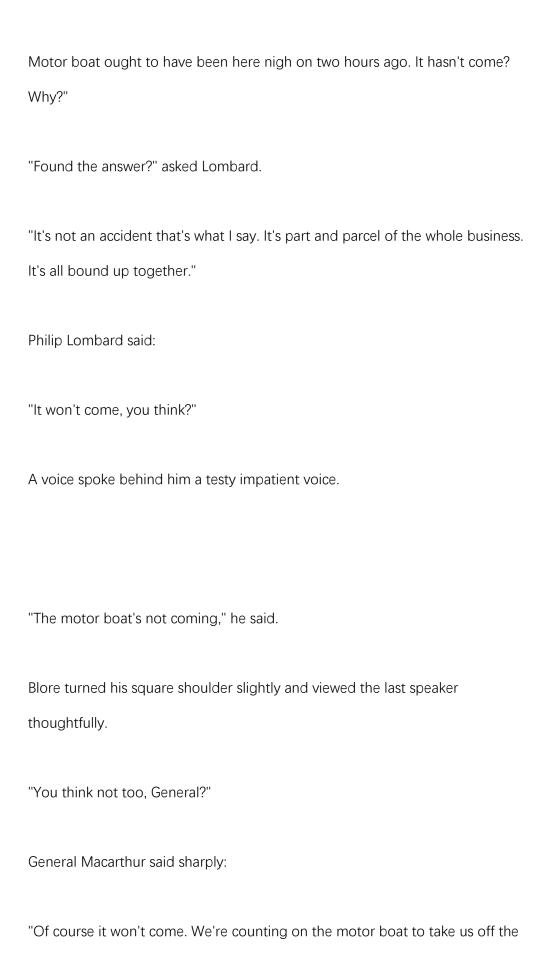
right. He'll lie with a straight face till kingdom comes but he can't be sure of her!

And if she goes to pieces, his neck's in danger! So he slips something into a cup
of tea and makes sure that her mouth is shut permanently."

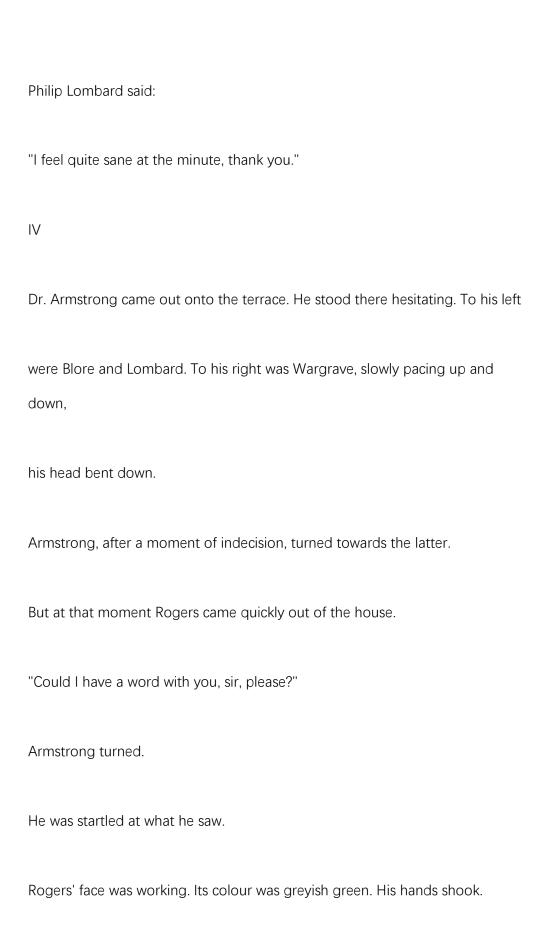
Armstrong said slowly:
"There was no empty cup by her bedside there was nothing there at all. I looked."
Blore snorted.
"Of course there wouldn't be! First thing he'd do when she'd drunk it would be to take that cup and saucer away and wash it up carefully."
There was a pause. Then General Macarthur said doubtfully:
"It may be so. But I should hardly think it possible that a man would do that to his wife."
Blore gave a short laugh.
He said:
"When a man's neck's in danger, he doesn't stop to think too much about sentiment."
There was a pause. Before any one could speak, the door opened and Rogers came

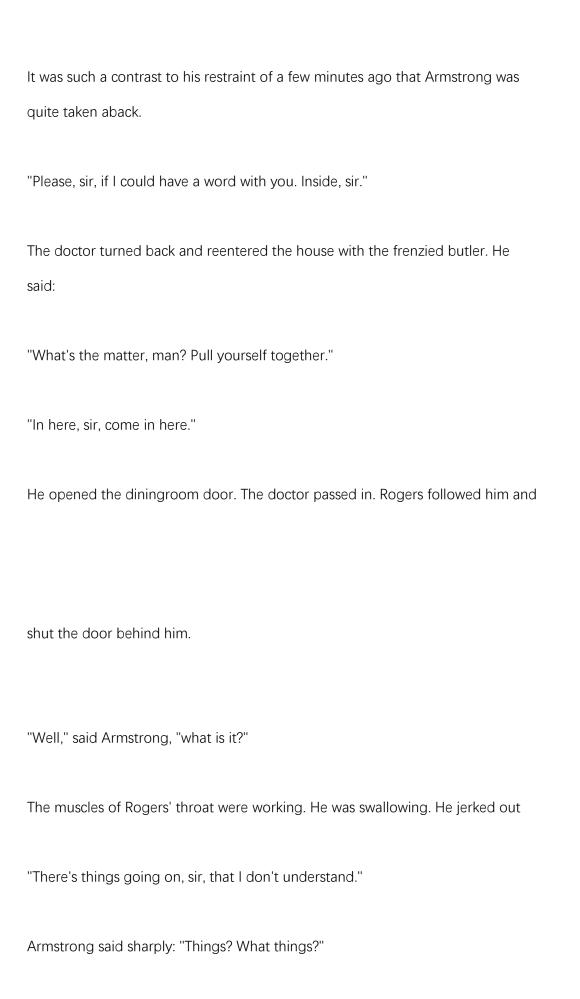


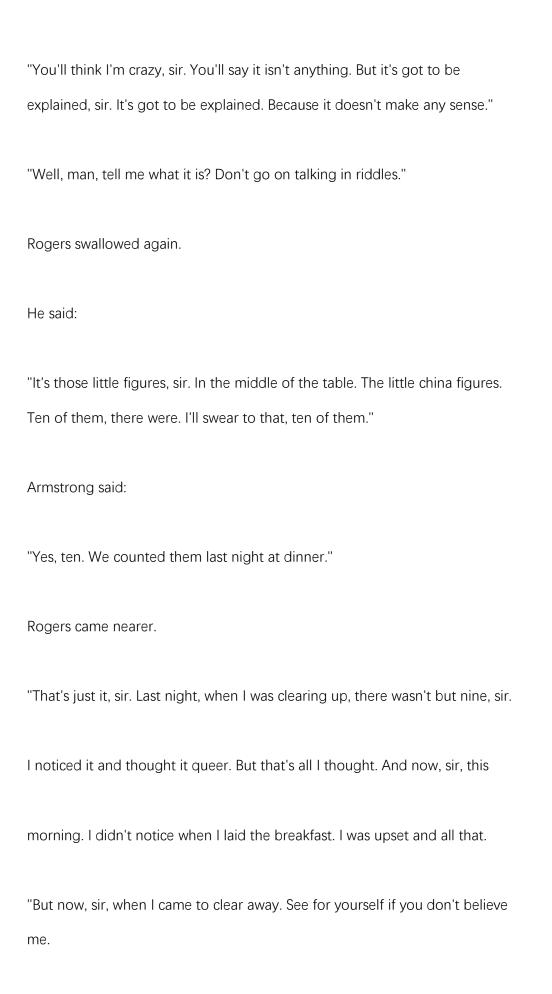
General Macarthur spoke suddenly and explosively.
"Sorry to hear about your wife, Rogers. Doctor's just been telling us."
Rogers inclined his head.
"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."
He took up the empty bacon dish and went out.
Again there was silence.
III
On the terrace outside Philip Lombard said:
"About this motor boat "
Blore looked at him.
Blore nodded his head.
He said:
"I know what you're thinking, Mr. Lombard. I've asked myself the same question.

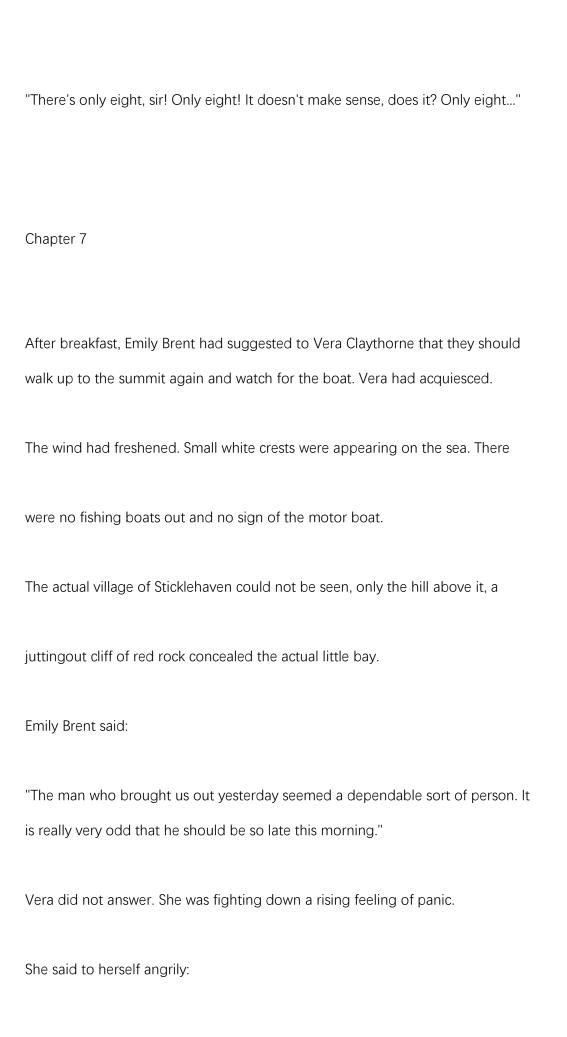


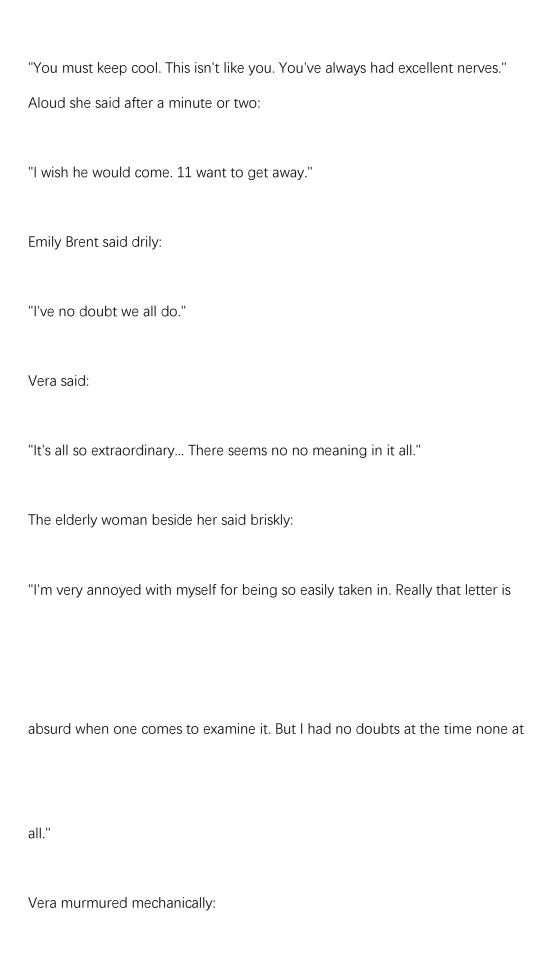
island. That's the meaning of the whole business. We're not going to leave the island... None of us will ever leave... Il's the end, you see the end of everything..." He hesitated, then he said in a low strange voice: "That's peace real peace. To come to the end not to have to go on... Yes, peace..." He turned abruptly and walked away. Along the terrace, then down the slope towards the sea obliquely to the end of the island where loose rocks went out into the water. He walked a little unsteadily, like a man who was only half awake. Blore said: "There goes another one who's balmy! Looks as though it'll end with the whole lot going that way." Philip Lombard said: "I don't fancy you will, Blore." The exinspector laughed. "It would take a lot to send me off my head." He added drily: "And I don't think you'll be going that way either, Mr. Lombard."



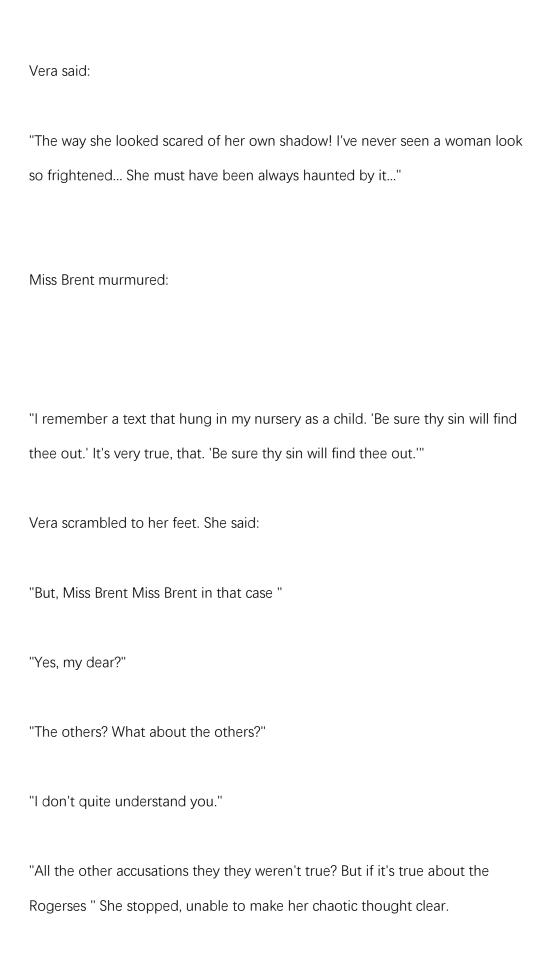












Emily Brent's brow, which had been frowning perplexedly, cleared.
She said:
"Ah, I understand you now. Well, there is that Mr. Lombard. He admits to having abandoned twenty men to their deaths."
Vera said:
"They were only natives"
Emily Brent said sharply:
"Black or white, they are our brothers."
Vera thought:
"Our black brothers our black brothers. Oh, I'm going to laugh. I'm hysterical.
I'm not myself"
Emily Brent continued thoughtfully:
"Of course, some of the other accusations were very farfetched and ridiculous.

Against the judge, for instance, who was only doing his duty in his public capacity, And the exScotland Yard man. My own case, too."

She paused and then went on:

"Naturally, considering the circumstances, I was not going to say anything last night. It was not a fit subject to discuss before gentlemen."

"No?"

Vera listened with interest. Miss Brent continued serenely:

"Beatrice Taylor was in service with me. Not a nice girl as I found out too late. I was very much deceived in her. She had nice manners and was very clean and

willing. I was very pleased with her. Of course all that was the sheerest hypocrisy! She was a loose girl with no morals. Disgusting! It was some time

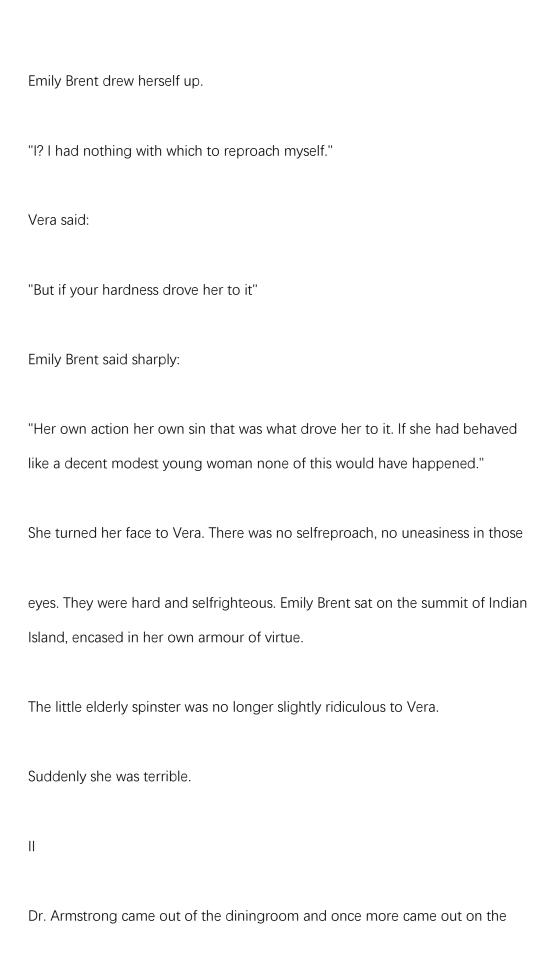
before I found out that she was what they call 'in trouble." She paused, her delicate nose wrinkling itself in distaste. "It was a great shock to me. Her parents were decent folk, too, who had brought her up very strictly. I'm glad to say they

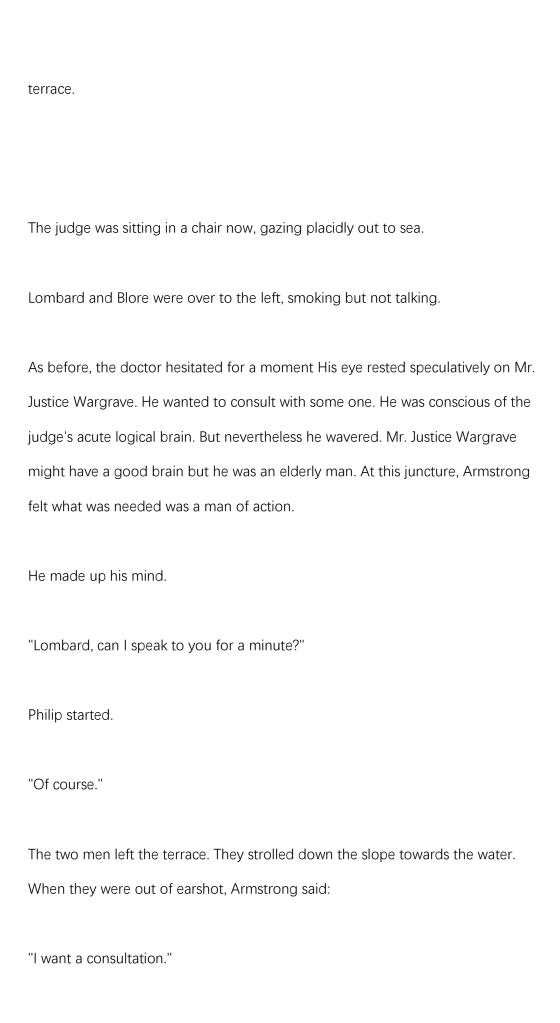
did not condone her behaviour."

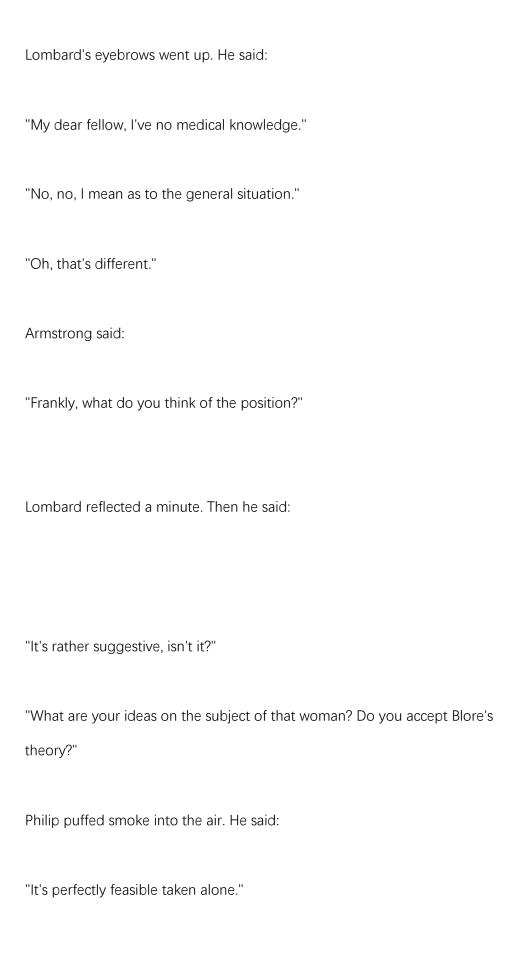
Vera said, staring at Miss Brent:

"What happened?"



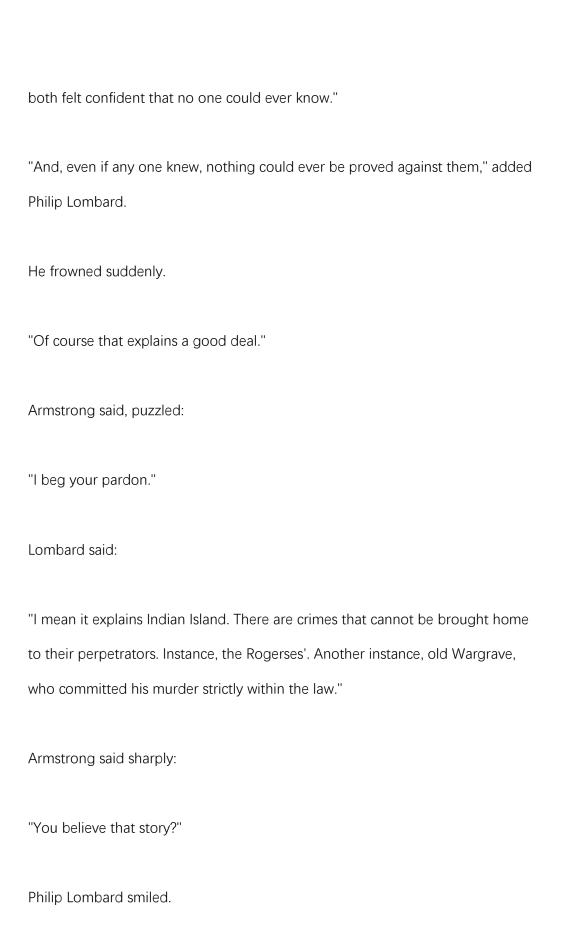






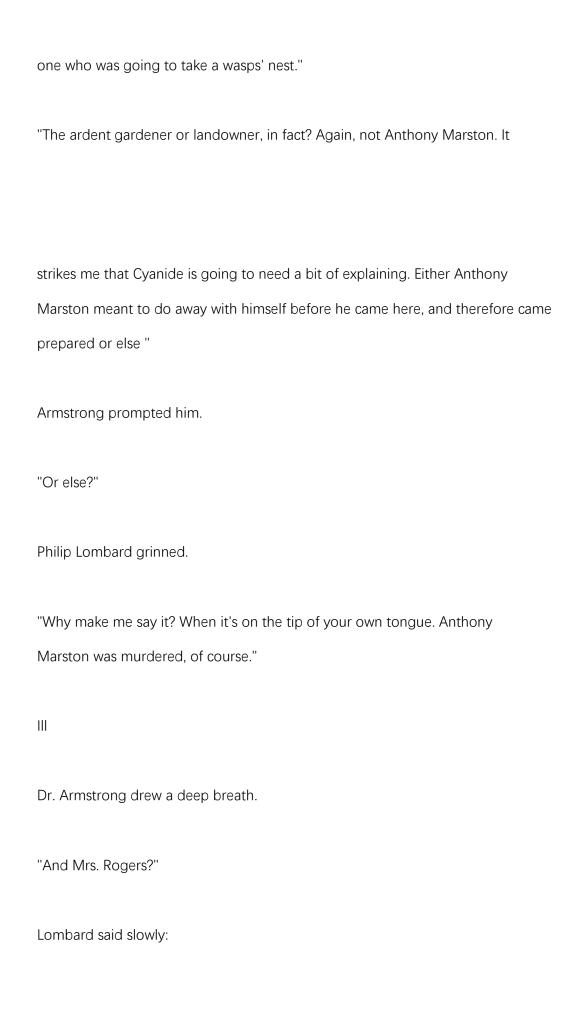
"Exactly." Armstrong's tone sounded relieved. Philip Lombard was no fool. The latter went on: "That is, accepting the premise that Mr. and Mrs. Rogers have successfully got away with murder in their time. And I don't see why they shouldn't. What do you think they did exactly? Poisoned the old lady?" Armstrong said slowly: "It might be simpler than that. I asked Rogers this morning what this Miss Brady had suffered from. His answer was enlightening. I don't need to go into medical details, but in a certain form of cardiac trouble, amyl nitrite is used. When an attack comes on an ampoule of amyl nitrite is broken and it is inhaled. If amyl nitrite were withheld well, the consequences might easily be fatal." Philip Lombard said thoughtfully: "As simple as that. It must have been rather tempting." The doctor nodded. "Yes, no positive action. No arsenic to obtain and administer nothing definite

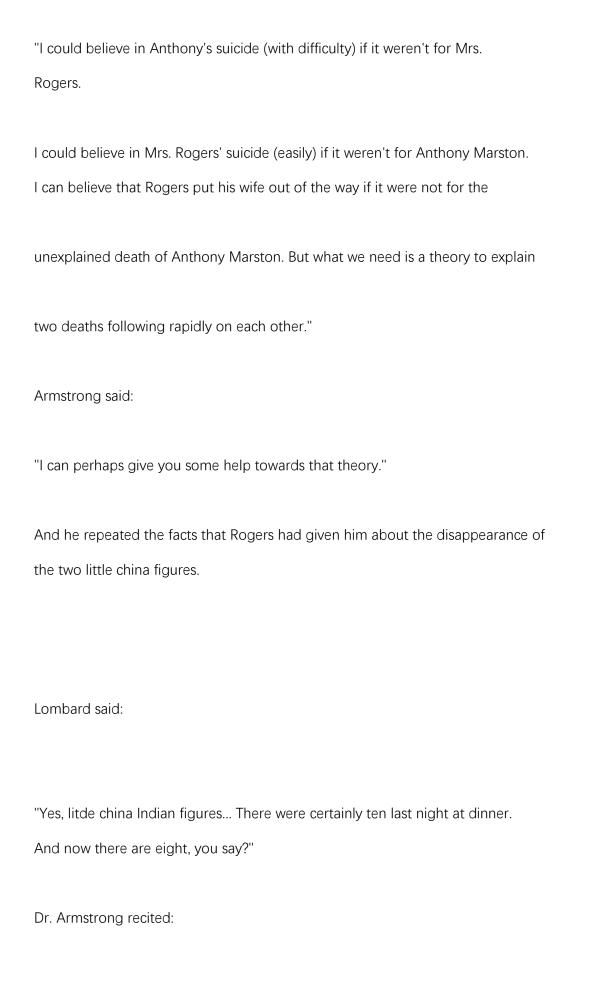
just negation! And Rogers hurried through the night to fetch a doctor and they

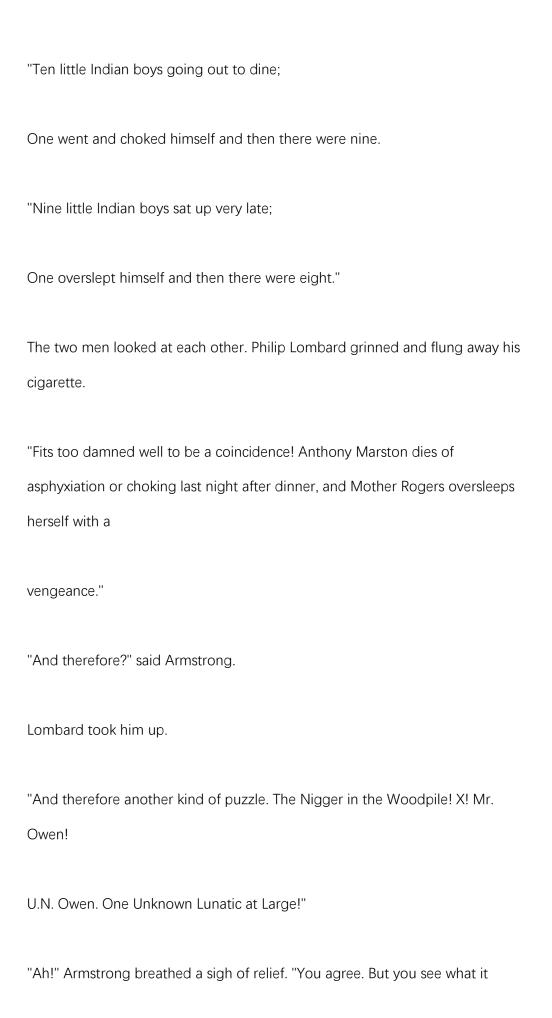


"Oh, yes, I believe it. Wargrave murdered Edward Seton all right, murdered him
as surely as if he'd stuck a stiletto through him! But he was clever enough to do
it from the judge's seat in wig and gown. So in the ordinary way you can't bring
his
little crime home to him."
A sudden flash passed like lightning through Armstrong's mind.
"Murder in Hospital. Murder on the Operating Table. Safe yes, safe as houses!"
Philip Lombard was saying:
"Hence Mr. Owen hence Indian Island!"
Tience Wit. Owen hence maian island:
Armstrong drew a deep breath.
"Now we're getting down to it. What's the real purpose of getting us all here?"
Philip Lombard said:
"What do you think?"
Armstrong said abruptly:











"This island's more or less a bare rock. We shall make short work of searching it.
We'll soon ferret out U.N. Owen, Esq."
Dr. Armstrong said warningly:
"He'll be dangerous."
Philip Lombard laughed.
"Dangerous? Who's afraid of the big bad wolf? I'll be dangerous when I get hold
of him!"
He paused and said:
"We'd better rope in Blore to help us. He'll be a good man in a pinch. Better not
tell the women. As for the others, the General's ga ga, I think, and old Wargrave's
forte is masterly inactivity. The three of us can attend to this job."
Chapter 8
Blore was easily roped in. He expressed immediate agreement with their
arguments.

"What you've said about those china figures, sir, makes all the difference. That's crazy, that is! There's only one thing. You don't think this Owen's idea might be

to do the job by proxy, as it were?"

"Explain yourself, man."

"Well, I mean like this. After the racket last night this young Mr. Marston gets the wind up and poisons himself. And Rogers, he gets the wind up too and bumps

off his wife! All according to U.N.O.'s plan."

Armstrong shook his head. He stressed the point about the Cyanide. Blore agreed.

"Yes, I'd forgotten that. Not a natural thing to be carrying about with you. But how did it get into his drink, sir?"

Lombard said:

"I've been thinking about that. Marston had several drinks that night. Between the time he had his last one and the time he finished the one before it, there was quite a gap. During that time his glass was lying about on some table or other. I

think though I can't be sure, it was on the little table near the window. The

window was open. Somebody could have slipped a dose of the Cyanide into the
glass."
Blore said unbelievingly:
"Without our all seeing him, sir?"
Lombard said drily:
"We were all rather concerned elsewhere."
Armstrong said slowly:
"That's true. We'd all been attacked. We were walking about, moving about the room. Arguing, indignant, intent on our own business. I think it could have been
done"
Blore shrugged his shoulders.
"Fact is, it must have been done! Now then, gentlemen, let's make a start.  Nobody's got a revolver, by any chance? I suppose that's too much to hope for."  Lombard said:

"I've got one." He patted his pocket.
Blore's eyes opened very wide. He said in an overcasual tone:
"Always carry that about with you, sir?"
Lombard said:
"Usually. I've been in some tight places, you know."
"Oh," said Blore and added: "Well, you've probably never been in a tighter place
than you are today! If there's a lunatic hiding on this island, he's probably got a
young arsenal on him to say nothing of a knife or dagger or two."
Armstrong coughed.
"You may be wrong there, Blore. Many homicidal lunatics are very quiet,
unassuming people. Delightful fellows."
Blore said:
"I don't feel this one is going to be of that kind, Dr. Armstrong."

The three men started on their tour of the island. It proved unexpectedly simple.

On the northwest side, towards the coast, the cliffs fell sheer to the sea below, their surface unbroken.

On the rest of the island there were no trees and very little cover. The three men worked carefully and methodically, beating up and down from the highest point

to the water's edge, narrowly scanning the least irregularity in the rock which

might point to the entrance to a cave. But there were no caves.

They came at last, skirting the water's edge, to where General Macarthur sat

looking out to sea. It was very peaceful here with the lap of the waves breaking

over the rocks. The old man sat very upright, his eyes fixed on the horizon.

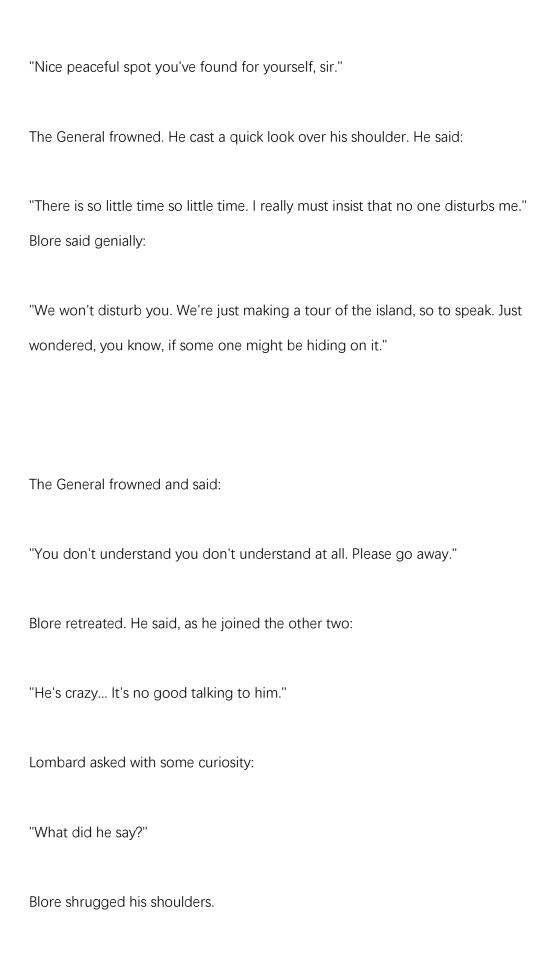
He paid no attention to the approach of the searchers. His oblivion of them made

one at least faintly uncomfortable.

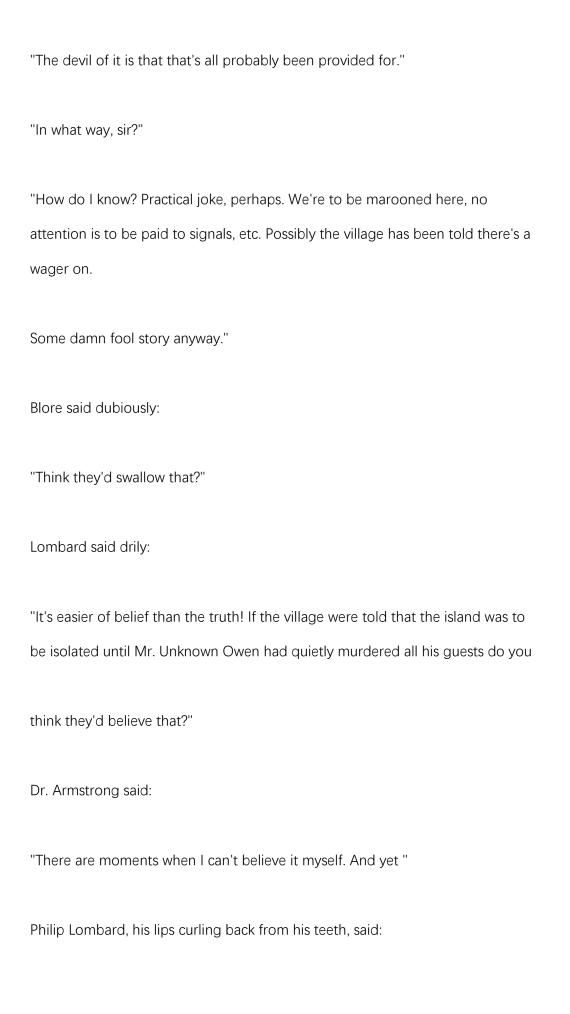
Blore thought to himself:

"'Tisn't natural looks as though he'd gone into a trance or something."

He cleared his throat and said in a wouldbe conversational tone:



"Something about there being no time and that he didn't want to be disturbed."
Dr. Armstrong frowned.
He murmured:
"I wonder now"
III
The search of the island was practically completed. The three men stood on the
highest point looking over towards the mainland. There were no boats out. The
wind was freshening.
Lombard said:
"No fishing boats out. There's a storm coming. Damned nuisance you can't see
"No fishing boats out. There's a storm coming. Damned nuisance you can't see the village from here. We could signal or do something."
the village from here. We could signal or do something."
the village from here. We could signal or do something."
the village from here. We could signal or do something."  Blore said:
the village from here. We could signal or do something."  Blore said:
the village from here. We could signal or do something."  Blore said:





"We can make sure of this cliff. There's only one place where there could be a
recess just a little to the right below here. If you fellows can get hold of a rope,
you can let me down to make sure."
Blore said:
"Might as well be sure. Though it seems absurd on the face of it! I'll see if I can
get hold of something."
He started off briskly down to the house.
Lombard stared up at the sky. The clouds were beginning to mass themselves
together. The wind was increasing.
He shot a sideways look at Armstrong. He said:
"You're very silent, doctor. What are you thinking?"
Armstrong said slowly:
"I was wondering exactly how mad old Macarthur was"
IV
Vera had been restless all the morning. She had avoided Emily Brent with a kind

of shuddering aversion.

Miss Brent herself had taken a chair just round the corner of the house so as to

be out of the wind. She sat there knitting.

Every time Vera thought of her she seemed to see a pale drowned face with seaweed entangled in the hair... A face that had once been pretty impudently pretty perhaps and which was now beyond the reach of pity or terror.

And Emily Brent, placid and righteous, sat knitting.

On the main terrace, Mr. Justice Wargrave sat huddled in a porter's chair. His head was poked down well into his neck.

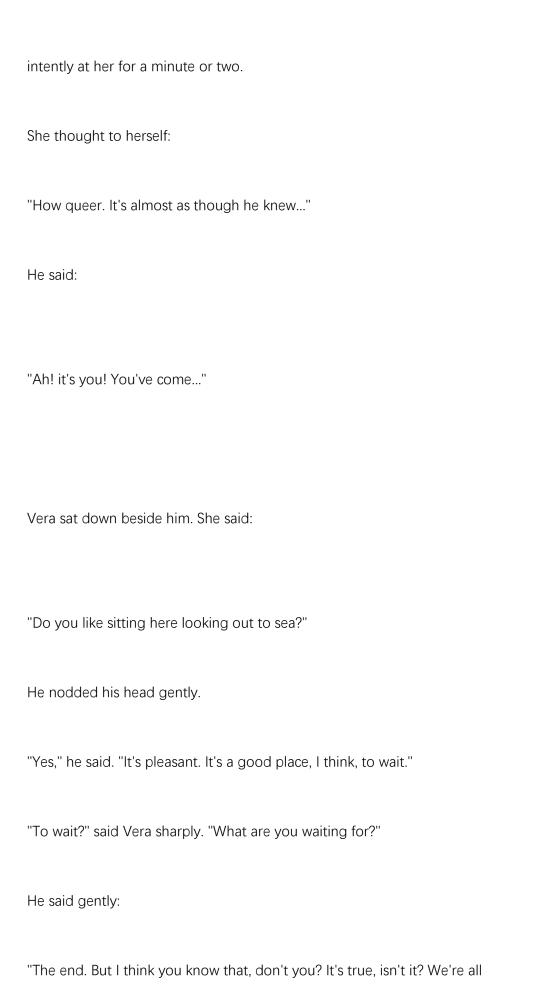
When Vera looked at him, she saw a man standing in the dock a young man with fair hair and blue eyes and a bewildered, frightened face. Edward Seton.

And in imagination she saw the judge's old hands put the black cap on his head and begin to pronounce sentence...

After a while Vera strolled slowly down to the sea. She walked along towards the

extreme end of the island where an old man sat staring out to the horizon.

General Macarthur stirred at her approach. His head turned there was a queer mixture of questioning and apprehension in his look. It startled her. He stared

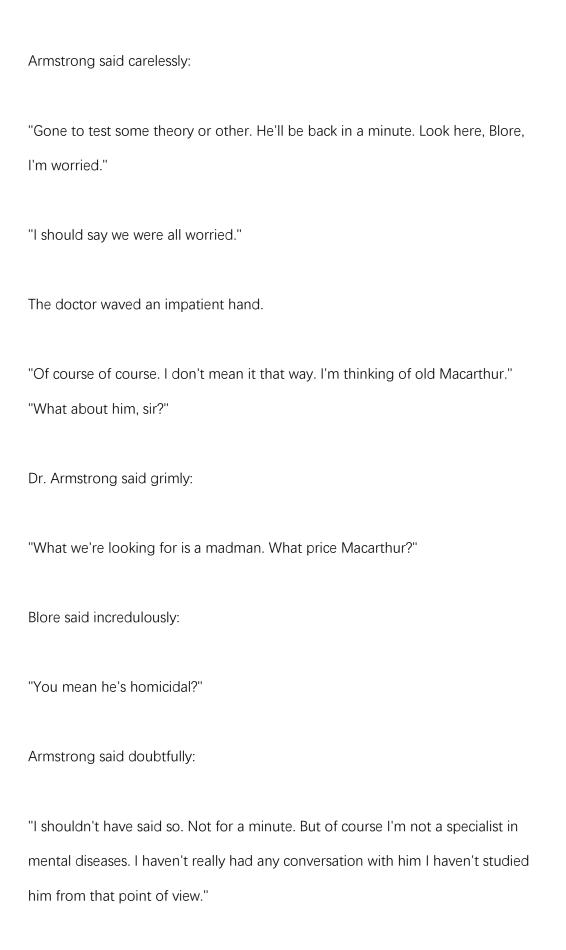


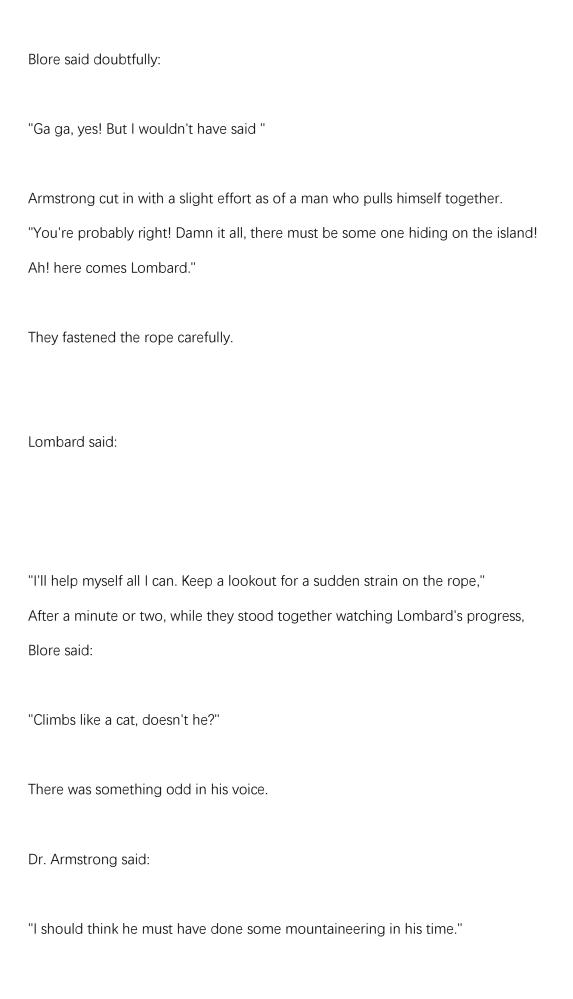
waiting for the end."
She said unsteadily:
"What do you mean?"
General Macarthur said gravely:
"None of us are going to leave the island. That's the plan. You know it, of course, perfectly. What, perhaps, you can't understand is the relief!"
Vera said wonderingly:
"The relief?"
He said:
"Yes. Of course, you're very young you haven't got to that yet. But it does come!
The blessed relief when you know that you've done with it all that you haven't got to carry the burden any longer. You'll feel that too some day"
Vera said hoarsely:
"I don't understand you."



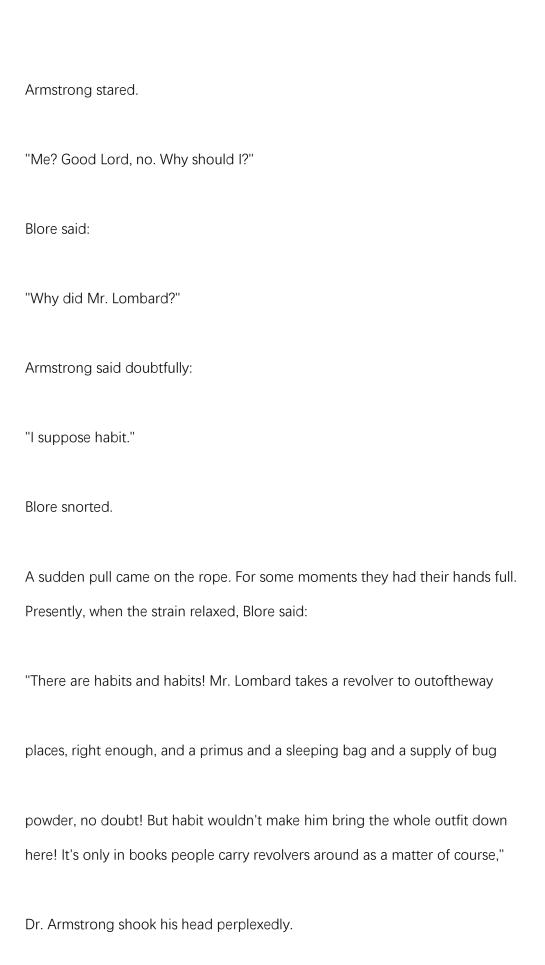








"Maybe."
There was a silence and the exinspector said:
"Funny sort of cove altogether. D'you know what I think?"
"What?"
"He's a wrong 'un!"
Armstrong said doubtfully:
"In what way?"
Blore grunted. Then he said:
"I don't know exactly. But I wouldn't trust him a yard."
Dr. Armstrong said;
"I suppose he's led an adventurous life."
Blore said:
"I bet some of his adventures have had to be kept pretty dark." He paused and
then went on: "Did you happen to bring a revolver along with you, doctor?"



They leaned over and watched Lombard's progress. His search was thorough and they could see at once that it was futile. Presently he came up over the edge of the cliff. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"Well," he said. "We're up against it. It's the house or nowhere."

VI

The house was easily searched. They went through the few outbuildings first and then turned their attention to the building itself. Mrs. Rogers' yard measure

discovered in the kitchen dresser assisted them. But there were no hidden spaces

left unaccounted for. Everything was plain and straightforward, a modern structure devoid of concealments. They went through the ground floor first. As

they mounted to the bedroom floor, they saw through the landing window Rogers

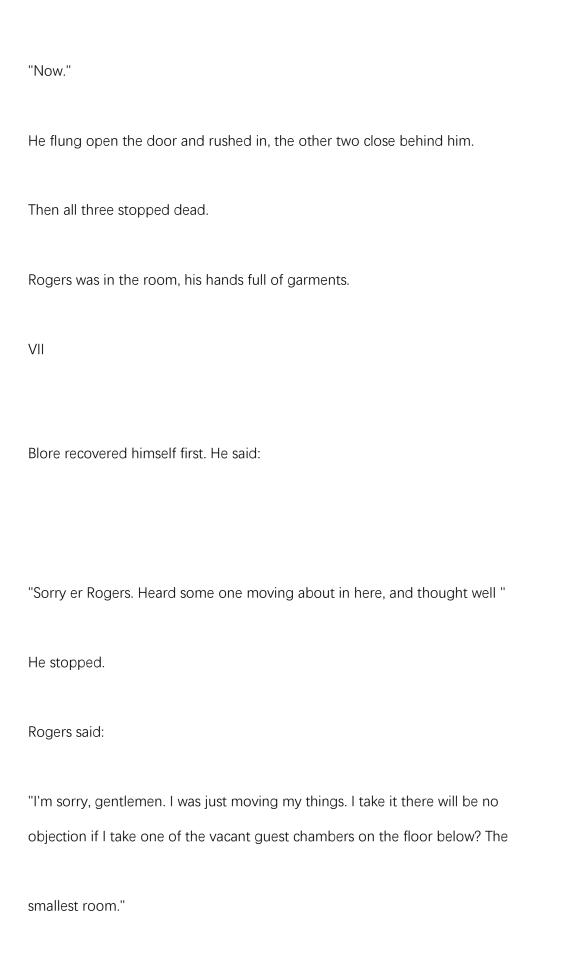
carrying out a tray of cocktails to the terrace.

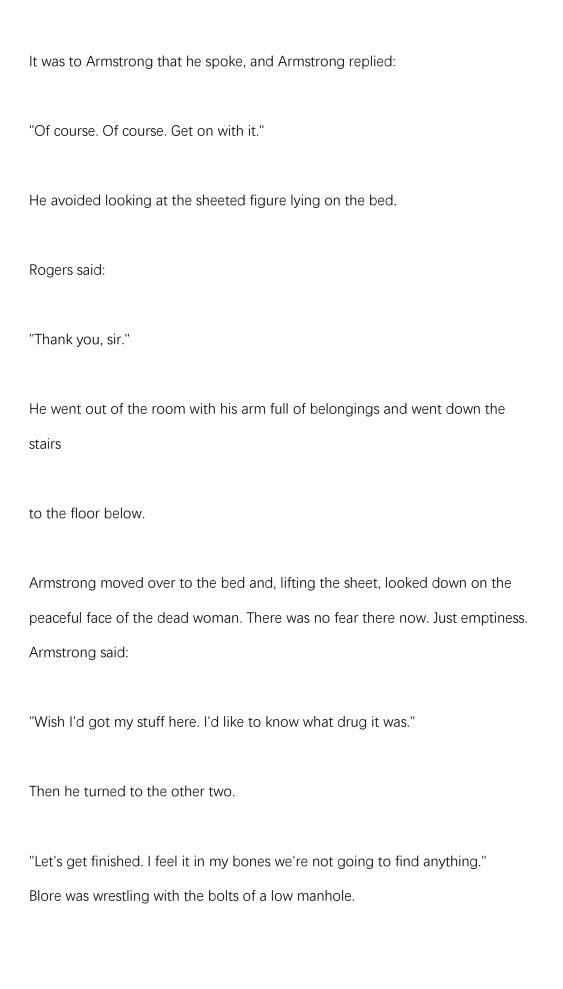
Philip Lombard said lightly:

"Wonderful animal, the good servant. Carries on with an impassive

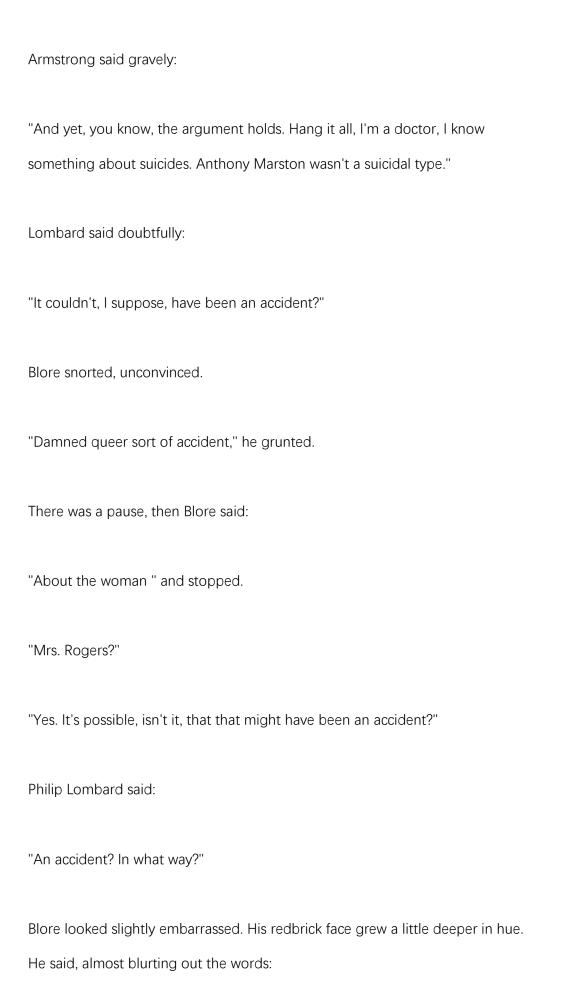
countenance."
Armstrong said appreciatively:
"Rogers is a firstclass butler, I'll say that for him!"
Blore said:
"His wife was a pretty good cook, too. That dinner last night "
They turned in to the first bedroom.
Five minutes later they faced each other on the landing. No one hiding no
possible hidingplace.
Blore said:
"There's a little stair here."
Dr. Armstrong said:
"It leads up to the servants' room."
Blore said:
"There must be a place under the roof for cisterns, water tank, etc. It's the best
chance and the only one!"

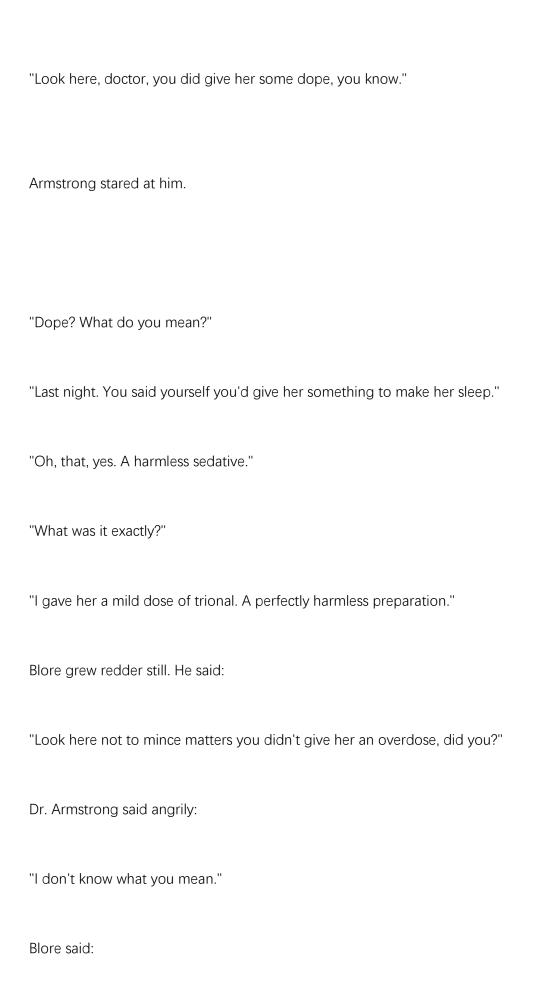
And it was then, as they stood there, that they heard the sound from above. A soft furtive footfall overhead.
They all heard it. Armstrong grasped Blore's arm. Lombard held up an admonitory finger.
"Quiet listen."
It came again some one moving softly, furtively, overhead.
Armstrong whispered:
"He's actually in the bedroom itself. The room where Mrs. Rogers' body is."  Blore whispered back:
"Of course! Best hidingplace he could have chosen! Nobody likely to go there.  Now then quiet as you can."
They crept stealthily upstairs.
On the little landing outside the door of the bedroom they paused again. Yes, some one was in the room. There was a faint creak from within.
Blore whispered:



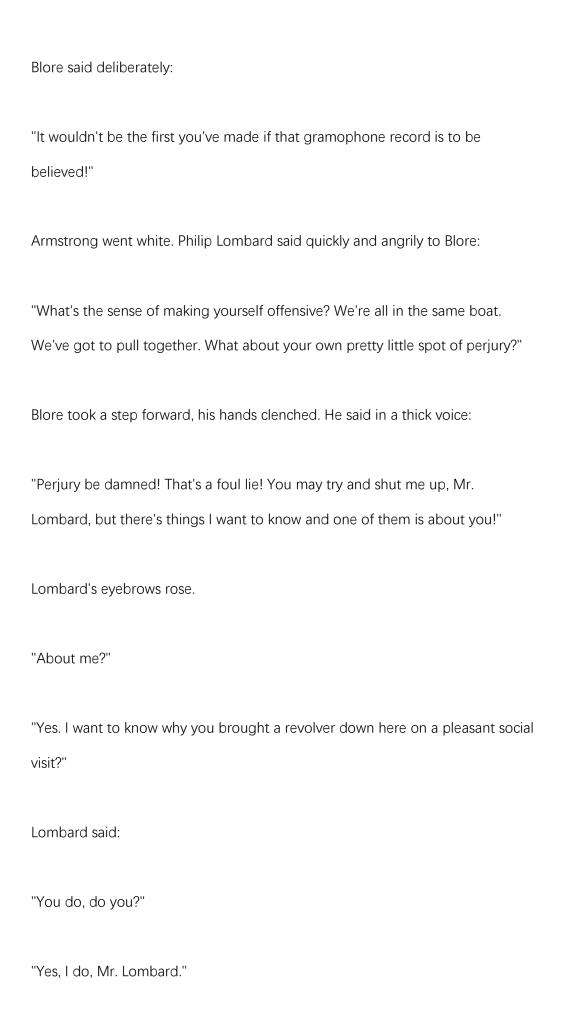


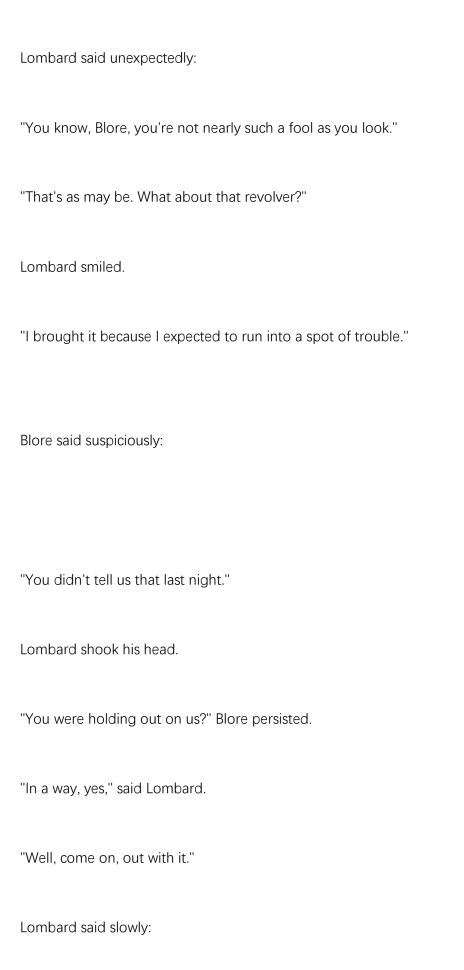
He said:
"That chap moves damned quietly. A minute or two ago we saw him in the garden. None of us heard him come upstairs."
Lombard said:
"I suppose that's why we assumed it must be a stranger moving about up here."  Blore disappeared into a cavernous darkness. Lombard pulled a torch from his pocket and followed.
Five minutes later three men stood on an upper landing and looked at each other. They were dirty and festooned with cobwebs and their faces were grim.  There was no one on the island but their eight selves.
Chapter 9
Lombard said slowly:
"So we've been wrong wrong all along! Built up a nightmare of superstition and fantasy all because of the coincidence of two deaths!"



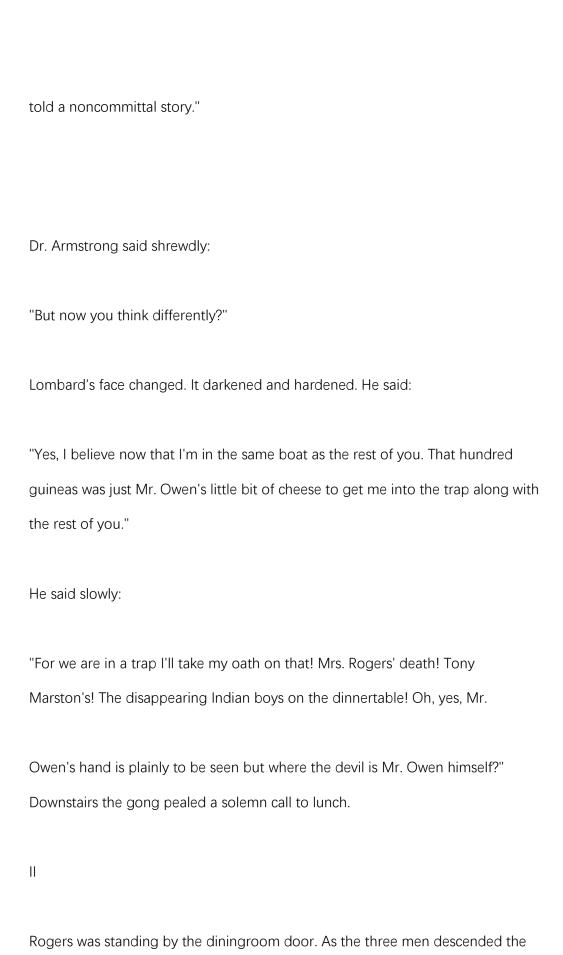


"It's possible, isn't it, that you may have made a mistake? These things do
happen once in awhile."
Armstrong said sharply:
"I did nothing of the sort. The suggestion is ridiculous," He stopped and added in
a cold biting tone: "Or do you suggest that I gave her an overdose on purpose?"
Philip Lombard said quickly:
"Look here, you two, got to keep our heads. Don't let's start slinging accusations
about."
Blore said sullenly:
blore said sullerliy.
"I only suggested the doctor had made a mistake."
Totily suggested the doctor had made a mistake.
Dr. Armstrong smiled with an effort. He said, showing his teeth in a somewhat
Dr. Armstrong siniled with all ellort. He said, showing his teeth in a somewhat
mirthless smile:
"Doctors can't afford to make mistakes of that kind, my friend."

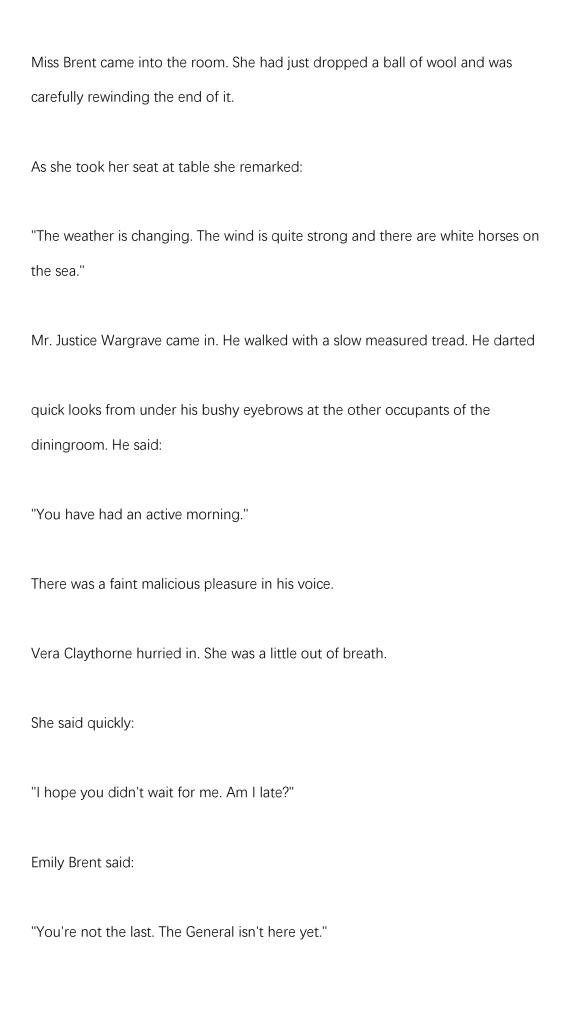




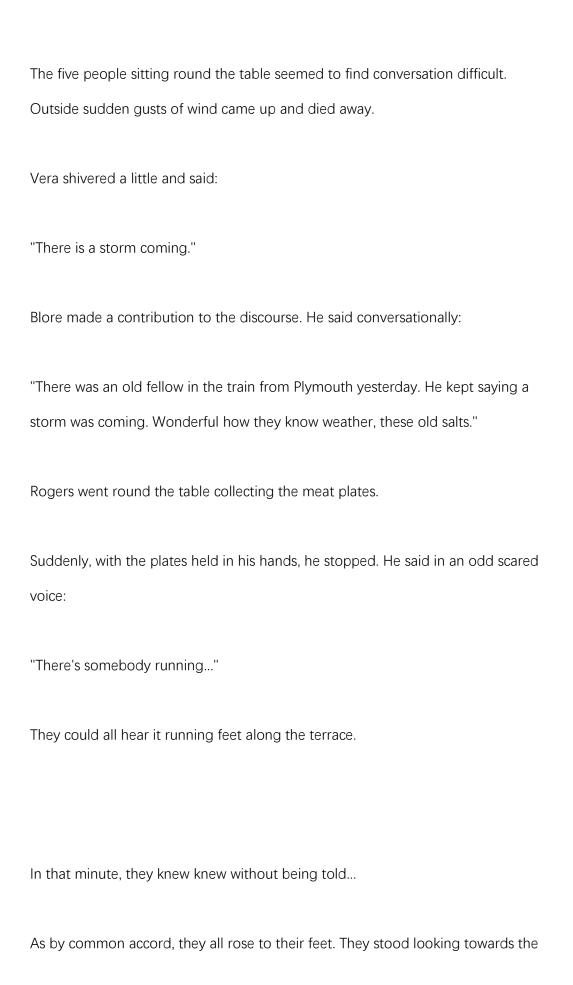




stairs he moved a step or two forward. He said in a low anxious voice:
"I hope lunch will be satisfactory. There is cold ham and cold tongue, and I've boiled some potatoes. And there's cheese and biscuits and some tinned fruits."
Lombard said:
"Sounds all right. Stores are holding out, then?"
"There is plenty of food, sir of a tinned variety. The larder is very well stocked.
A necessity, that, I should say, sir, on an island where one may be cut off from the mainland for a considerable period."
Lombard nodded.
Rogers murmured as he followed the three men into the diningroom:
"It wormes me that Fred Narracott hasn't been over today. It's peculiarly unfortunate, as you might say,"
"Yes," said Lombard, "peculiarly unfortunate describes it very well."



They sat round the table.
Rogers addressed Miss Brent:
"Will you begin, Madam, or will you wait?"
Vera said:
"General Macarthur is sitting right down by the sea. I don't expect he would hear
the gong there and anyway" she hesitated "he's a little vague today, I think."
Rogers said quickly:
"I will go down and inform him luncheon is ready."
Dr. Armstrong jumped up.
"I'll go," he said. "You others start lunch."
He left the room. Behind him he heard Rogers' voice.
"Will you take cold tongue or cold ham, Madam?"





turned suddenly and went into the deserted diningroom.
It was as they had left it. The sweet course stood ready on the sideboard untasted,
Vera went up to the table. She was there a minute or two later when Rogers came softly into the room.
He started when he saw her. Then his eyes asked a question.
He said:
"Oh, Miss, 11 just came to see"
In a loud harsh voice that surprised herself Vera said:
"You're quite right, Rogers. Look for yourself. There are only seven"
V
General Macarthur had been laid on his bed.
After making a last examination Armstrong left the room and came downstairs.
He found the others assembled in the drawingroom.

Miss Brent was knitting. Vera Claythorne was standing by the window looking
out at the hissing rain, Blore was sitting squarely in a chair, his hands on his
knees. Lombard was walking restlessly up and down. At the far end of the room
Mr. Justice Wargrave was sitting in a grandfather chair. His eyes were half
closed.
They opened as the doctor came into the room. He said in a clear penetrating
voice:
"Well, doctor?"
Armstrong was very pale. He said:
Amistrong was very pale. He said.
"No question of heart failure or anything like that. Macarthur was hit with a life
preserver or some such thing on the back of the head."
A little murmur went round, but the clear voice of the judge was raised once
more.
"Did you find the actual weapon used?"
"No."

"Nevertheless you are sure of your facts?"

"lam quite sure."

Mr. Justice Wargrave said quietly:

"We know now exactly where we are."

There was no doubt now who was in charge of the situation. This morning

Wargrave had sat huddled in his chair on the terrace refraining from any overt

activity. Now he assumed command with the ease born of a long habit of authority. He definitely presided over the court.

Clearing his throat, he once more spoke.

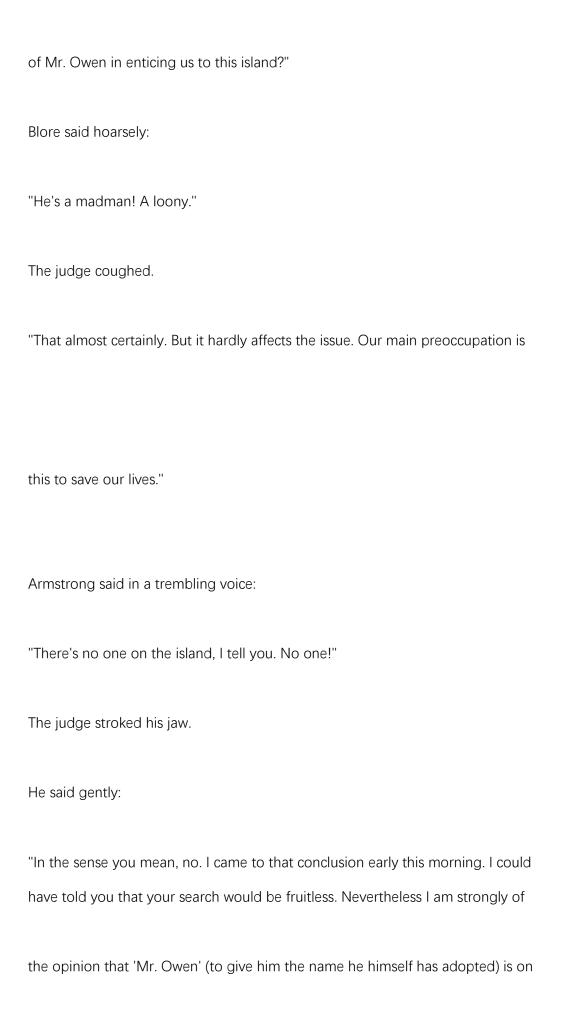
"This morning, gentlemen, whilst I was sitting on the terrace. I was an observer of your activities. There could be little doubt of your purpose. You were searching the island for an unknown murderer?"

"Quite right, sir," said Philip Lombard.

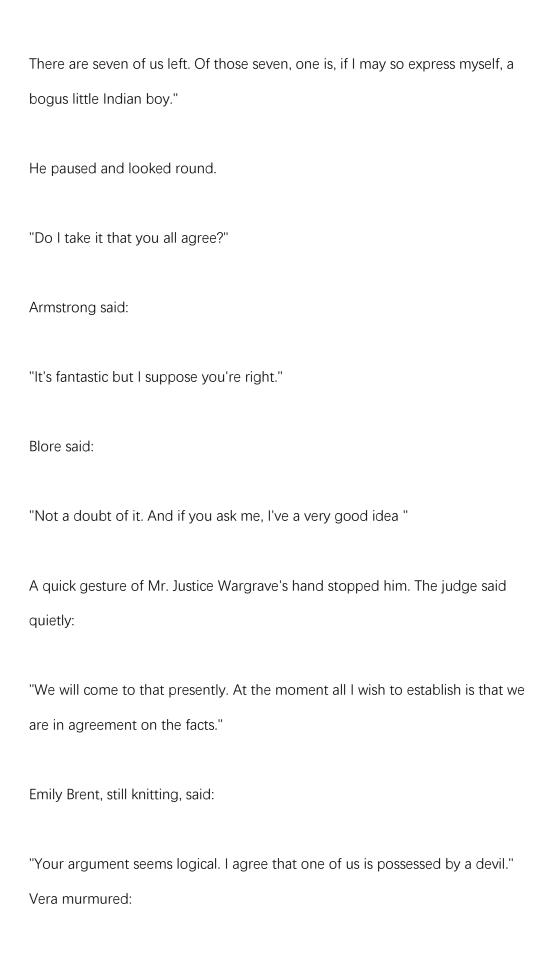
The judge went on.

"You had come, doubtless, to the same conclusion that I had namely that the deaths of Anthony Marston and Mrs. Rogers were neither accidental nor were

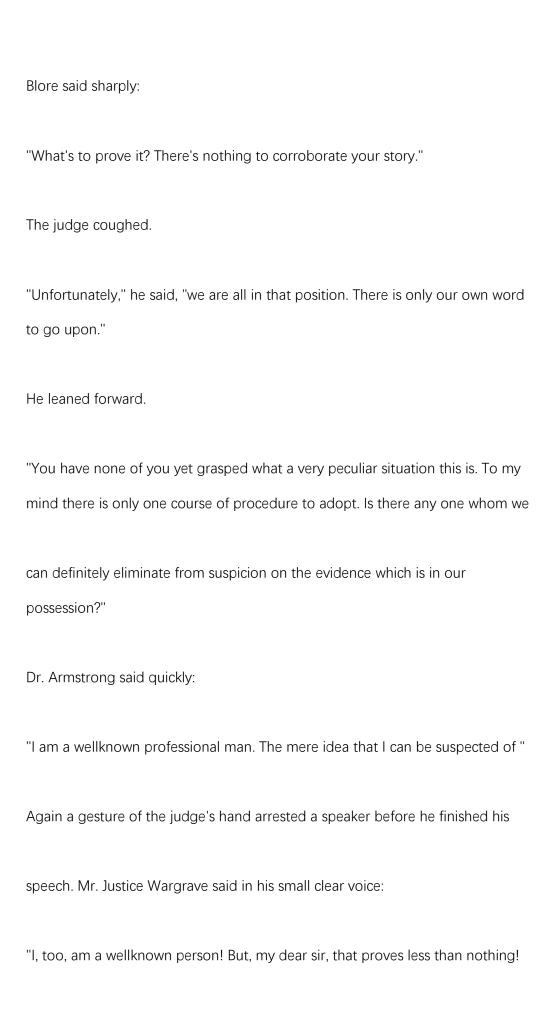
they suicides. No doubt you also reached a certain conclusion as to the purpose

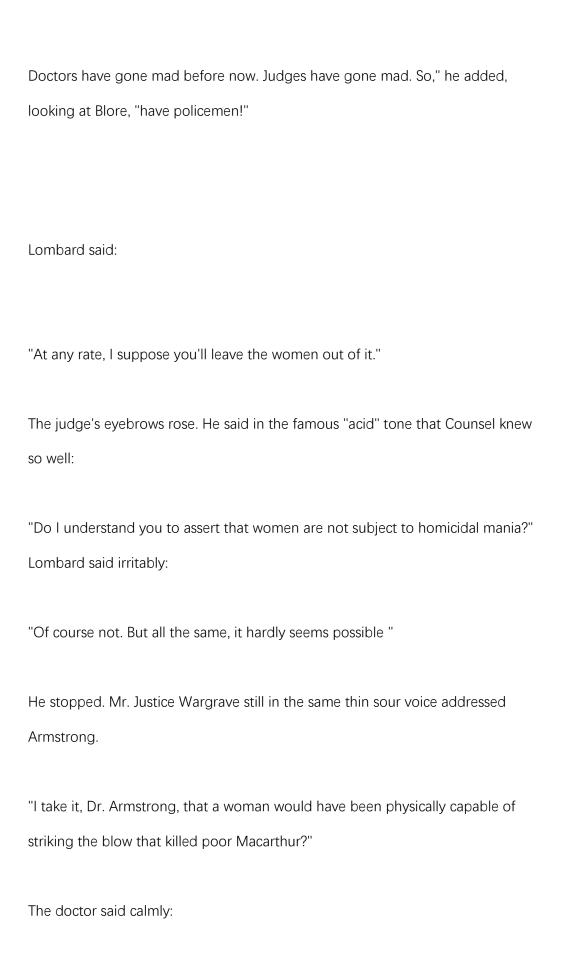


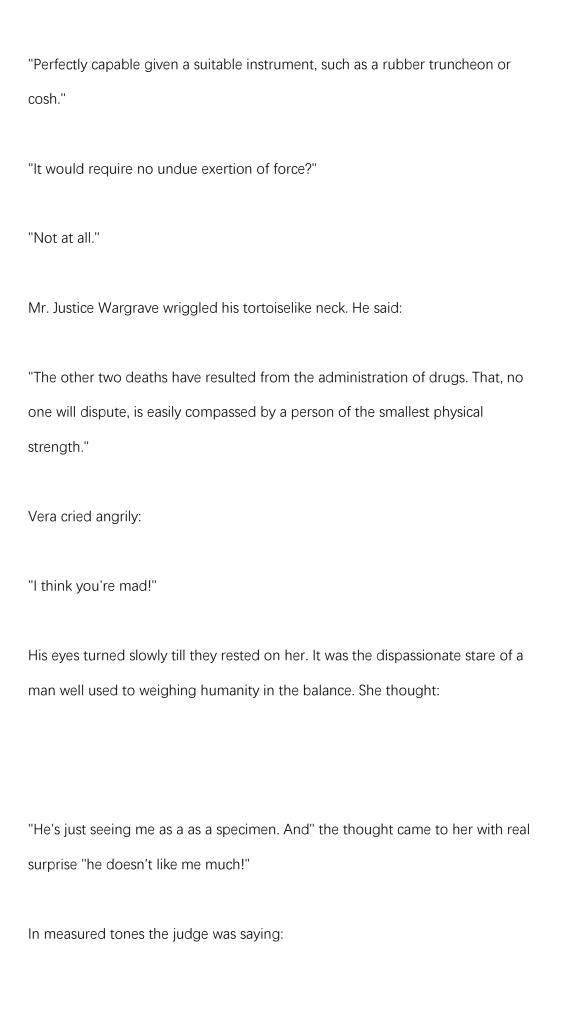
the island. Very much so. Given the scheme in question which is neither more nor less than the execution of justice upon certain individuals for offences which the law cannot touch, there is only one way in which that scheme could be accomplished. Mr. Owen could only come to the island in one way. "It is perfectly clear. Mr. Owen is one of us..." VI"Oh, no, no, no..." It was Vera who burst out almost in a moan. The judge turned a keen eye on her. He said: "My dear young lady, this is no time for refusing to look facts in the face. We are all in grave danger. One of us is U.N. Owen. And we do not know which of us. Of the ten people who came to this island three are definitely cleared. Anthony Marston, Mrs. Rogers, and General Macarthur have gone beyond suspicion.





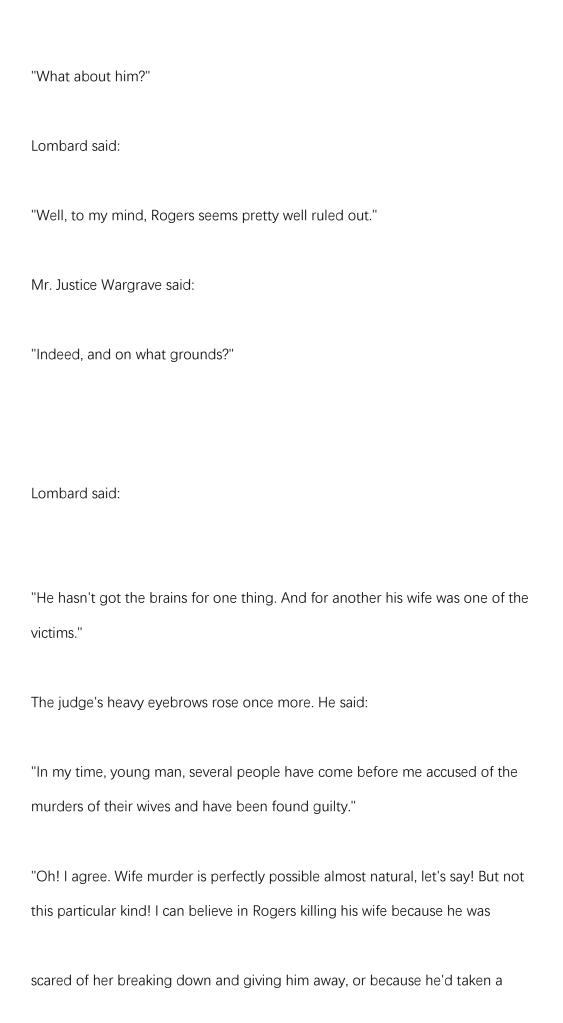






"My dear young lady, do try and restrain your feelings. I am not accusing you." He bowed to Miss Brent. "I hope, Miss Brent, that you are not offended by my insistence that all of us are equally under suspicion?" Emily Brent was knitting. She did not look up. In a cold voice she said: "The idea that I should be accused of taking a fellow creature's life not to speak of the lives of three fellow creatures is, of course, quite absurd to any one who knows anything of my character. But I quite appreciate the fact that we are all strangers to one another and that in those circumstances, nobody can be exonerated without the fullest proof. There is, as I have said, a devil amongst us." The judge said: "Then we are agreed. There can be no elimination on the ground of character or position alone." Lombard said: "What about Rogers?"

The judge looked at him unthinkingly.



dislike

to her, or because he wanted to link up with some nice little bit rather less long in the tooth. But I can't see him as the lunatic Mr. Owen dealing out crazy justice

and starting on his own wife for a crime they both committed."

Mr. Justice Wargrave said:

"You are assuming hearsay to be evidence. We do not know that Rogers and his

wife conspired to murder their employer. That may have been a false statement,

made so that Rogers should appear to be in the same position as ourselves. Mrs.

Rogers' terror last night may have been due to the fact that she realized her

husband was mentally unhinged."

Lombard said:

"Well, have it your own way, U.N. Owen is one of us. No exceptions allowed.

We all qualify."

Mr. Justice Wargrave said:

"My point is that there can be no exceptions allowed on the score of character,

position, or probability. What we must now examine is the possibility of

eliminating one or more persons on the facts. To put it simply, is there among us

one or more persons who could not possibly have administered either Cyanide to

Anthony Marston, or an overdose of sleeping draught to Mrs. Rogers, and who

had no opportunity of striking the blow that killed General Macarthur?"

Blore's rather heavy face lit up. He leant forward.

"Now you're talking, sir!" he said. "That's the stuff! Let's go into it. As regards young Marston I don't think there's anything to be done. It's already been suggested that some one from outside slipped something into the dregs of his

glass before he refilled it for the last time. A person actually in the room could have done that even more easily. I can't remember if Rogers was in the room, but

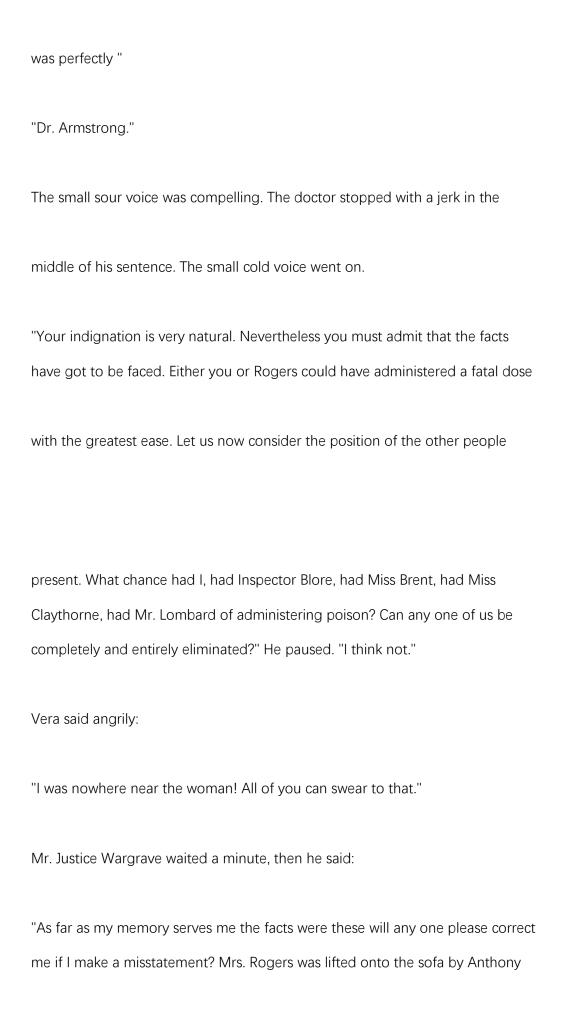
any of the rest of us could certainly have done it."

He paused, then went on.

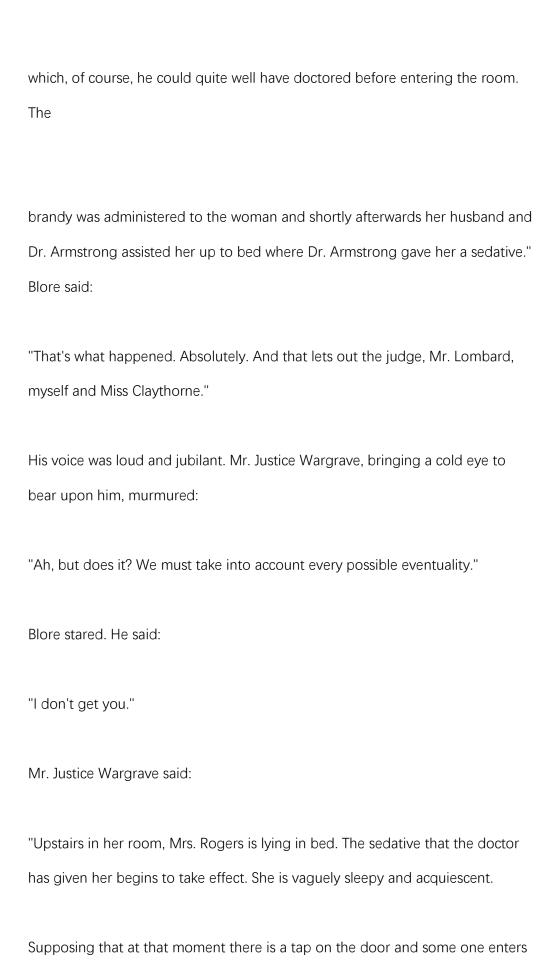
"Now take the woman Rogers. The people who stand out there are her husband and the doctor. Either of them could have done it as easy as winking "

Armstrong sprang to his feet. He was trembling.

"I protest This is absolutely uncalled for! I swear that the dose I gave the woman



Marston and Mr. Lombard and Dr. Armstrong went to her. He sent Rogers for
brandy. There was then a question raised as to where the voice we had just heard
had come from. We all went into the next room with the exception of Miss Brent
who remained in this room alone with the unconscious woman."
A spot of colour came into Emily Brent's cheeks. She stopped knitting. She said:
"This is outrageous!"
The remorseless small voice went on.
"When we returned to this room, you, Miss Brent, were bending over the woman on the sofa."
Emily Brent said:
"Is common humanity a criminal offence?"
Mr. Justice Wargrave said:
"I am only establishing facts. Rogers then entered the room with the brandy



bringing her, shall we say, a tablet, or a draught, with the message that 'the
doctor says you're to take this.' Do you imagine for one minute that she would not have swallowed it obediently without thinking twice about it?"
There was a silence. Blore shifted his feet and frowned. Philip Lombard said:
"I don't believe in that story for a minute. Besides none of us left this room for hours afterwards. There was Marston's death and all the rest of it."
The judge said:
"Some one could have left his or her bedroom later."
Lombard objected:
"But then Rogers would have been up there."
Dr. Armstrong stirred.
"No," he said. "Rogers went downstairs to clear up in the diningroom and pantry.  Any one could have gone up to the woman's bedroom then without being seen."

Emily Brent said:

"Surely, doctor, the woman would have been fast asleep by then under the influence of the drug you had administered?"

"In all likelihood, yes. But it is not a certainty. Until you have prescribed for a patient more than once you cannot tell their reaction to different drugs. There is, sometimes, a considerable period before a sedative takes effect. It depends on the personal idiosyncrasy of the patient towards that particular drug."

Lombard said:

"Of course you would say that, doctor. Suits your book eh?"

Again Armstrong's face darkened with anger.

But again that passionless cold little voice stopped the words on his lips.

"No good result can come from recrimination. Facts are what we have to deal

with. It is established, I think, that there is a possibility of such a thing as I have outlined occurring. I agree that its probability value is not high; though there

again, it depends on who that person might have been. The appearance of Miss Brent or of Miss Claythorne on such an errand would have occasioned no surprise in the patient's mind. I agree that the appearance of myself, or of Mr.

Blore, or of Mr. Lombard could have been, to say the least of it, unusual, but I
still think the visit would have been received without the awakening of any real suspicion."
Blore said:
"And that gets us where?"
VII
Mr. Justice Wargrave, stroking his lip and looking quite passionless and inhuman, said:
"We have now dealt with the second killing, and have established the fact that no one of us can be completely exonerated from suspicion."
He paused and went on.
"We come now to the death of General Macarthur. That took place this morning.
I will ask any one who considers that he or she has an alibi to state it in so many words. I myself will state at once that I have no valid alibi. I spent the morning
sitting on the terrace and meditating on the singular position in which we all find ourselves.

"I sat on that chair on the terrace for the whole morning until the gong went, but
there were, I should imagine, several periods during the morning when I was
quite unobserved and during which it would have been possible for me to walk
down to the sea, kill the General, and return to my chair. There is only my word
for the fact that I never left the terrace. In the circumstances that is not enough.
There must be proof."
Blore said:
"I was with Mr. Lombard and Dr. Armstrong all the morning. They'll bear me out."
Dr. Armstrong said:
"You went to the house for a rope."
Blore said:
"Of course, I did. Went straight there and straight back. You know I did."
Armstrong said:



Armstrong nodded. He said:
"That's right. Not long enough to do a murder, I assure you."
The judge said:
"Did either of you two glance at your watches?"
"Well, no."
Philip Lombard said:
"I wasn't wearing one."
The judge said evenly:
"A minute or two is a vague expression."
He turned his head to the upright figure with the knitting lying on her lap.
"Miss Brent?"
Emily Brent said:
"I took a walk with Miss Claythorne up to the top of the island. Afterwards I sat



Vera for the first time was vague. She said;
"I don't know. About an hour before lunch, I think or it might have been less."  Blore asked:
biore asked.
"Was it after we'd spoken to him or before?"
Vera said:
"I don't know. He he was very queer."
She shivered.
"In what way was he queer?" the judge wanted to know.
Vera said in a low voice:
"He said we were all going to die he said he was waiting for the end. He he
frightened me"
The judge nodded. He said:
"What did you do next?"
"I went back to the house. Then, just before lunch, I went out again and up
behind the house. I've been terribly restless all day."

Mr. Justice Wargrave stroked his chin. He said:

"There remains Rogers. Though I doubt if his evidence will add anything to our sum of knowledge."

Rogers, summoned before the court, had very little to tell. He had been busy all the morning about household duties and with the preparation of lunch. He had taken cocktails onto the terrace before lunch and had then gone up to remove his things from the attic to another room. He had not looked out of the window during the morning and had seen nothing that could have any bearing upon the death of General Macarthur. He would swear definitely that there had been eight china figures upon the diningtable when he laid the table for lunch.

At the conclusion of Rogers' evidence there was a pause. Mr. Justice Wargrave cleared his throat.

Lombard murmured to Vera Claythorne:

"The summing up will now take place!"

The judge said:

"We have inquired into the circumstances of these three deaths to the best of our ability. Whilst probability in some cases is against certain people being implicated, yet we cannot say definitely that any one person can be considered as

cleared of all complicity. I reiterate my positive belief that of the seven persons assembled in this room one is a dangerous and probably insane criminal. There is

no evidence before us as to who that person is. All we can do at the present juncture is to consider what measures we can take for communicating with the mainland for help, and in the event of help being delayed (as is only too possible given the state of the weather) what measures we must adopt to ensure our safety.

"I would ask you all to consider this carefully and to give me any suggestions that may occur to you. In the meantime I warn everybody to be upon his or her guard.

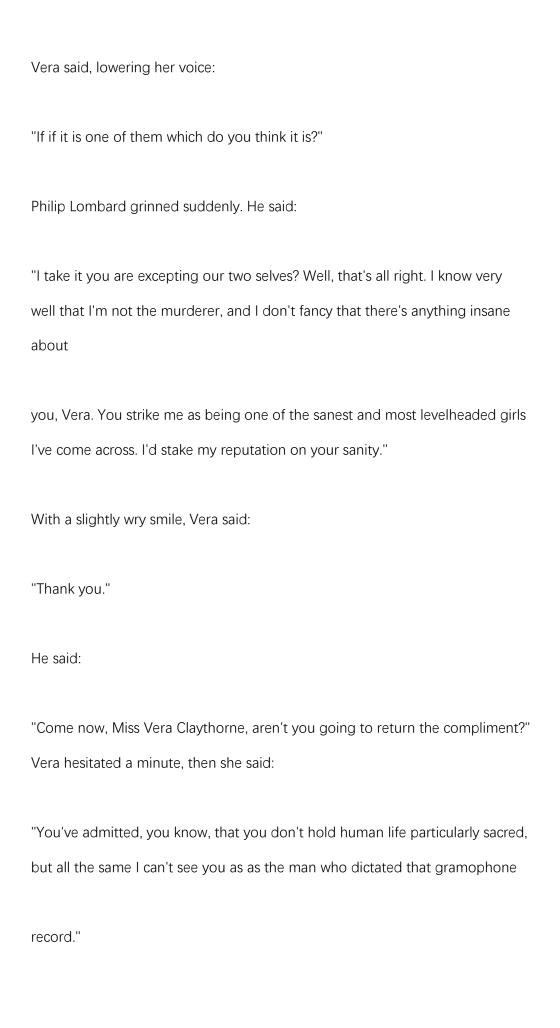
So far the murderer has had an easy task, since his victims have been unsuspicious. From now on, it is our task to suspect each and every one amongst

us. Forewarned is forearmed. Take no risks and be alert to danger. That is all."

Philip Lombard murmured beneath his breath:



Philip Lombard made a grimace.
"The whole thing's incredible! But after Macarthur's death there's no more doubt
as to one thing. There's no question now of accidents or suicides. It's definitely
murder. Three murders up to date."
Vera shivered. She said:
"It's like some awful dream. I keep feeling that things like this can't happen!"
He said with understanding:
"I know. Presently a tap will come on the door, and early morning tea will be
brought in."
Vera said:
"Oh, how I wish that could happen!"
Philip Lombard said gravely:
"Yes, but it won't! We're all in the dream! And we've got to be pretty much upon our guard from now on."



## Lombard said:

"Quite right. If I were to commit one or more murders it would be solely for what I could get out of them. This mass clearance isn't my line of country. Good, then

we'll eliminate ourselves and concentrate on our five fellow prisoners. Which of

them is U.N. Owen? Well, at a guess, and with absolutely nothing to go upon, I'd plump for Wargrave!"

"Oh!" Vera sounded surprised. She thought a minute or two and then said, "Why?"

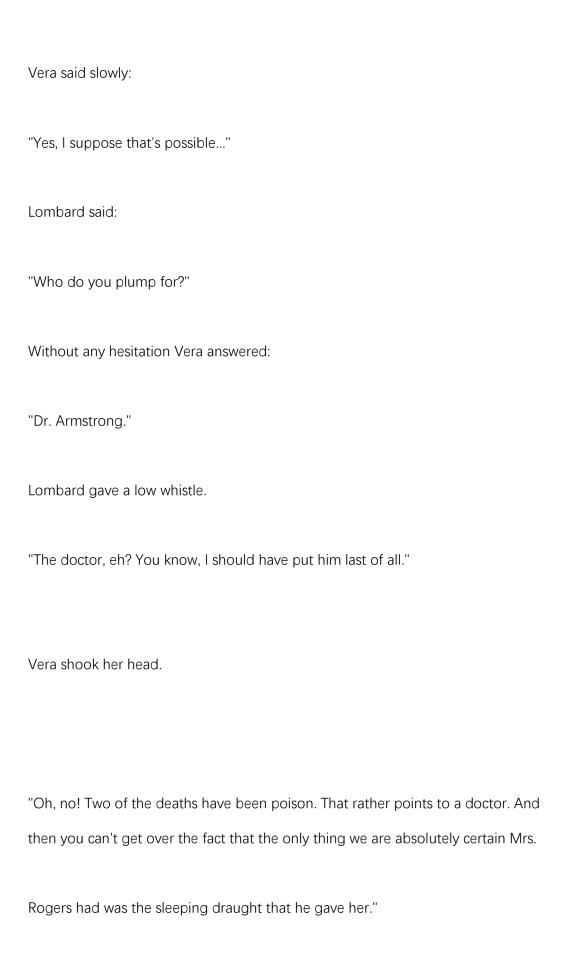
"Hard to say exactly. But to begin with, he's an old man and he's been presiding over courts of law for years. That is to say, he's played God Almighty for a good

many months every year. That must go to a man's head eventually. He gets to

see himself as all powerful, as holding the power of life and death and it's

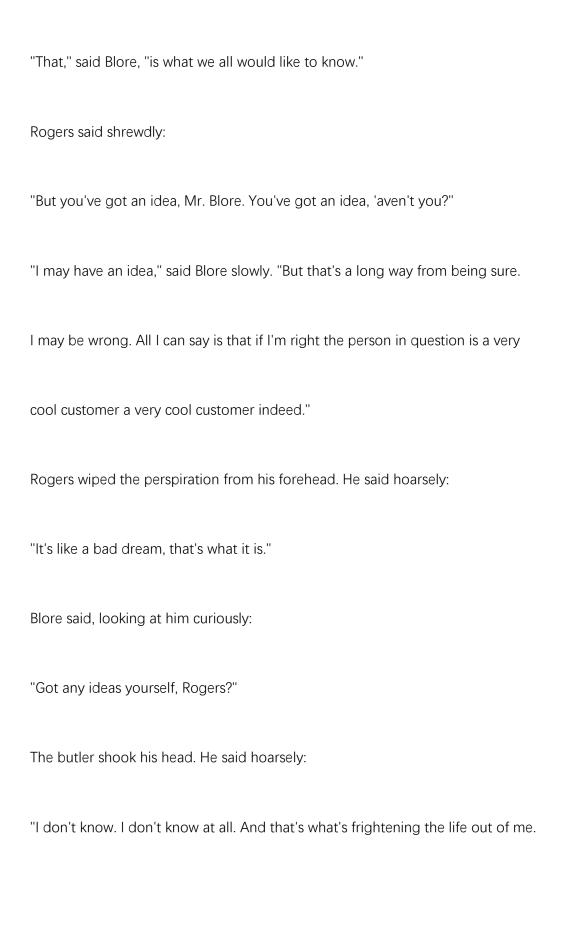
possible that his brain might snap and he might want to go one step farther and

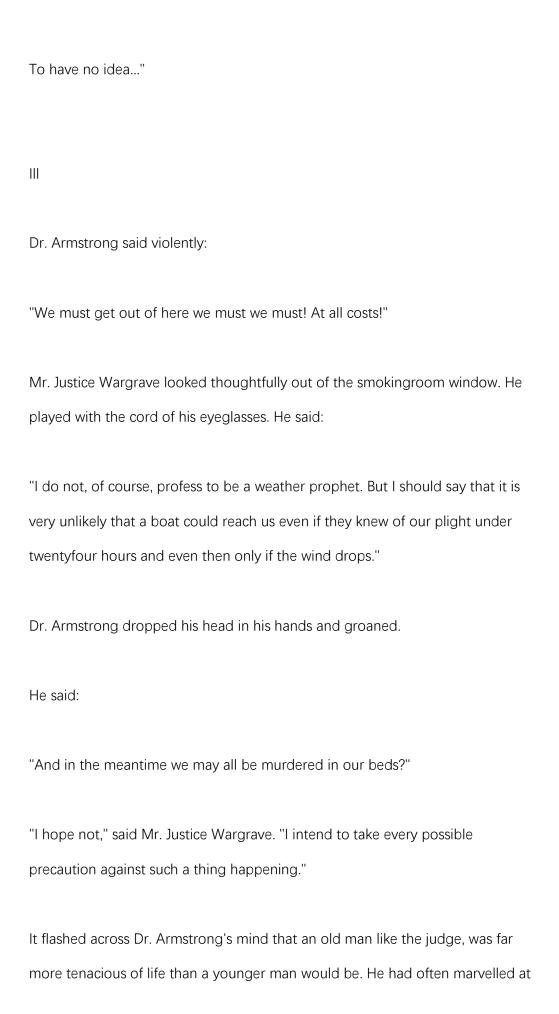
be Executioner and Judge Extraordinary."

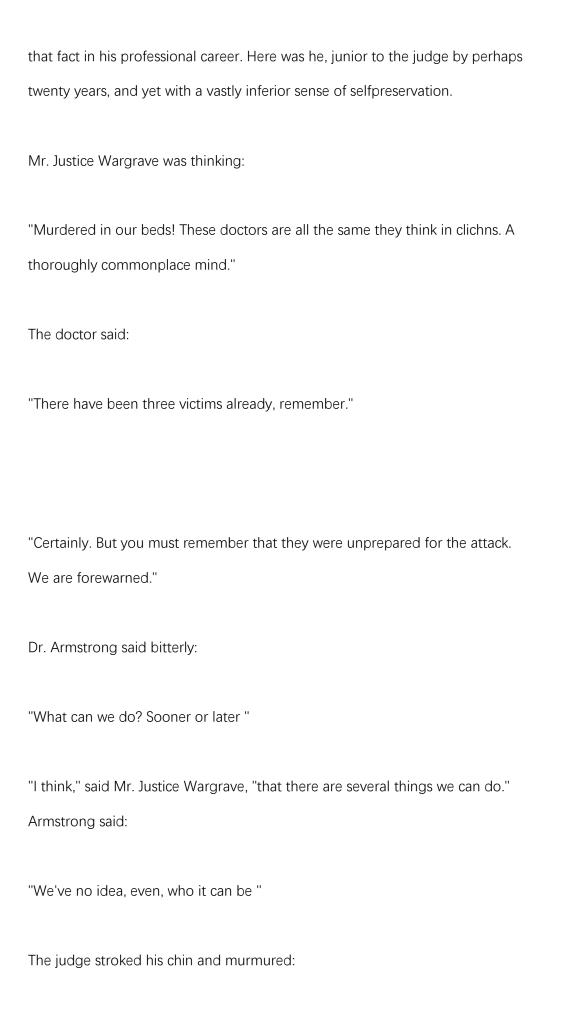


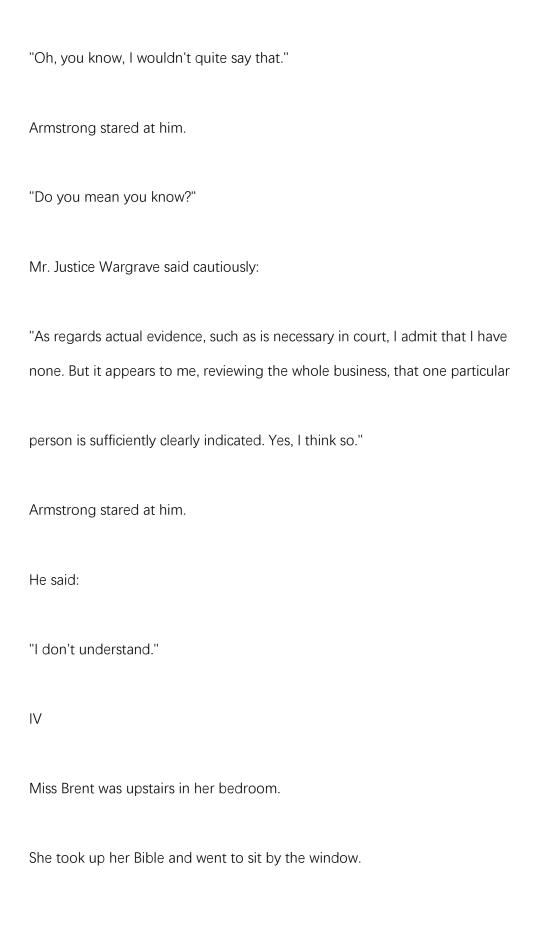












She opened it. Then, after a minute's hesitation, she set it aside and went over to the dressingtable. From a drawer in it she took out a small blackcovered notebook.

She opened it and began writing.

"A terrible thing has happened. General Macarthur is dead. (His cousin married Elsie MacPherson.) There is no doubt but that he was murdered. After luncheon

the judge made us a most interesting speech. He is convinced that the murderer

is one of us. That means that one of us is possessed by a devil. I had already

suspected that. Which of us is it? They are all asking themselves that. I alone

know..."

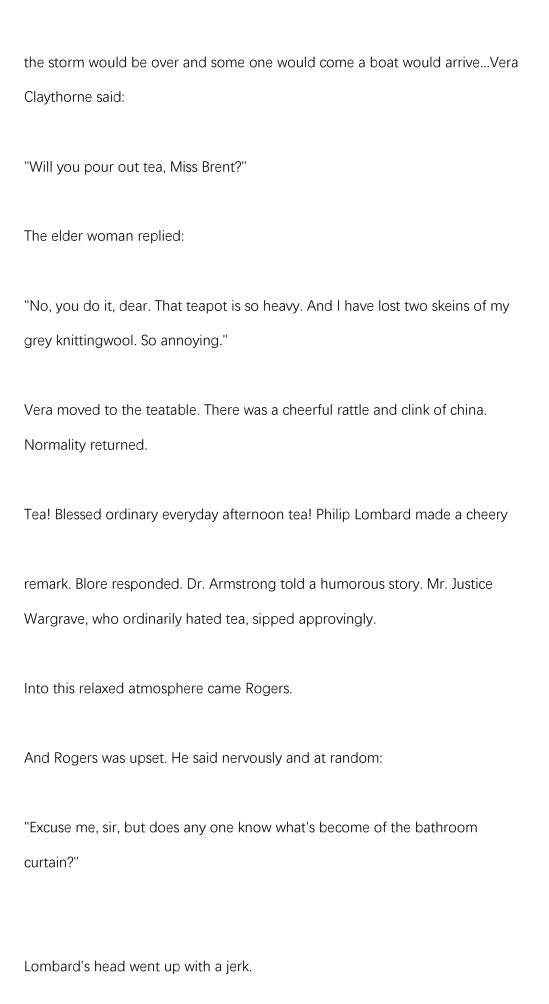
She sat for some time without moving. Her eyes grew vague and filmy. The pencil

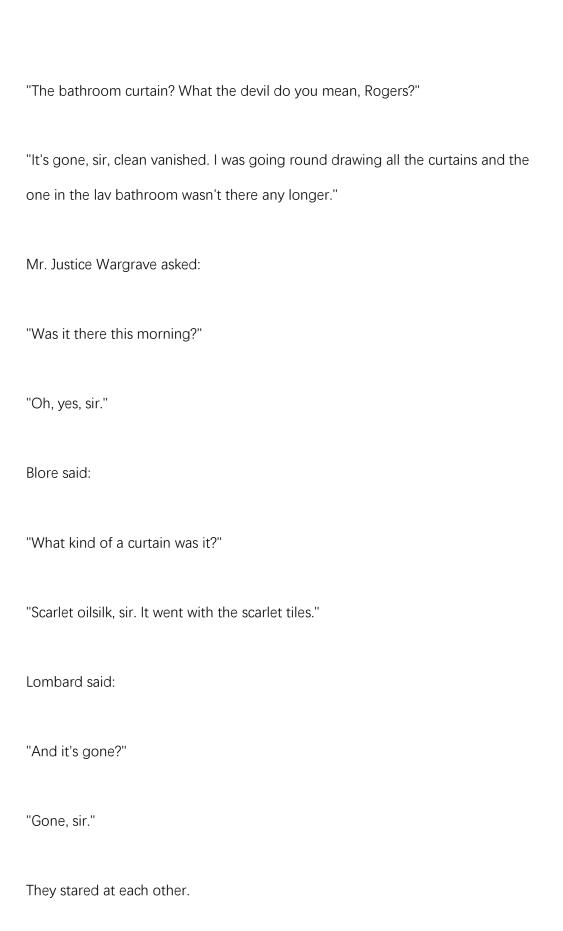
straggled drunkenly in her fingers. In shaking loose capitals she wrote:

THE MURDERER'S NAME IS BEATRICE TAYLOR...

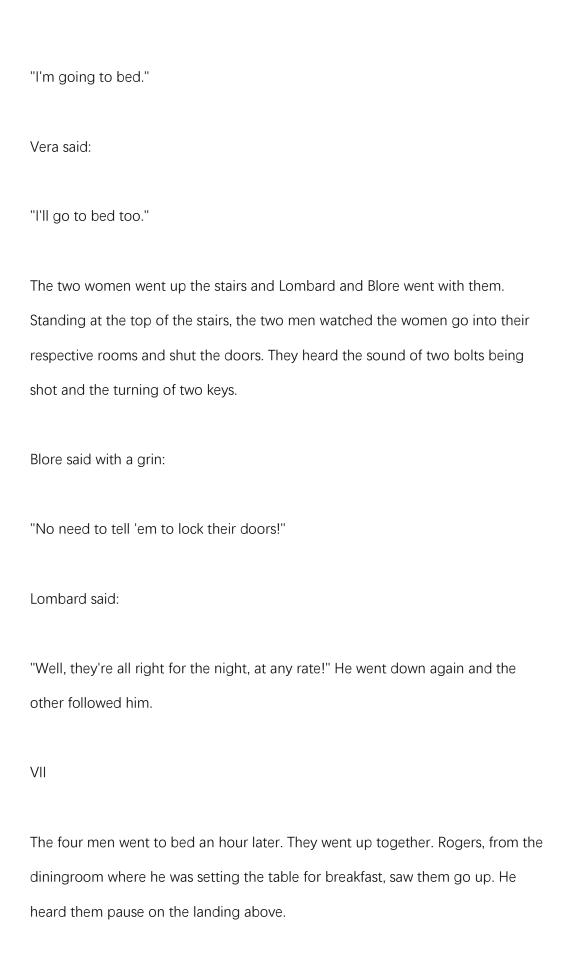
Her eyes closed.

Suddenly, with a start, she awoke. She looked down at the notebook. With an
angry exclamation she scored through the vague unevenly scrawled characters of
the last sentence.
She said in a low voice:
"Did I write that? Did I? I must be going mad"
V
The storm increased. The wind howled against the side of the house.
The storm increased. The wind howied against the side of the house.
Even your one was in the diving any area. They you thin the solution by adult and to mathew And
Every one was in the livingroom. They sat listlessly huddled together. And,
surreptitiously, they watched each other.
When Rogers brought in the teatray, they all jumped.
He said:
"Shall I draw the curtains? It would make it more cheerful like."
Receiving an assent to this, the curtains were drawn and the lamps turned on.
Receiving an assent to this, the curtains were drawn and the lamps turned on.





Blore said heavily:
"Well after all what of it? It's mad but so's everything else. Anyway, it doesn't matter. You can't kill anybody with an oilsilk curtain. Forget about it."
Rogers said:
"Yes, sir, thank you, sir."
He went out, shutting the door behind him.
Inside the room, the pall of fear had fallen anew.
Again, surreptitiously, they watched each other.
VI
Dinner came, was eaten, and cleared away. A simple meal, mostly out of tins.
Afterwards, in the livingroom, the strain was almost too great to be borne.
At nine o'clock, Emily Brent rose to her feet.
She said:





He went back into the diningroom. Yes, everything was ready for the morning.
His eye lingered on the centre plaque of lookingglass and the seven little china
figures.
A sudden grin transformed his face.
He murmured:
"I'll see no one plays tricks tonight, at any rate."
Crossing the room he locked the door to the pantry. Then going through the
other door to the hall he pulled the door to, locked it and slipped the key into his
pocket.
Then, extinguishing the lights, he hurried up the stairs and into his new bedroom.
There was only one possible hidingplace in it, the tall wardrobe, and he looked
into that immediately. Then, locking and bolting the door, he prepared for bed.
He said to himself:
"No more Indian tricks tonight I've seen to that"

## Chapter 11

Philip Lombard had the habit of waking at daybreak. He did so on this particular

morning. He raised himself on an elbow and listened. The wind had somewhat

abated but was still blowing. He could hear no sound of rain...

At eight o'clock the wind was blowing more strongly, but Lombard did not hear it.

He was asleep again.

At ninethirty he was sitting on the edge of his bed looking at his watch. He put it to his ear. Then his lips drew back from his teeth in that curious wolflike smile characteristic of the man.

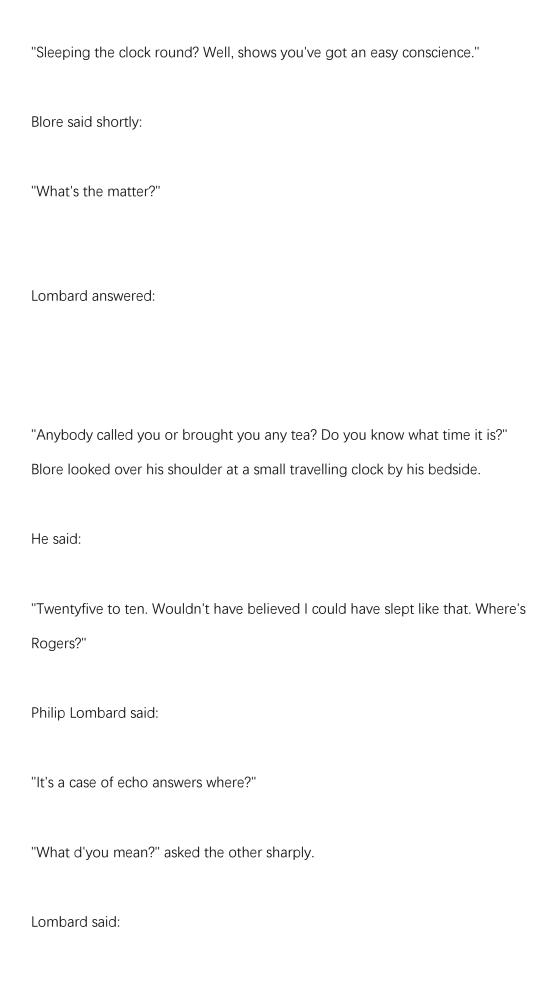
He said very softly:

"I think the time has come to do something about this."

At twentyfive minutes to ten he was tapping on the closed door of Blore's room.

The latter opened it cautiously. His hair was tousled and his eyes were still dim with sleep.

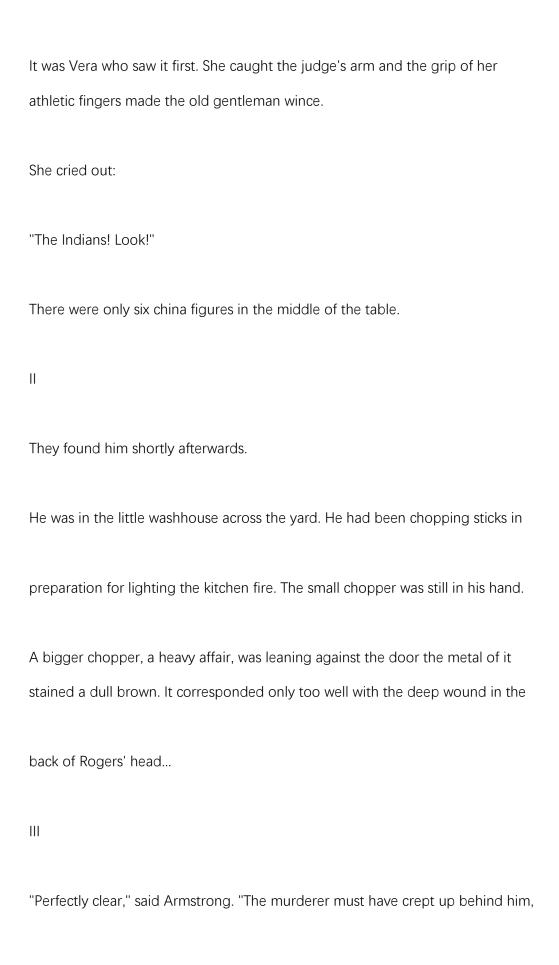
Philip Lombard said affably:

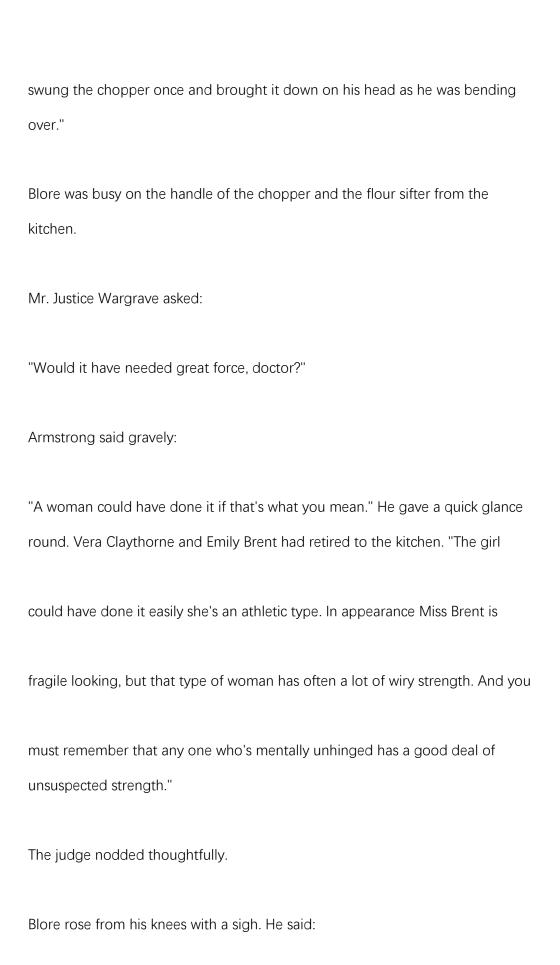


"I mean that Rogers is missing. He isn't in his room or anywhere else. And there's no kettle on and the kitchen fire isn't even lit."
Blore swore under his breath. He said:
"Where the devil can he be? Out on the island somewhere? Wait till I get some clothes on. See if the others know anything."
Philip Lombard nodded. He moved along the line of closed doors.
He found Armstrong up and nearly dressed. Mr. Justice Wargrave, like Blore,
had to be roused from sleep. Vera Claythorne was dressed. Emily Brent's room
was empty.
The little party moved through the house. Rogers' room, as Philip Lombard had already ascertained, was untenanted. The bed had been slept in, and his razor
and sponge and soap were wet.
Lombard said:
"He got up all right."

Vera said in a low voice which she tried to make firm and assured:
"You don't think he's hiding somewhere waiting for us?"
Lombard said:
"My dear girl, I'm prepared to think anything of any one! My advice is that we keep together until we find him."
Armstrong said:
"He must be out on the island somewhere."
Blore who had joined them, dressed, but still unshaved, said:
"Where's Miss Brent got to that's another mystery?"
But as they arrived in the hall, Emily Brent came in through the front door. She had on a mackintosh. She said:
"The sea is as high as ever. I shouldn't think any boat could put out today."
Blore said:
"Have you been wandering about the island alone, Miss Brent? Don't you realize
that that's an exceedingly foolish thing to do?"







"No fingerprints. Handle was wiped afterwards."

A sound of laughter was heard they turned sharply. Vera Claythorne was standing in the yard. She cried out in a high shrill voice, shaken with wild bursts of laughter:

"Do they keep bees on this island? Tell me that. Where do we go for honey? Ha! ha!"

They stared at her uncomprehendingly. It was as though the sane wellbalanced girl had gone mad before their eyes. She went on in that high unnatural voice:

"Don't stare like that! As though you thought I was mad. It's sane enough what I'm asking. Bees, hives, bees! Oh, don't you understand? Haven't you read that

idiotic rhyme? It's up in all your bedrooms put there for you to study! We might have come here straightaway if we'd had sense. Seven little Indian boys chopping

up sticks. And the next verse. I know the whole thing by heart, I tell you! Six little Indian boys playing with a hive. And that's why I'm asking do they keep bees on this island? isn't it funny? isn't it damned funny...?"

She began laughing wildly again. Dr. Armstrong strode forward. He raised his

hand and struck her a flat blow on the cheek.
She gasped, hiccuped and swallowed. She stood motionless a minute, then she said:
"Thank you I'm all right now."
Her voice was once more calm and controlled the voice of the efficient games mistress.
She turned and went across the yard into the kitchen saying: "Miss Brent and I are getting you breakfast. Can you bring some sticks to light the fire?"
The marks of the doctor's hand stood out red on her cheek.
As she went into the kitchen Blore said:
"Well, you dealt with that all right, doctor."
Armstrong said apologetically:
"Had to! We can't cope with hysteria on the top of everything else."
Philip Lombard said:



"As you're just about to tell me, it's not worth the trouble of guessing."

Exinspector Blore was an earnest man. A light touch was incomprehensible to him. He went on heavily:

"There was a case in America. Old gentleman and his wife both killed with an axe. Middle of the morning. Nobody in the house but the daughter and the maid.

Maid, it was proved, couldn't have done it. Daughter was a respectable middleaged spinster. Seemed incredible. So incredible that they acquitted her. But they never found any other explanation." He paused. "I thought of that when I saw the axe and then when I went into the kitchen and saw her there so neat and calm.

Hadn't turned a hair! That girl, coming all over hysterical well, that's natural the sort of thing you'd expect don't you think so?"

Philip Lombard said laconically:

"It might be."

Blore went on.

"But the other! So neat and prim wrapped up in that apron Mrs. Rogers'

apron, I suppose saying: 'Breakfast will be ready in half an hour or so.' If you

ask me that woman's as mad as a hatter! Lots of elderly spinsters go that way I don't mean go in for homicide on the grand scale, but go queer in their heads. Unfortunately it's taken her this way. Religious mania thinks she's God's instrument, something of that kind! She sits in her room, you know, reading her Bible." Philip Lombard sighed and said: "That's hardly proof positive of an unbalanced mentality, Blore." But Blore went on, ploddingly, perseveringly: "And then she was out in her mackintosh, said she'd been down to look at the sea." The other shook his head. He said: "Rogers was killed as he was chopping firewood that is to say first thing when he got up. The Brent woman wouldn't have needed to wander about outside for

hours afterwards. If you ask me, the murderer of Rogers would take jolly good



"I may be wrong, of course, but I can't feel that you've got enough imagination for this job. All I can say is, if you're the criminal, you're a damned fine actor and I take my hat off to you." He lowered his voice. "Just between ourselves, Blore, and taking into account that we'll probably both be a couple of stiffs before another

day is out, you did indulge in that spot of perjury, I suppose?"

Blore shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. He said at last:

"Doesn't seem to make much odds now. Oh, well, here goes. Landor was innocent right enough. The gang had got me squared and between us we got him put away

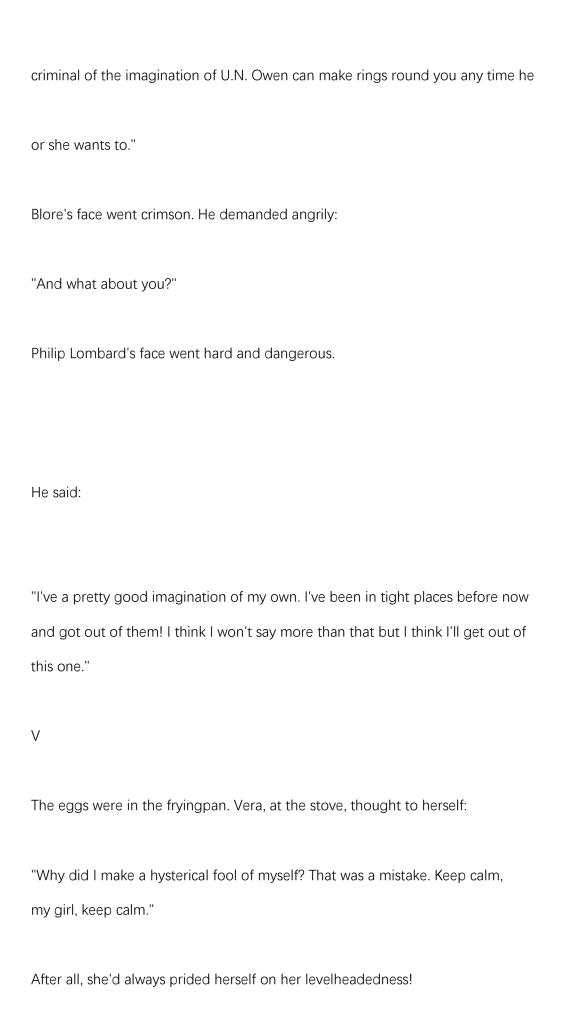
for a stretch. Mind you, I wouldn't admit this "

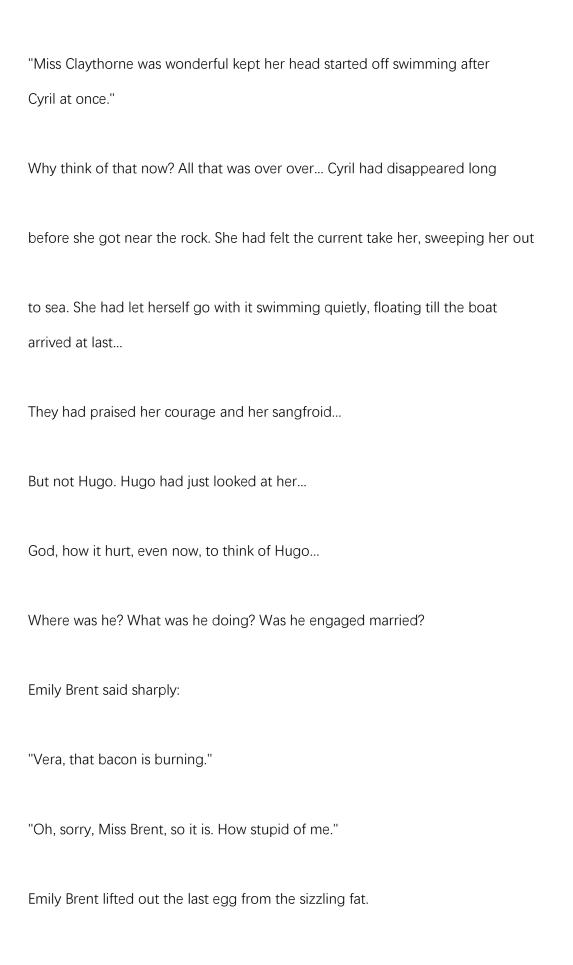
"If there were any witnesses," finished Lombard with a grin. "It's just between you and me. Well, I hope you made a tidy bit out of it."

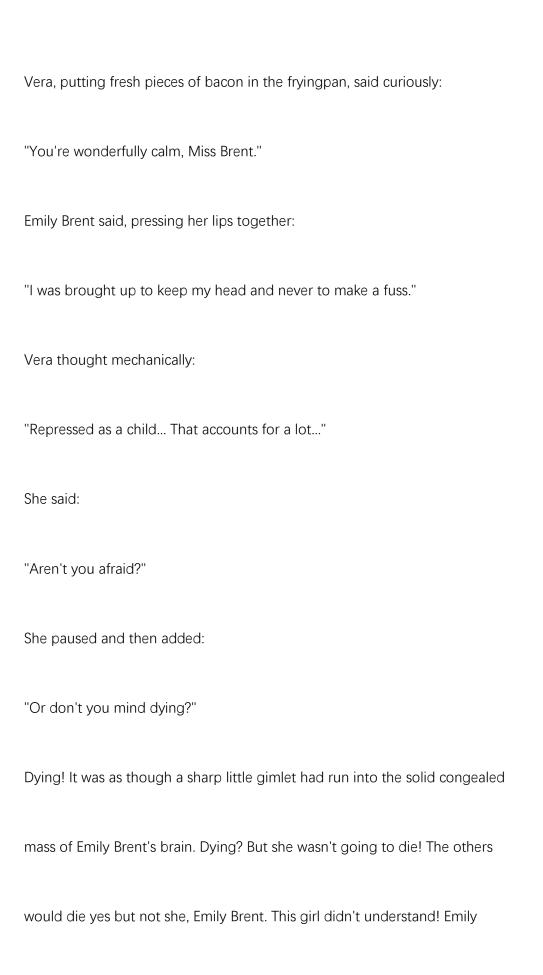
"Didn't make what I should have done. Mean crowd, the Purcell gang. I got my promotion, though."

"And Landor got penal servitude and died in prison."









wasn't afraid naturally none of the Brents were afraid, All her people were

Service people. They faced death unflinchingly. They led upright lives just as she, Emily Brent, had led an upright life... She had never done anything to be ashamed of... And so, naturally, she wasn't going to die...

"The Lord is mindful of his own." "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day..." It was daylight now there was no terror. "We shall none of us leave this island... Who had said that? General Macarthur, of course, whose cousin had married Elsie MacPherson. He hadn't

seemed to care. He had seemed actually to welcome the idea! Wicked! Almost

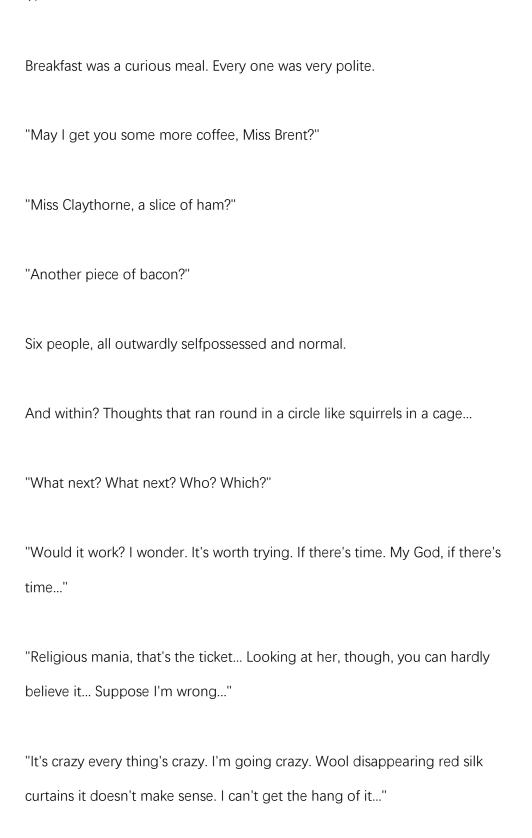
impious to feel that way. Some people thought so little of death that they actually took their own lives. Beatrice Taylor... Last night she had dreamed of Beatrice

dreamt that she was outside pressing her face against the window and moaning, asking to be let in. But Emily Brent hadn't wanted to let her in. Because, if she did, something terrible would happen...

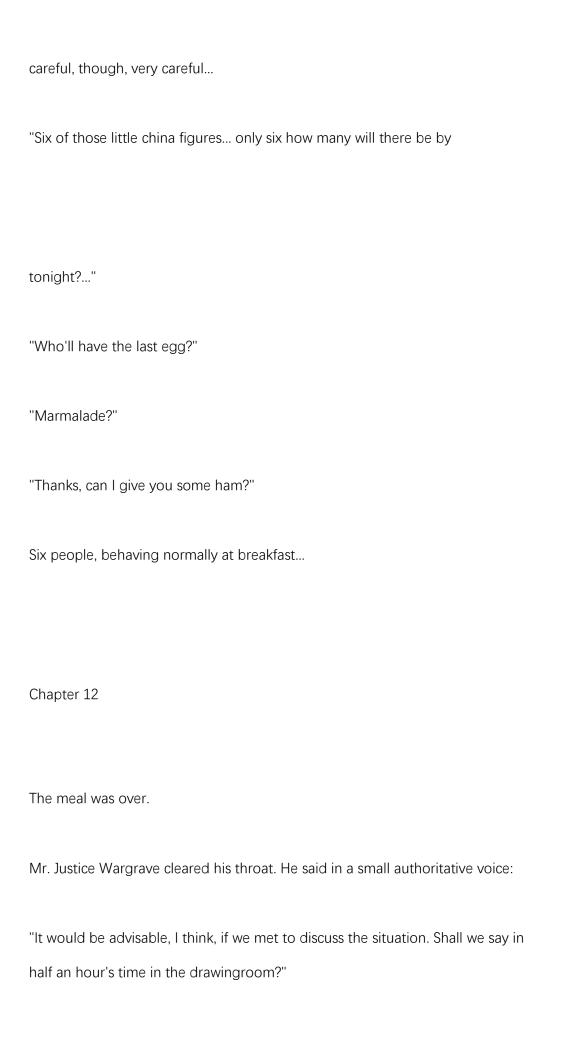
Emily came to herself with a start. That girl was looking at her very strangely.

She said in a brisk voice:

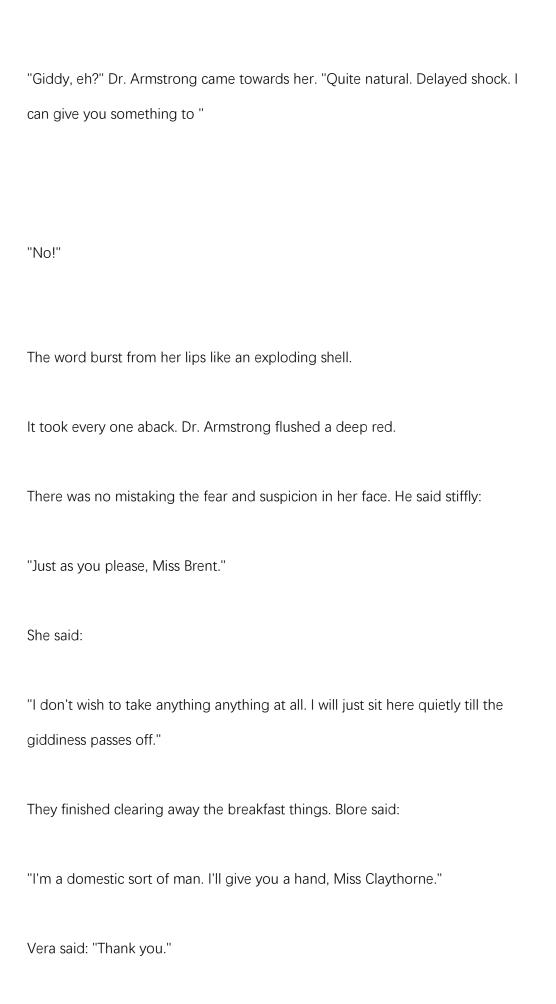
"Everything's ready, isn't it? We'll take the breakfast in."



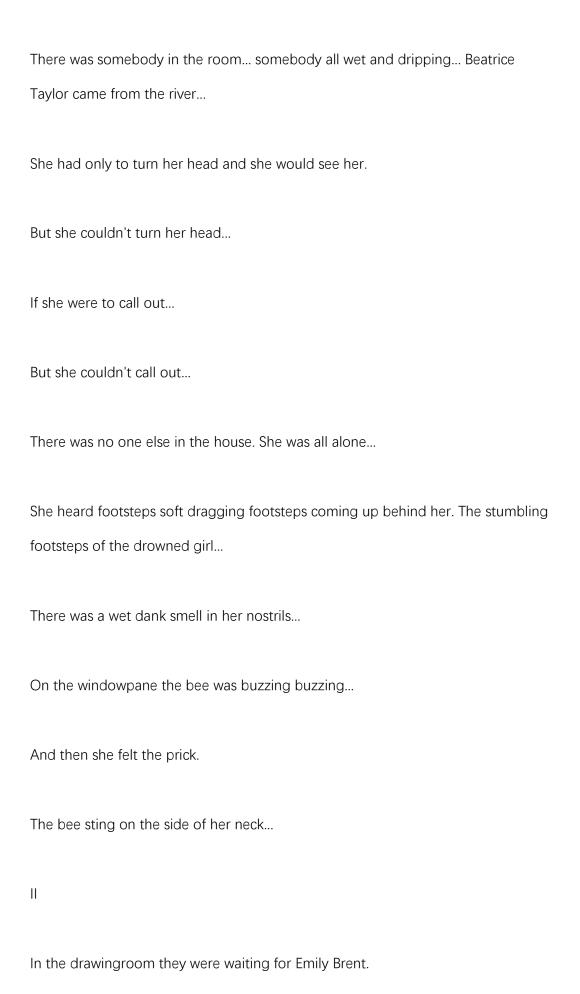
"The damned fool, he believed every word I said to him. It was easy... I must be



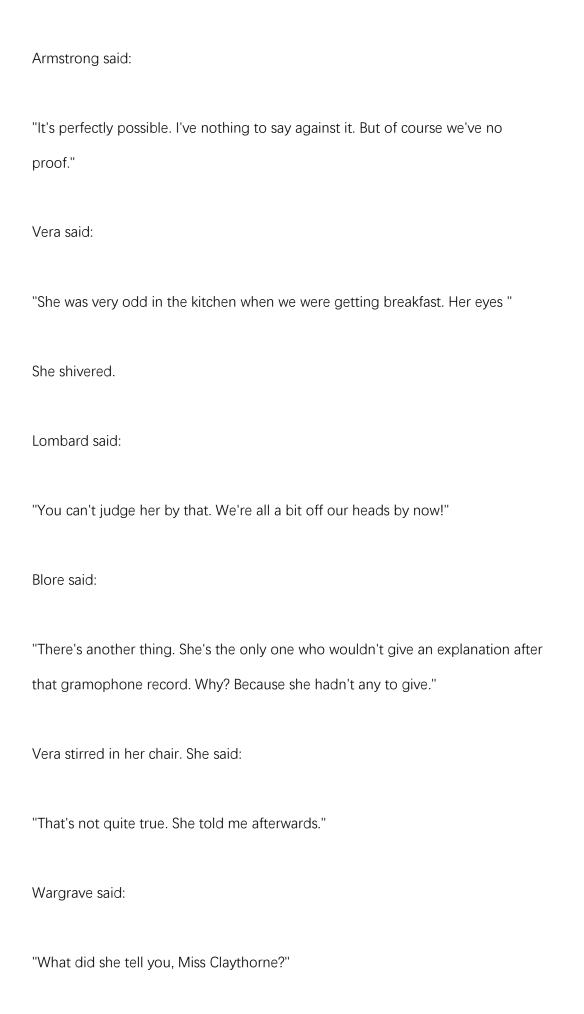
Every one made a sound suggestive of agreement.
Vera began to pile plates together.
She said:
"I'll clear away and wash up."
Philip Lombard said:
"We'll bring the stuff out to the pantry for you."
"Thanks."
Emily Brent, rising to her feet; sat down again. She said:
"Oh, dear."
The judge said:
"Anything the matter, Miss Brent?"
Emily said apologetically:
"I'm sorry. I'd like to help Miss Claythorne, but I don't know how it is. I feel just a little giddy."

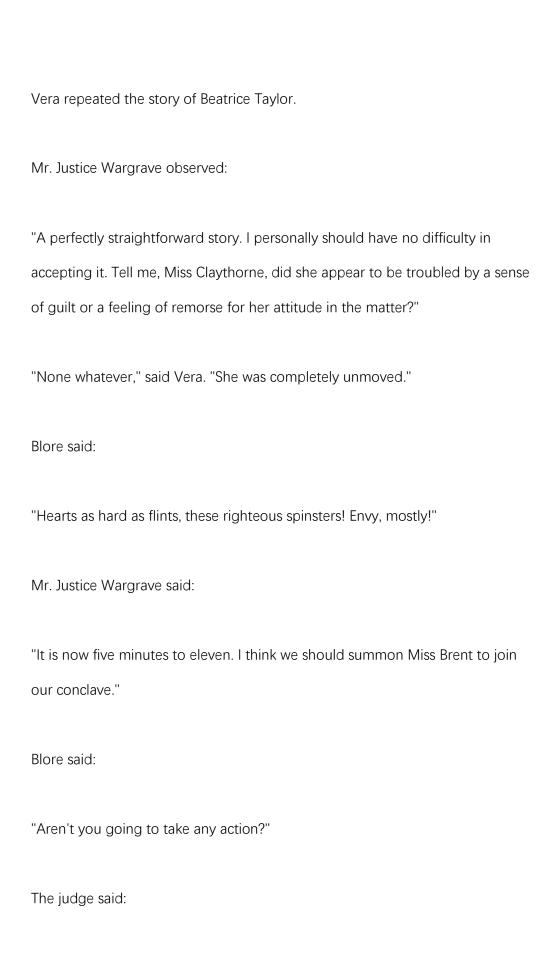


Emily Brent was left alone sitting in the diningroom.
For a while she heard a faint murmur of voices from the pantry.
The giddiness was passing. She felt drowsy now, as though she could easily go to
sleep.
There was a buzzing in her ears or was it a real buzzing in the room?
She thought:
"It's like a bee a bumblebee."
Presently she saw the bee. It was crawling up the windowpane.
Vera Claythorne had talked about bees this morning.
Bees and honey
She liked honey. Honey in the comb, and strain it yourself through a muslin bag.  Drip, drip, drip



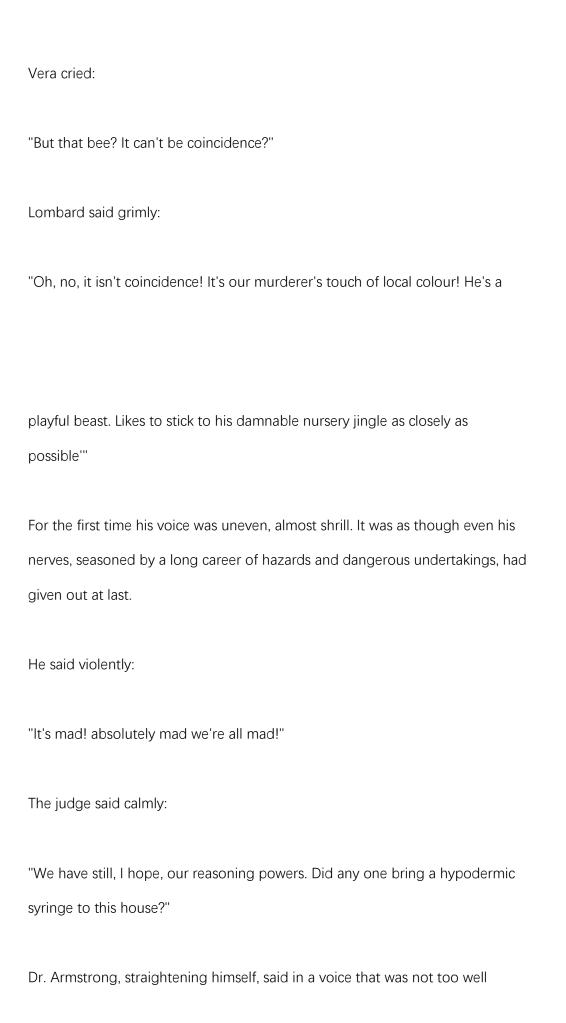
Vera Claythorne said:
"Shall I go and fetch her?"
Blore said quickly:
"Just a minute."
Vera sat down again. Every one looked inquiringly at Blore.
He said:
"Look here, everybody, my opinion's this: we needn't look farther for the author of these deaths than the diningroom at this minute. I'd take my oath that woman's
the one we're after!"
Armstrong said:
"And the motive?"
"Religious mania. What do you say, doctor?"

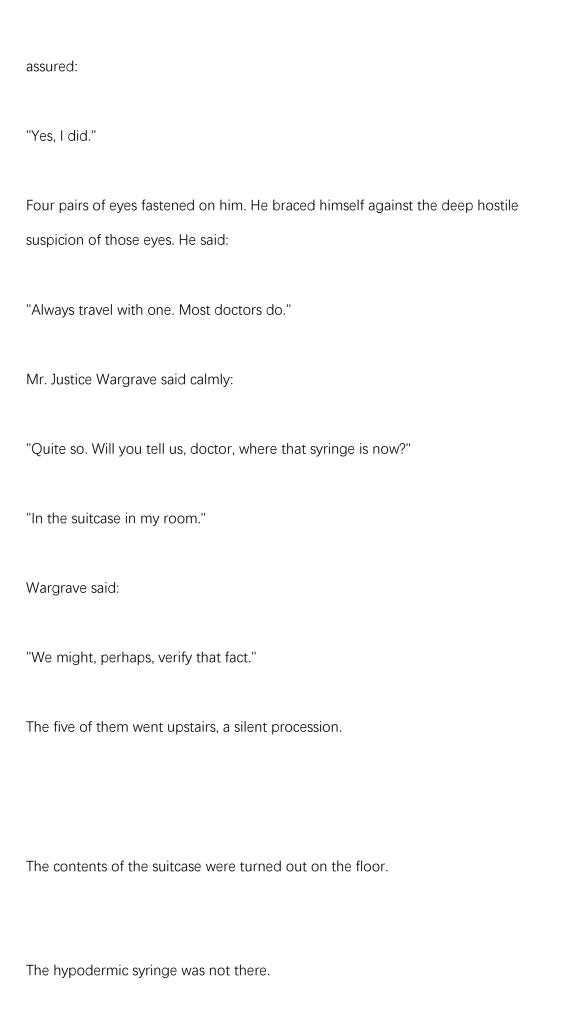


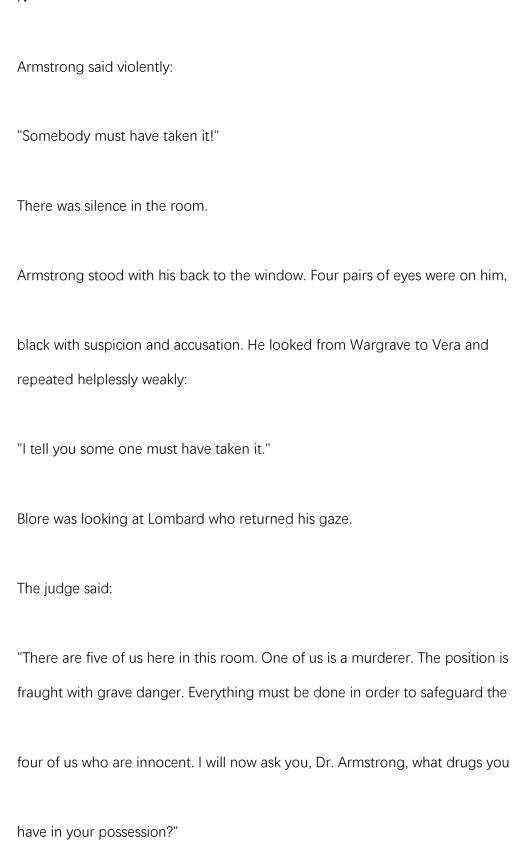


"I fail to see what action we can take. Our suspicions are, at the moment, only
suspicions. I will, however, ask Dr. Armstrong to observe Miss Brent's
demeanour very carefully. Let us now go into the diningroom."
They found Emily Brent sitting in the chair in which they had left her. From
behind they saw nothing amiss, except that she did not seem to hear their
entrance into the room.
And then they say her fees suffused with blood with blue line and storing even
And then they saw her face suffused with blood, with blue lips and staring eyes.
Blore said:
"My God, she's dead!"
III
The small quiet voice of Mr. Justice Wargrave said:
"One more of us acquitted too late!"
Armstrong was bent over the dead woman. He sniffed the lips, shook his head,
peered into the eyelids.

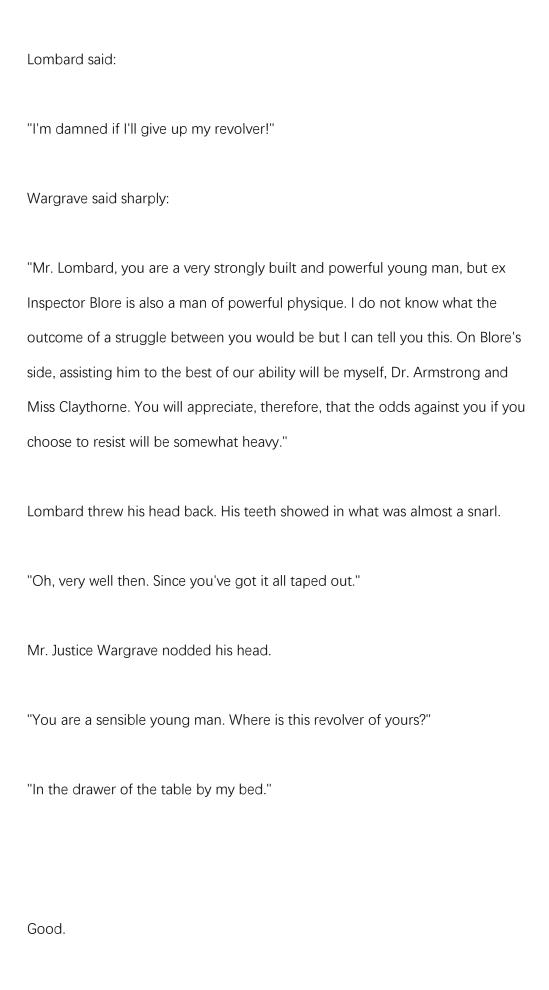
Lombard said impatiently:
"How did she die, doctor? She was all right when we left her here!"
Armstrong's attention was riveted on a mark on the right side of the neck.
He said:
"That's the mark of a hypodermic syringe."
There was a buzzing sound from the window. Vera cried:
"Look a bee a bumblebee. Remember what I said this morning!"
Armstrong said grimly:
"It wasn't that bee that stung her! A human hand held the syringe."
The judge asked:
"What poison was injected?"
Armstrong answered:
"At a guess, one of the cyanides. Probably Potassium Cyanide, same as Anthony
Marston. She must have died almost immediately by asphyxiation."

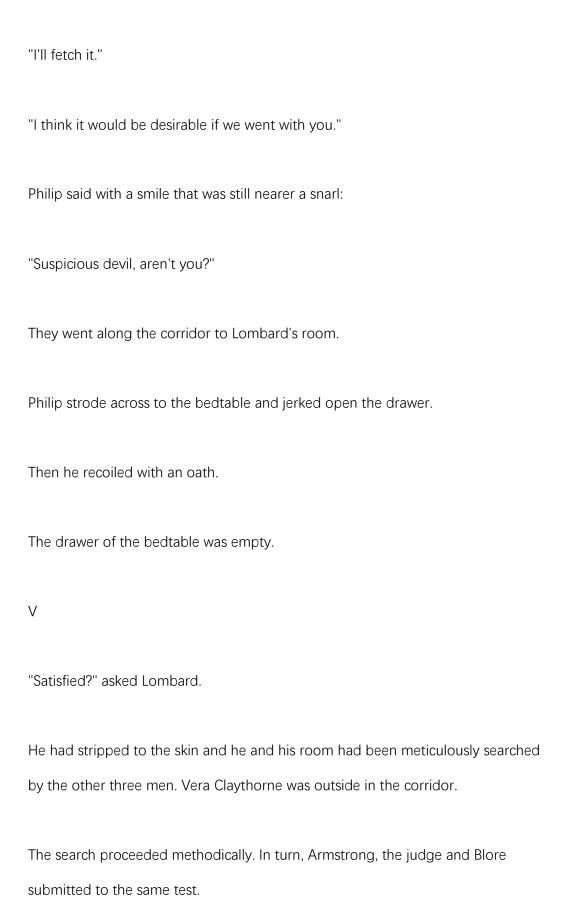






Armstrong replied:
"I have a small medicine case here. You can examine it. You will find some
sleeping stuff trional and sulphonal tablets a packet of bromide, bicarbonate of soda, aspirin. Nothing else. I have no cyanide in my possession."
The judge said:
"I have, myself, some sleeping tablets sulphonal, I think they are. I presume they would be lethal if a sufficiently large dose were given. You, Mr. Lombard,
have in your possession a revolver."
Philip Lombard said sharply:
"What if I have?"
"Only this. I propose that the doctor's supply of drugs, my own sulphonal tablets, your revolver and anything else of the nature of drugs or firearms should be
collected together and placed in a safe place. That after this is done, we should
each of us submit to a search both of our persons and of our effects."





The four men emerged from Blore's room and approached Vera. It was the judge
who spoke.
"I hope you will understand. Miss Claythorne, that we can make no exceptions.
That revolver must be found. You have, I presume, a bathing dress with you?"
Vera nodded.
"Then I will ask you to go into your room and put it on and then come out to us
here."
Vera went into her room and shut the door. She reappeared in under a minute
dressed in a tightfitting silk rucked bathing dress.
Wargrave nodded approval.
"Thank you, Miss Claythorne. Now if you will remain here, we will search your
room."
Vera waited patiently in the corridor until they emerged. Then she went in,
dressed, and came out to where they were waiting.
The judge said:

"We are now assured of one thing. There are no lethal weapons or drugs in the possession of any of us five. That is one point to the good. We will now place the drugs in a safe place. There is, I think, a silver chest, is there not, in the pantry?"

Blore said:

"That's all very well, but who's to have the key? You, I suppose."

Mr. Justice Wargrave made no reply.

He went down to the pantry and the others followed him. There was a small case

there designed for the purpose of holding silver and plate. By the judge's directions, the various drugs were placed in this and it was locked. Then, still on Wargrave's instructions, the chest was lifted into the plate cupboard and this in

turn was locked. The judge then gave the key of the chest to Philip Lombard and

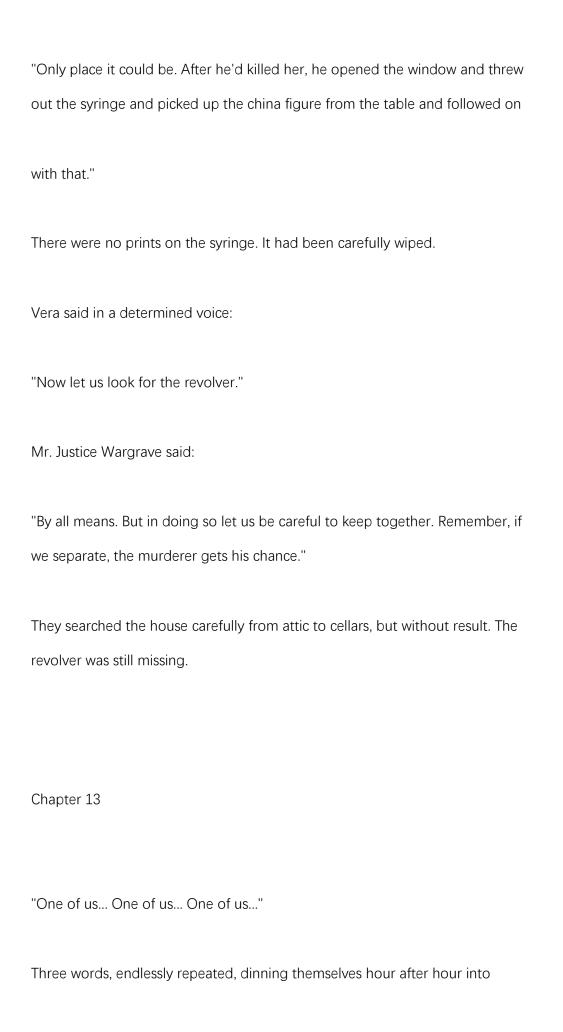
the key of the cupboard to Blore.

He said:

"You two are the strongest physically. It would be difficult for either of you to get the key from the other. It would be impossible for any of us three to do so. To

break open the cupboard or the plate chest would be a noisy and cumbrous
proceeding and one which could hardly be carried out without attention being
attracted to what was going on."
He paused, then went on:
"We are still faced by one very grave problem. What has become of Mr.
Lombard's revolver?"
Blore said:
"Seems to me its owner is the most likely person to know that."
A white dint showed in Philip Lombard's nostrils. He said:
"You damned pigheaded fool! I tell you it's been stolen from me!"
Wargrave asked:
"When did you see it last?"
"Last night. It was in the drawer when I went to bed ready in case anything
happened."
The judge nodded.
He said:





receptive brains.

Five people five frightened people. Five people who watched each other, who now hardly troubled to hide their state of nervous tension.

There was little pretence now no formal veneer of conversation. They were five enemies linked together by a mutual instinct of selfpreservation.

And all of them, suddenly, looked less like human beings. They were reverted to more bestial types. Like a wary old tortoise, Mr. Justice Wargrave sat hunched up, his body motionless, his eyes keen and alert. Exinspector Blore looked coarser and clumsier in build. His walk was that of a slow padding animal. His eyes were bloodshot. There was a look of mingled ferocity and stupidity about him. He was like a beast at bay ready to charge its pursuers. Philip Lombard's

senses seemed heightened, rather than diminished. His ears reacted to the slightest sound. His step was lighter and quicker, his body was lithe and graceful. And he smiled often, his lips curling back from his long white teeth.

Vera Claythorne was very quiet. She sat most of the time huddled in a chair. Her

eyes stared ahead of her into space. She looked dazed. She was like a bird that has dashed its head against glass and that has been picked up by a human hand. It crouches there, terrified, unable to move, hoping to save itself by its immobility.

Armstrong was in a pitiable condition of nerves. He twitched and his hands

shook. He lighted cigarette after cigarette and stubbed them out almost immediately. The forced inaction of their position seemed to gall him more than

the others. Every now and then he broke out into a torrent of nervous speech.

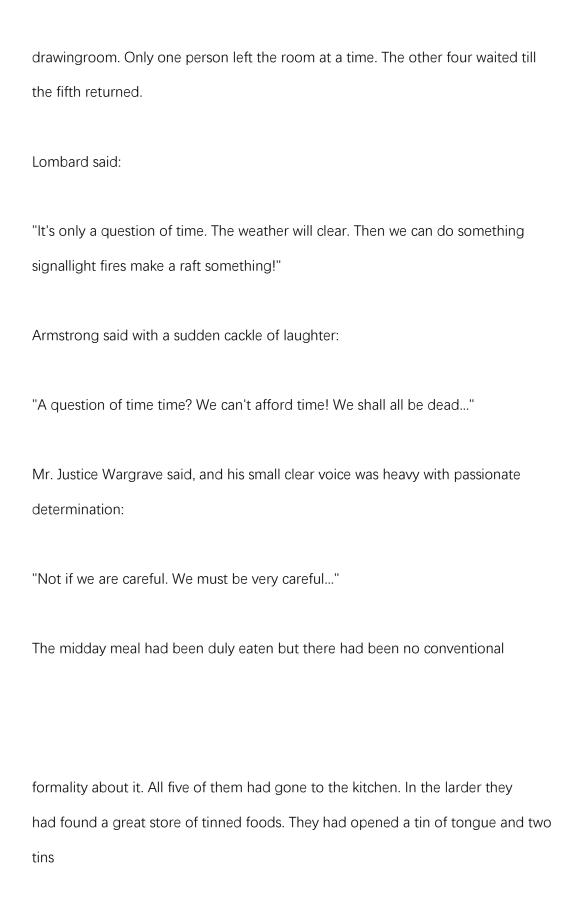
"We we shouldn't just sit here doing nothing! There must be something surely, surely, there is something that we can do? If we lit a bonfire "

Blore said heavily:

"In this weather?"

The rain was pouring down again. The wind came in fitful gusts. The depressing sound of the pattering rain nearly drove them mad.

By tacit consent, they had adopted a plan of campaign. They all sat in the big



of fruit. They had eaten standing round the kitchen table. Then, herding close together, they had returned to the drawingroom to sit there sit watching

each other...

And by now the thoughts that ran through their brains were abnormal, feverish, diseased...

"It's Armstrong... I saw him looking at me sideways just then... his eyes are mad... quite mad... Perhaps he isn't a doctor at all... That's it, of course!... He's a lunatic, escaped from some doctor's house pretending to be a doctor... It's true...

shall I tell them?... Shall I scream out?... No, it won't do to put him on his guard...

Besides he can seem so sane... What time is it?... Only a quarter past three!... Oh, God, I shall go mad myself... Yes, it's Armstrong... He's watching me now..."

"They won't get me! I can take care of myself... I've been in tight places before...

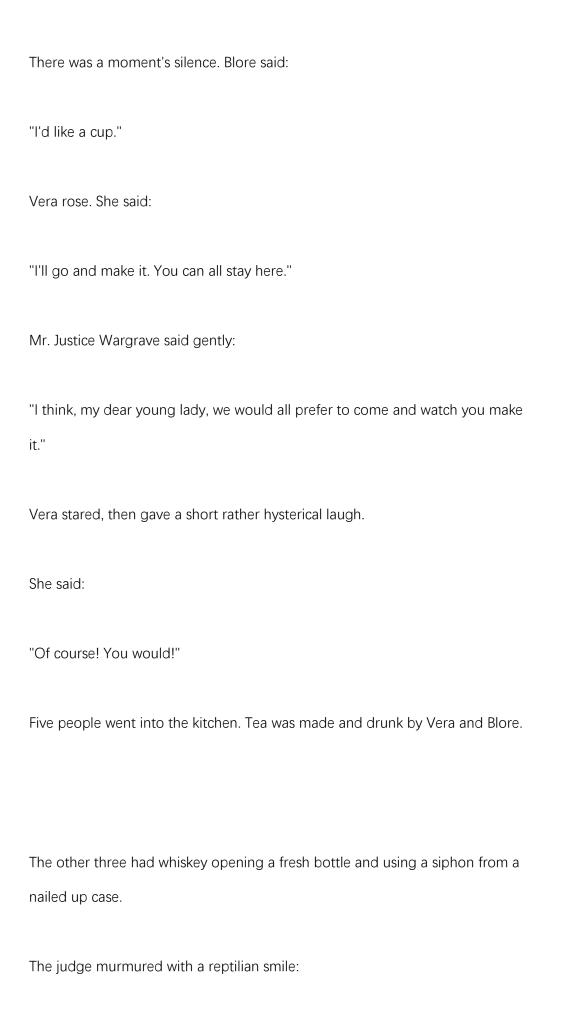
Where the hell is that revolver?... Who took it?... Who's got it?... Nobody's got it

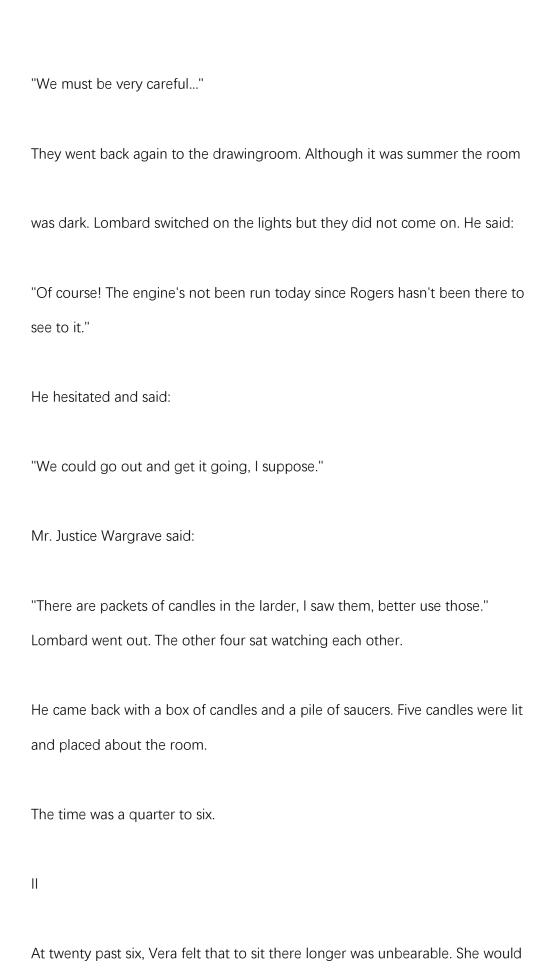
we know that. We were all searched... Nobody can have it... But some one knows

where it is..."

"They're going mad... they're all go mad... Afraid of death... we're all afraid of death... I'm afraid of death... Yes, but that doesn't stop death coming... 'The hearse is at the door, sir.' Where did I read that? The girl... I'll watch the girl.

Yes, I'll watch the girl"
"Twenty to four only twenty to four perhaps the clock has stopped I don't understand no, I don't understand This sort of thing can't happen it is
happening Why don't we wake up? Wake up Judgement Day not that! If I
could only think My head something's happening in my head it's going to
burst it's going to split This sort of thing can't happen What's the time? Oh, God! it's only a quarter to four."
"I must keep my head I must keep my head If only I keep my head It's all perfectly clear all worked out. But nobody must suspect. It may do the trick. It must! Which one? That's the question which one? I think yes, I rather think
yes him."
When the clock struck five they all jumped.
Vera said:
"Does any one want tea?"





go to her room and bathe her aching head and temples in cold water.

She got up and went towards the door. Then she remembered and came back and

got a candle out of the box. She lighted it, let a little wax pour into a saucer and stuck the candle firmly to it. Then she went out of the room, shutting the door

behind her and leaving the four men inside.

She went up the stairs and along the passage to her room.

As she opened her door, she suddenly halted and stood stock still.

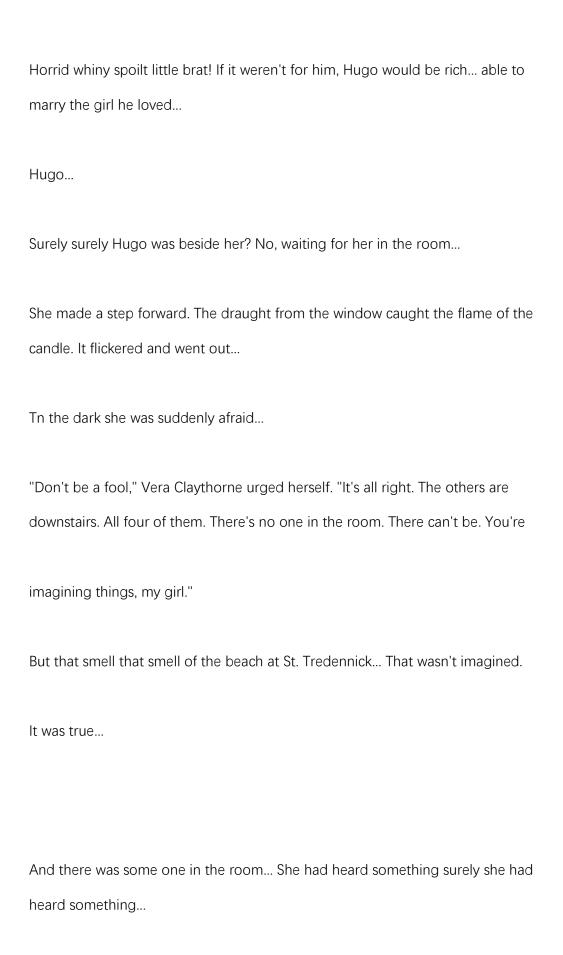
Her nostrils quivered.

The sea... The smell of the sea at St. Tredennick...

That was it. She could not be mistaken. Of course one smelt the sea on an island anyway, but this was different. It was the smell there had been on the beach that day with the tide out and the rocks covered with seaweed drying in the sun.

"Can I swim out to the island, Miss Claythorne?"

"Why can't I swim out to the island?..."



And then, as she stood there, listening a cold, clammy hand touched her throat a wet hand, smelling of the sea...

Ш

Vera screamed. She screamed and screamed screams of the utmost terror wild desperate cries for help.

She did not hear the sounds from below, of a chair being overturned, of a door opening, of men's feet running up the stairs. She was conscious only of supreme terror.

Then, restoring her sanity, lights flickered in the doorway candles men hurrying into the room.

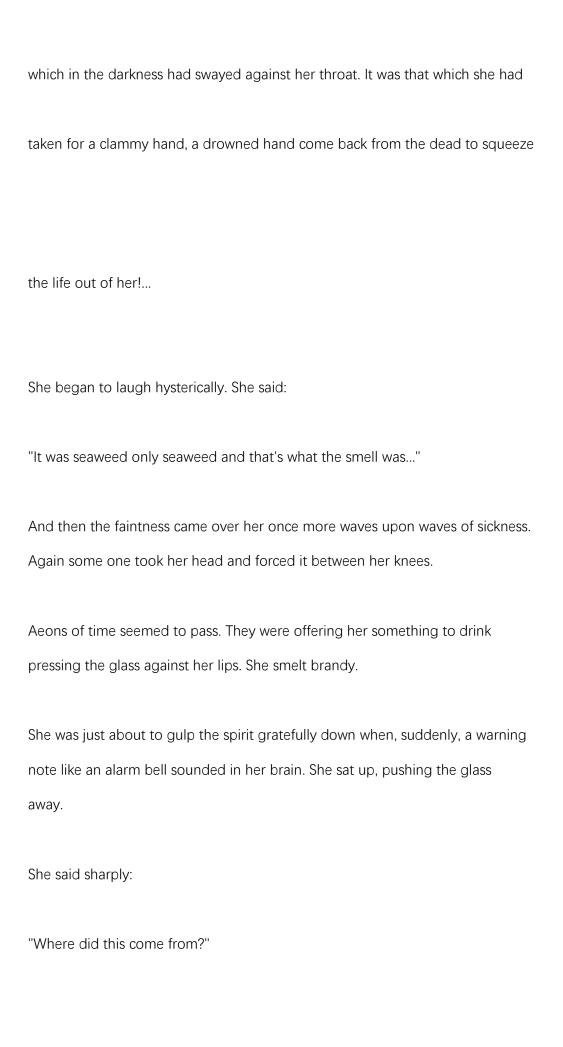
"What the devil?" "What's happened?" "Good God, what is it?"

She shuddered, took a step forward, collapsed on the floor.

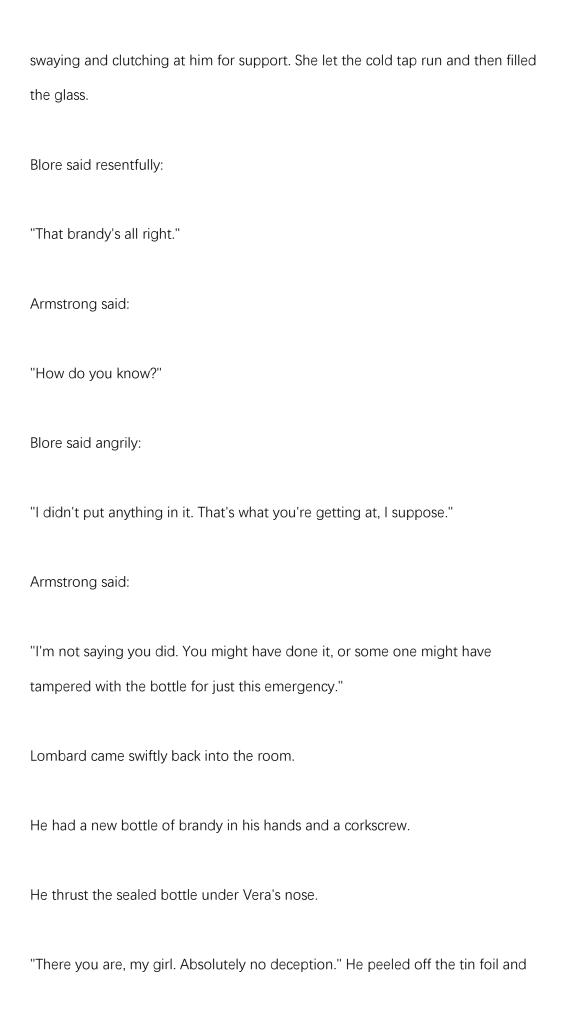
She was only half aware of some one bending over her, of some one forcing her head down between her knees.

Then a sudden exclamation, a quick "My God, look at that!" her senses returned She opened her eyes and raised her head. She saw what it was the men with the candles were looking at.

A broad ribbon of wet seaweed was hanging down from the ceiling. It was that

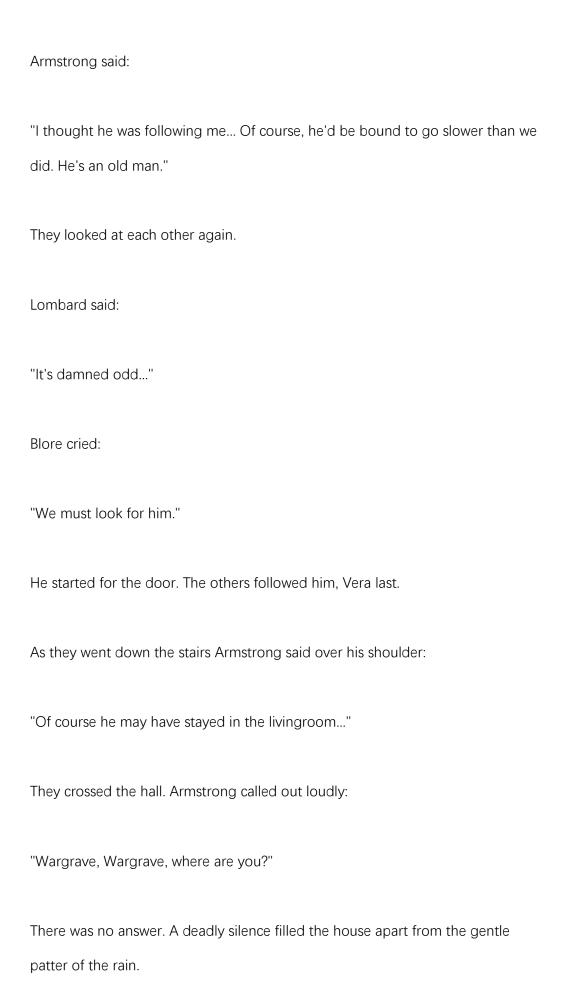


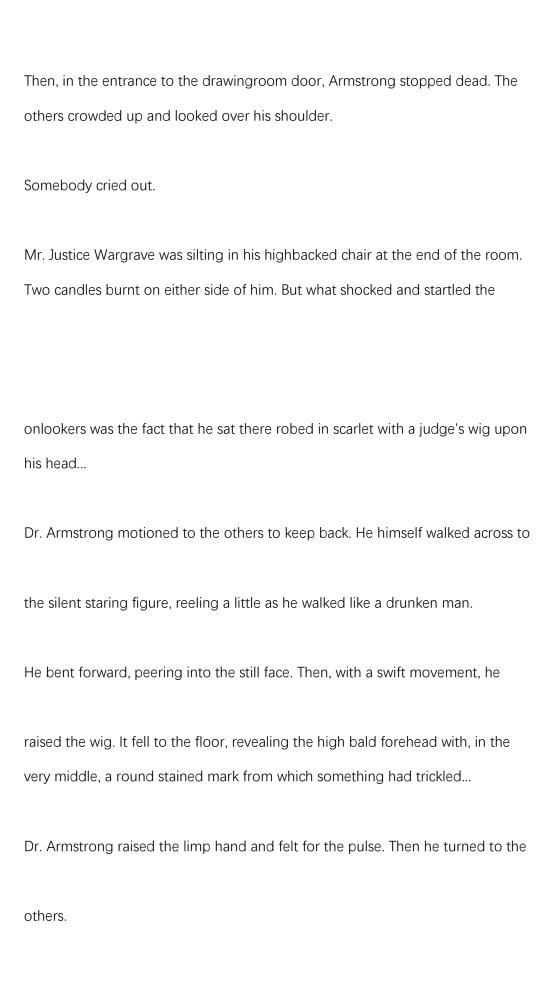
Blore's voice answered. He stared a minute before speaking.
He said:
"I got it from downstairs."
Vera cried:
"I won't drink it"
There was a moment's silence, then Lombard laughed.
He said with appreciation:
"Good for you, Vera! You've got your wits about you even if you have been
scared half out of your life. I'll get a fresh bottle that hasn't been opened."
He went swiftly out.
Vera said uncertainly:
"I'm all right now. I'll have some water."
Armstrong supported her as she struggled to her feet. She went over to the basin,

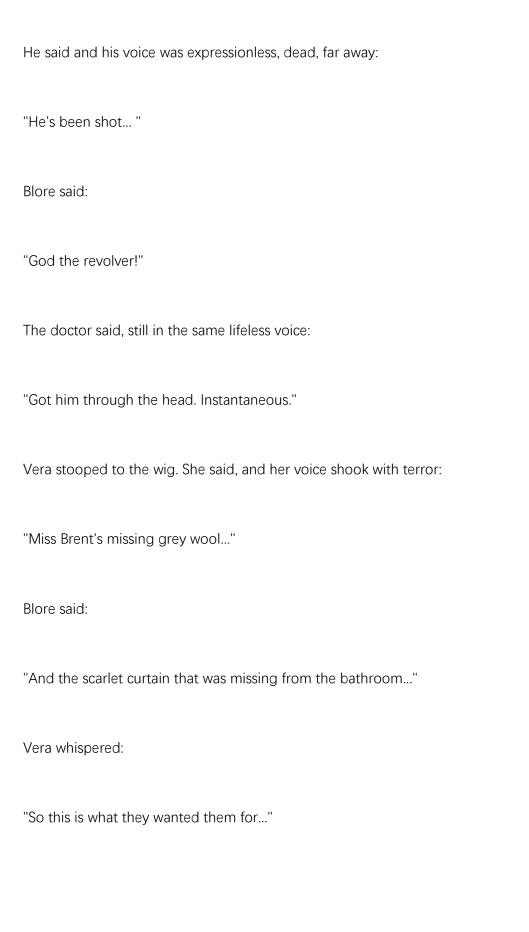




"H'm, impossible to say. Young healthy subject no cardiac weakness. Unlikely.
On the other hand "
He picked up the glass of brandy that Blore had brought. He dipped a finger in it, tasted it gingerly. His expression did not alter. He said dubiously: "H'm, tastes all right."
Blore stepped forward angrily. He said:
"If you're saying that I tampered with that, I'll knock your ruddy block off."
Vera, her wits revived by the brandy, made a diversion by saying:
"Where's the judge?"
The three men looked at each other.
"That's odd Thought he came up with us."
Blore said:
"So did I What about it, doctor? You came up the stairs behind me."





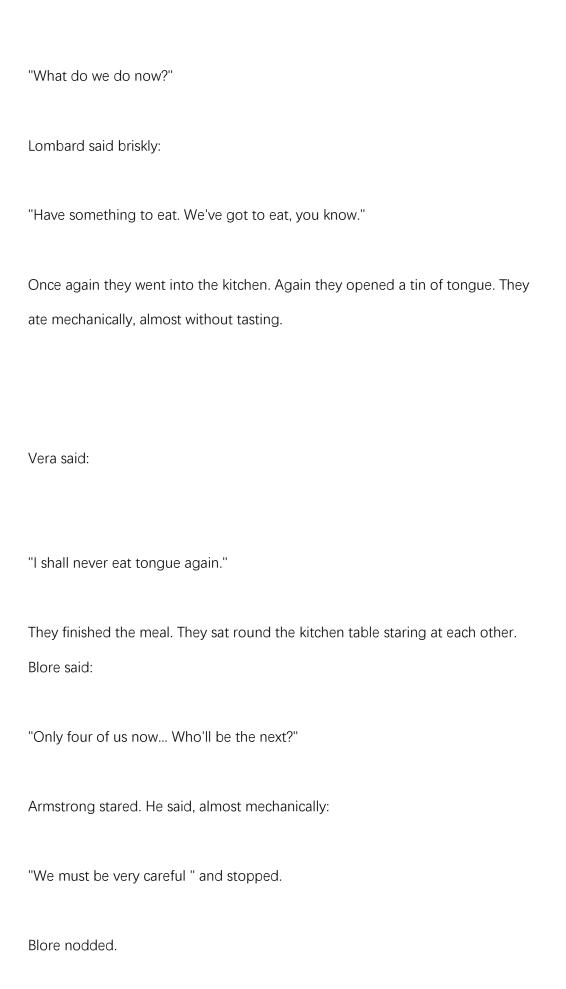


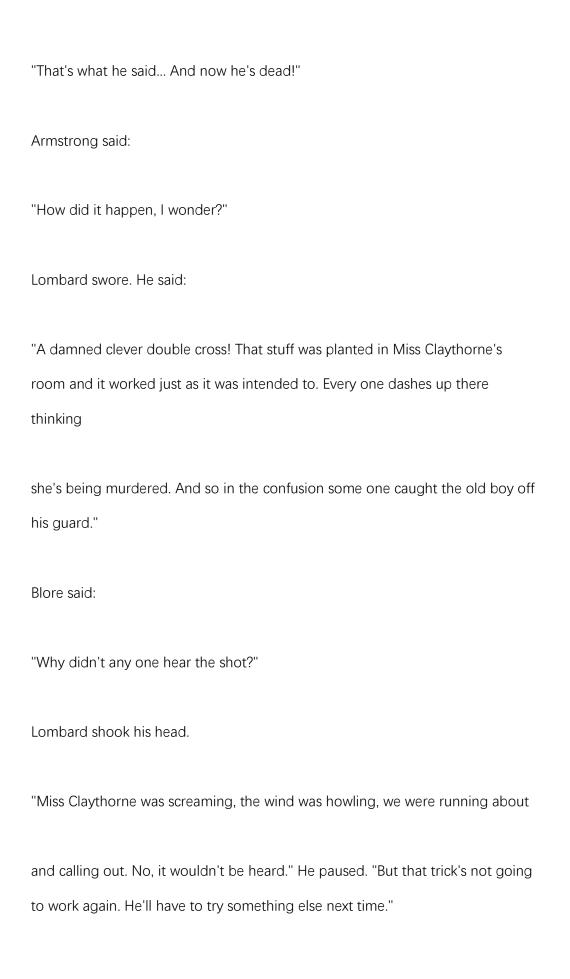
Suddenly Philip Lombard laughed a high unnatural laugh.

"Five little Indian boys going in for law; one got in Chancery and then there were four.' That's the end of Mr. Bloody Justice Wargrave. No more pronouncing sentence for him! No more putting on of the black cap! Here's the last time he'll ever sit in court! No more summing up and sending innocent men to death. How Edward Seton would laugh if he were here! God, how he'd laugh!" His outburst shocked and startled the others. Vera cried: "Only this morning you said he was the one!" Philip Lombard's face changed sobered. He said in a low voice: "I know I did... Well, I was wrong. Here's one more of us who's been proved innocent too late!" Chapter 14 They had carried Mr. Justice Wargrave up to his room and laid him on the bed.

Then they had come down again and had stood in the hall looking at each other.

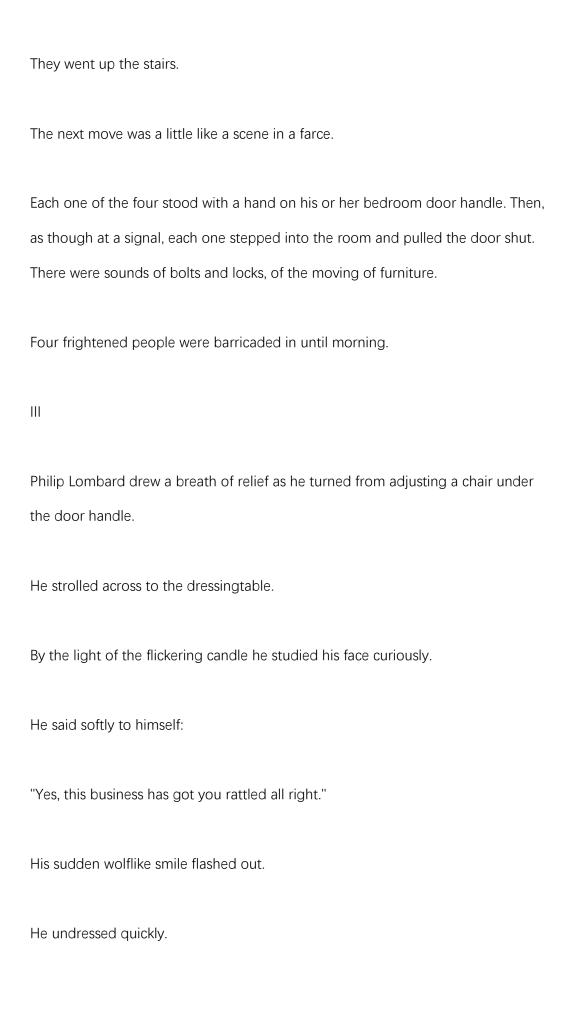
Blore said heavily:

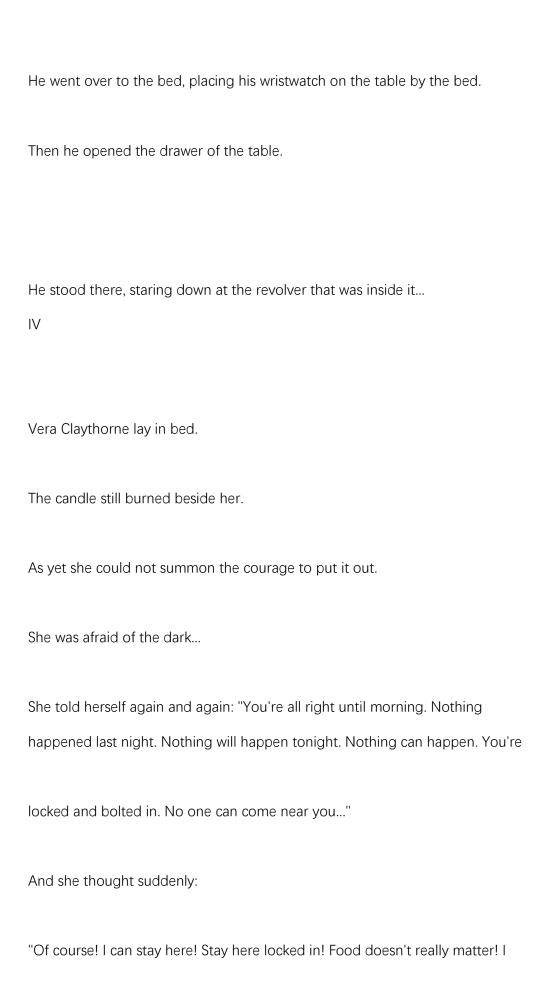




Blore said:
"He probably will."
There was an unpleasant tone in his voice. The two men eyed each other.  Armstrong said:
"Four of us, and we don't know which"
Blore said:
"I know"
Vera said:
"I haven't the least doubt"
Armstrong said slowly:
"I suppose I do know really"
Philip Lombard said:
"I think I've got a pretty good idea now"

Again they all looked at each other
Vera staggered to her feet. She said:
"I feel awful. I must go to bed I'm dead beat."
Lombard said:
"Might as well. No good sitting watching each other."
Blore said:
"I've no objection"
The doctor murmured:
"The best thing to do although I doubt if any of us will sleep."
They moved to the door. Blore said:
"I wonder where that revolver is now?"







on the rock waving to her! It will be a surprise!"

"Oh, good egg, Miss Claythorne! That will be a lark!"

She'd said it now. Tomorrow! Hugo was going to Newquay. When he came back it would be all over...

Yes, but supposing it wasn't? Supposing it went wrong? Cyril might be rescued in

time. And then then he'd say, "Miss Claythorne said I could... Well, what of it?

One must take some risk! If the worst happened she'd brazen it out. "How can

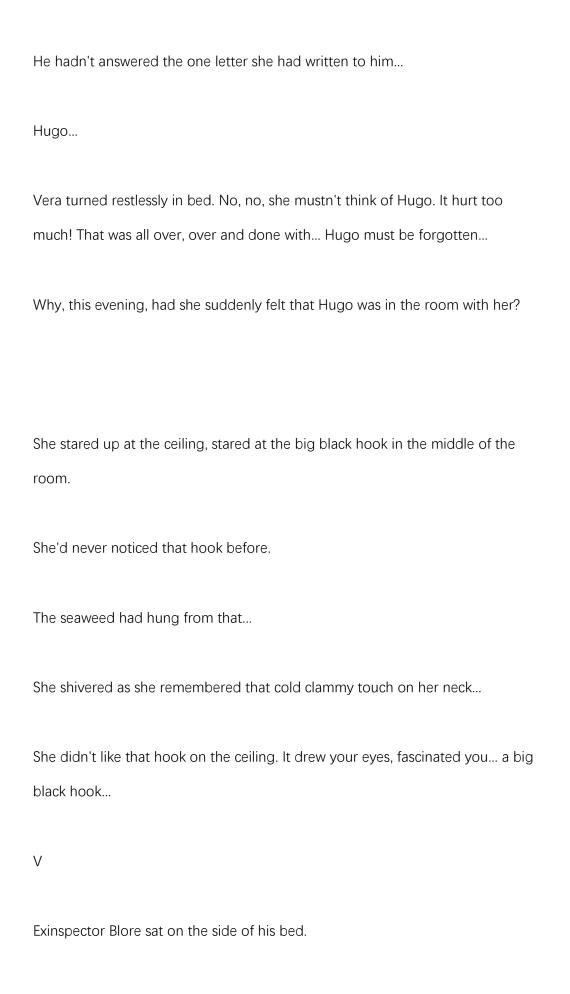
you tell such a wicked lie, Cyril? Of course I never said any such thing!" They'd believe her all right. Cyril often told stories. He was an untruthful child. Cyril would know, of course. But that didn't matter... And anyway nothing would go

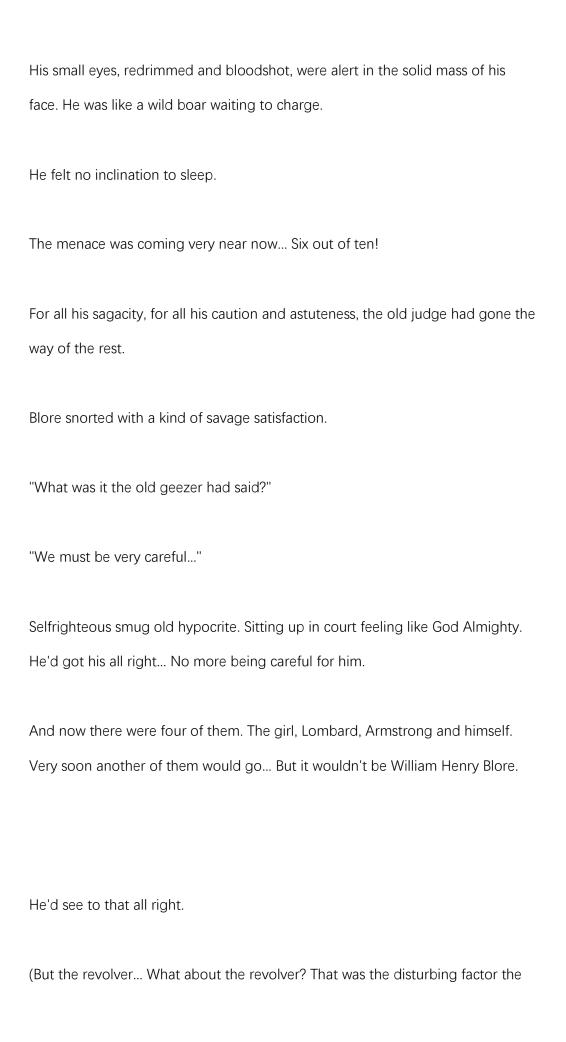
wrong. She'd pretend to swim out after him. But she'd arrive too late... Nobody

would ever suspect...

Had Hugo suspected? Was that why he had looked at her in that queer faroff way...? Had Hugo known?

Was that why he had gone off after the inquest so hurriedly?





revolver!)

Blore sat on his bed, his brow furrowed, his little eyes creased and puckered while he pondered the problem of the revolver...

In the silence he could hear the clocks strike downstairs.

Midnight.

He relaxed a little now even went so far as to lie down on his bed. But he did not undress.

He lay there, thinking. Going over the whole business from the beginning, methodically, painstakingly, as he had been wont to do in his police officer days.

It was thoroughness that paid in the end.

The candle was burning down. Looking to see if the matches were within easy reach of his hand, he blew it out.

Strangely enough, he found the darkness disquieting. It was as though a thousand ageold fears awoke and struggled for supremacy in his brain. Faces

floated in the air the judge's face crowned with that mockery of grey wool the cold dead face of Mrs. Rogers the convulsed purple face of Anthony Marston...

Another face pale, spectacled, with a small strawcoloured moustache...

A face he had seen sometime or other but when? Not on the island. No, much
longer ago than that.
Funny, that he couldn't put a name to it Silly sort of face really fellow looked a
bit of a mug.
Of course!
It came to him with a real shock.
Landor!
Odd to think he'd completely forgotten what Landor looked like. Only yesterday
he'd been trying to recall the fellow's face, and hadn't been able to.
And now here it was, every feature clear and distinct, as though he had seen it
only yesterday
Landor had had a wife a thin slip of a woman with a worried face. There'd been

a kid too, a girl about fourteen. For the first time, he wondered what had become

of them...

(The revolver. What had become of the revolver? That was much more important...)

The more he thought about it the more puzzled he was... He didn't understand this revolver business...

Somebody in the house had got that revolver...

Downstairs a clock struck one.

Blore's thoughts were cut short. He sat up on the bed, suddenly alert. For he had heard a sound a very faint sound somewhere outside his bedroom door.

There was some one moving about in the darkened house.

The perspiration broke out on his forehead. Who was it, moving secretly and silently along the corridors? Some one who was up to no good, he'd bet that!

Noiselessly, in spite of his heavy build, he dropped off the bed and with two

strides was standing by the door listening.

But the sound did not come again. Nevertheless Blore was convinced that he was

not mistaken. He had heard a footfall just outside his door. The hair rose slightly on his scalp. He knew fear again...

Some one creeping about stealthily in the night...

He listened but the sound was not repeated.

And now a new temptation assailed him. He wanted, desperately, to go out and

investigate. If he could only see who it was prowling about in the darkness.

But to open his door would be the action of a fool. Very likely that was exactly

what the other was waiting for. He might even have meant Blore to hear what he

had heard, counting on him coming out to investigate.

Blore stood rigid listening. He could hear sounds everywhere now, cracks, mstles, mysterious whispers but his dogged realistic brain knew them for what

they were the creations of his own heated imagination.

And then suddenly he heard something that was not imagination. Footsteps, very soft, very cautious, but plainly audible to a man listening with all his ears as

Blore was listening.

They came softly along the corridor (both Lombard's and Armstrong's rooms were

farther from the stairhead than his). They passed his door without hesitating or faltering.

And as they did so, Blore made up his mind.

He meant to see who it was! The footsteps had definitely passed his door going

to

the stairs. Where was the man going?

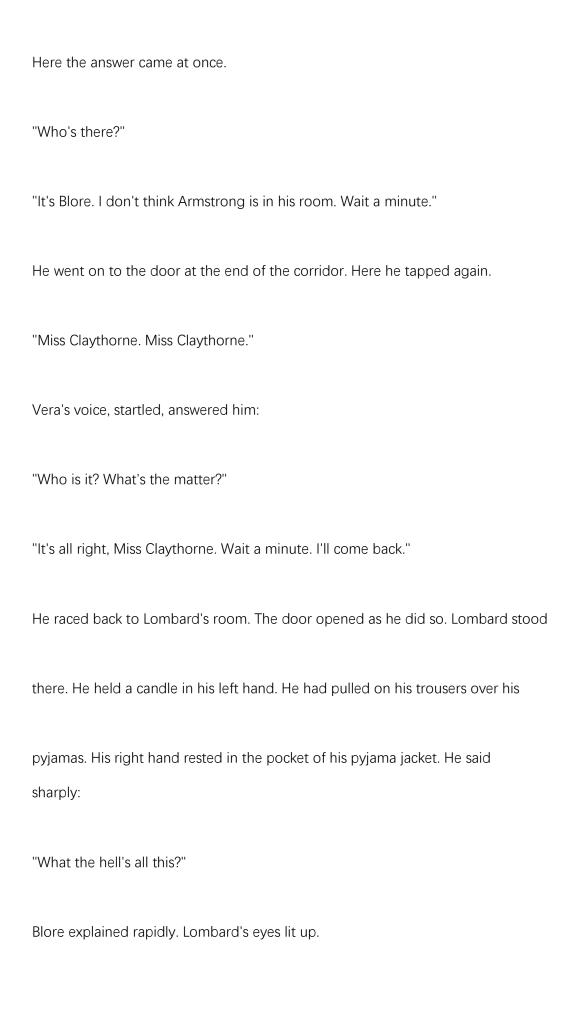
When Blore acted, he acted quickly, surprisingly so for a man who looked so heavy and slow. He tiptoed back to the bed, slipped matches into his pocket, detached the plug of the electric lamp by his bed, and picked it up winding the flex round it. It was a chromium affair with a heavy ebonite base a useful weapon.

He sprinted noiselessly across the room, removed the chair from under the door handle and with precaution unlocked and unbolted the door. He stepped out into the corridor. There was a faint sound in the hall below; Blore ran noiselessly in his stockinged feet to the head of the stairs.

At that moment he realized why it was he had heard all these sounds so clearly.

The wind had died down completely and the sky must have cleared. There was

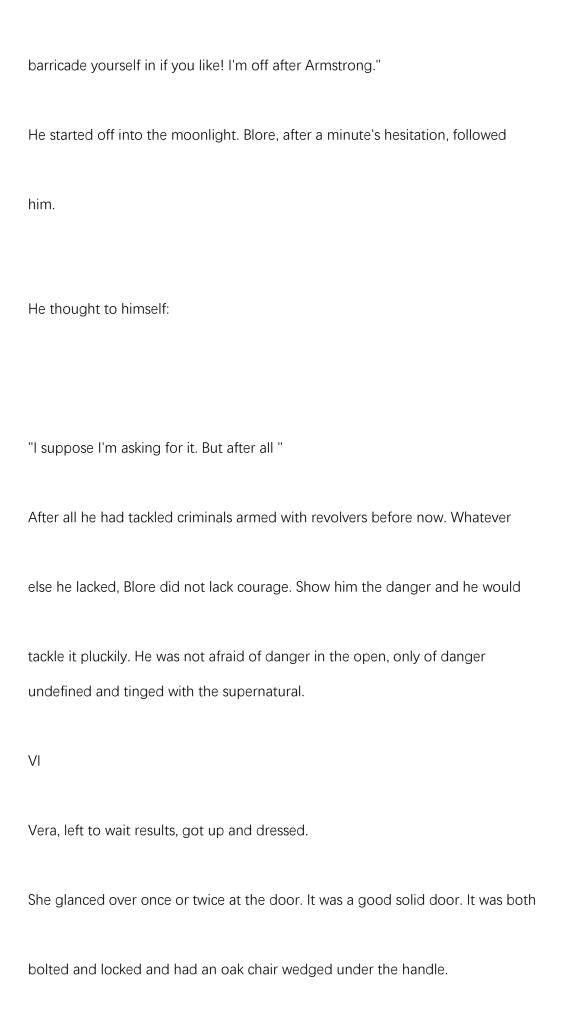
faint moonlight coming in through the landing window and it illuminated the hall below.
Blore had an instantaneous glimpse of a figure just passing out through the front door.
In the act of running down the stairs in pursuit, he paused.
Once again, he had nearly made a fool of himself! This was a trap, perhaps, to lure him out of the house!
But what the other man didn't realize was that he had made a mistake, had
delivered himself neady into Blore's hands.
For, of the three tenanted rooms upstairs, one must now be empty. All that had to be done was to ascertain which!
Blore went swiftly back along the corridor.
He paused first at Dr. Armstrong's door and tapped. There was no answer.
He waited a minute, then went on to Philip Lombard's room.





He raced along to Vera's room.
"Vera."
"Yes."
"We're hunting Armstrong. He's out of his room. Whatever you do, don't open your door. Understand?"
"Yes, I understand."
"If Armstrong comes along and says that I've been killed, or Blore's been killed, pay no attention. See? Only open your door if both Blore and I speak to you. Got
that?"
Vera said:
"Yes. I'm not a complete fool."
Lombard said:





It could not be broken open by force. Certainly not by Dr. Armstrong. He was not

a physically powerful man.

If she were Armstrong intent on murder, it was cunning that she would employ, not force.

She amused herself by reflecting on the means he might employ.

He might, as Philip had suggested, announce that one of the other two men was dead. Or he might possibly pretend to be mortally wounded himself, might drag himself groaning to her door.

There were other possibilities. He might inform her that the house was on fire.

More, he might actually set the house on fire... Yes, that would be a possibility.

Lure the other two men out of the house, then, having previously laid a trail of petrol, he might set light to it. And she, like an idiot, would remain barricaded in

her room until it was too late.

She crossed over to the window. Not too bad. At a pinch one could escape that way. It would mean a drop but there was a handy flowerbed.

She sat down and picking up her diary began to write in it in a clear flowing hand.

One must pass the time.

Suddenly she stiffened to attention. She had heard a sound. It was, she thought, a sound like breaking glass. And it came from somewhere downstairs.

She listened hard, but the sound was not repeated.

She heard, or thought she heard, stealthy sounds of footsteps, the creak of stairs, the rustle of garments but there was nothing definite, and she concluded, as

Blore had done earlier, that such sounds had their origin in her own imagination.

But presently she heard sounds of a more concrete nature.

People moving about downstairs the murmur of voices. Then the very decided

sound of some one mounting the stairs doors opening and shutting feet going

up to the attics overhead. More noises from there.

Finally the steps came along the passage. Lombard's voice said:

"Vera? You all right?"

"Yes. What's happened?"
Blore's voice said:
"Will you let us in?"
Vera went to the door. She removed the chair, unlocked the door and slid back
the bolt. She opened the door. The two men were breathing hard, their feet and
the bottom of their trousers were soaking wet.
She said again:
"What's happened?"
Lombard said:
"Armstrong's disappeared"
VII
Vera cried:
"What?"

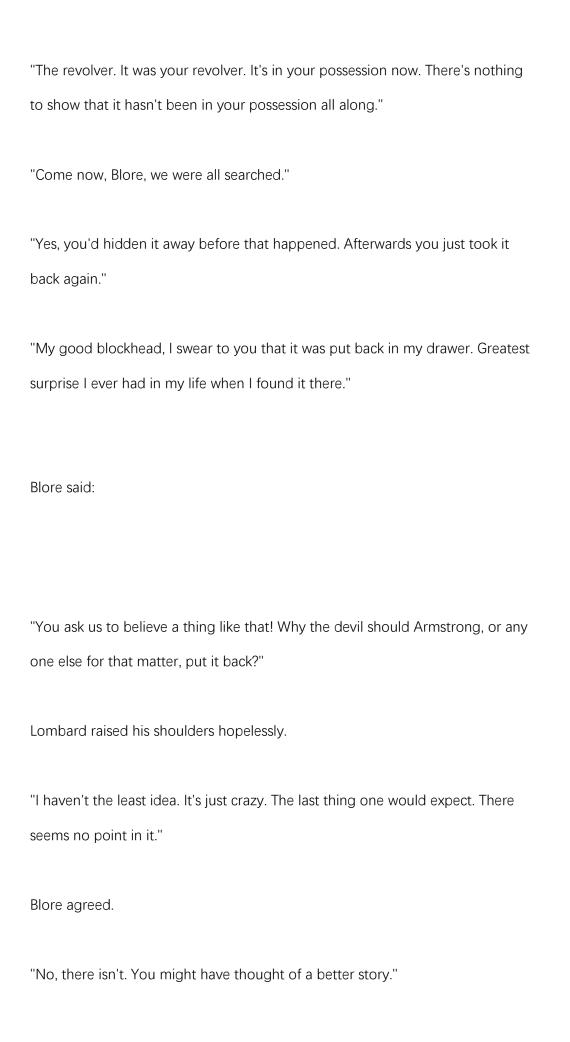
Lombard said:
"Vanished clean off the island."
Blore concurred:
"Vanished that's the word! Like some damned conjuring trick."
Vera said impatiently:
"Nonsense! He's hiding somewhere!"
Blore said:
"No, he isn't! I tell you, there's nowhere to hide on this island. It's as bare as your hand! There's moonlight outside. As clear as day it is. And he s not to be found."
Vera said:
"He doubled back into the house."
Blore said:

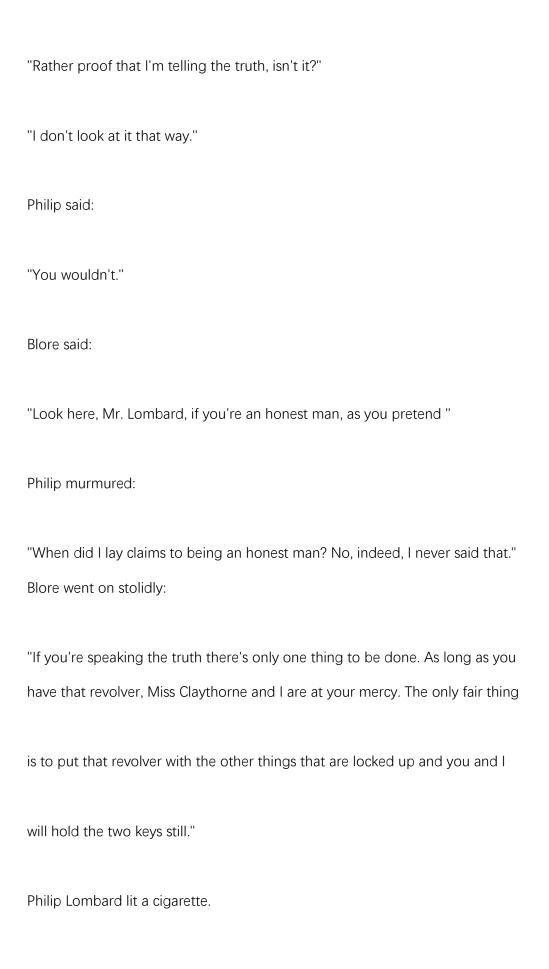
"We thought of that. We've searched the house too. You must have heard us. He's $$
not here, I tell you. He's gone clean vanished, vamoosed"
Vera said incredulously:
"I don't believe it."
Lombard said:
"It's true, my dear."
He paused and then said:
"There's one other little fact. A pane in the diningroom window has been smashed and there are only three little Indian boys on the table."
Chapter 15
Three people sat eating breakfast in the kitchen.
Outside, the sun shone. It was a lovely day.
The storm was a thing of the past.
And with the change in the weather, a change had come in the mood of the prisoners on the island.

They felt now like people just awakening from a nightmare. There was danger,
yet, but it was danger in daylight. That paralyzing atmosphere of fear that had
wrapped them round like a blanket yesterday while the wind howled outside was
gone.
Lombard said:
"We'll try heliographing today with a mirror from the highest point of the island.
Some bright lad wandering on the cliff will recognize SOS when he sees it, I
hope.
In the evening we could try a bonfire only there isn't much wood and anyway
they might just think it was song and dance and merriment."
Vera said:
"Surely some one can read Morse. And then they'll come to take us off. Long
before this evening."
before this evening.
Lombard said:
"The weather's cleared all right, but the sea hasn't gone down yet. Terrific swell
on! They won't be able to get a boat near the island before tomorrow."

Vera cried:
"Another night in this place!"
Lombard shrugged his shoulders.
"May as well face it! Twentyfour hours will do it, I think. If we can last out that, we'll be all right."
Blore cleared his throat. He said:
"We'd better come to a clear understanding. What's happened to Armstrong?" Lombard said:
"Well, we've got one piece of evidence. Only three little Indian boys left on the dinnertable. It looks as though Armstrong had got his quietus."
Vera said:
"Then why haven't you found his dead body?"
Blore said:
"Exactly."

Lombard shook his head. He said:
"It's damned odd no getting over it."
Blore said doubtfully:
"It might have been thrown into the sea."
Lombard said sharply:
"By whom? You? Me? You saw him go out of the front door. You come along and
find me in my room. We go out and search together. When the devil had I time to kill him and carry his body round the island?"
Blore said:
"I don't know. But I do know one thing."
Lombard said:
"What's that?"
Blore said:





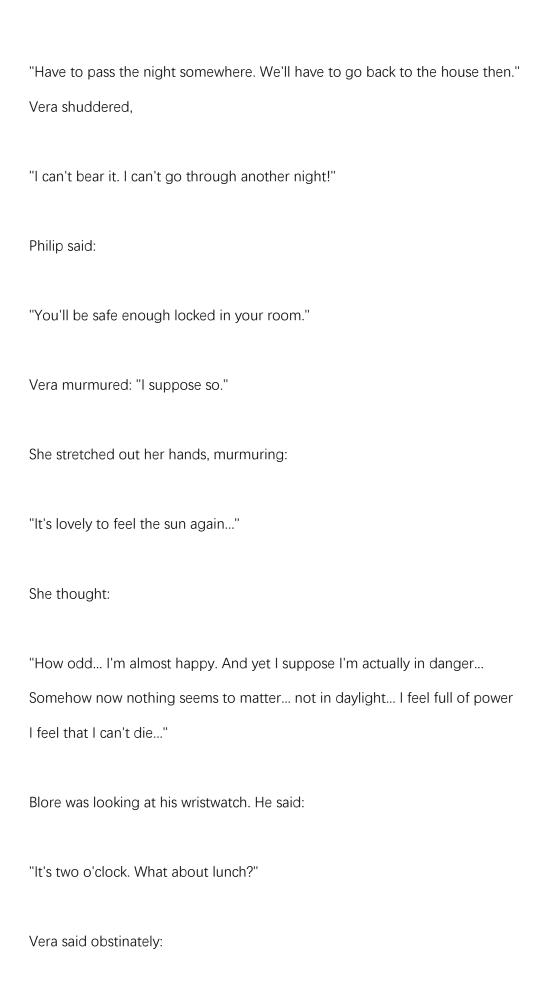


"I think you're both behaving like a pair of idiots."
Lombard looked at her.
"What's this?"
Vera said:
"You've forgotten the nursery rhyme. Don't you see there's a clue there?"
She recited in a meaning voice:
"Four little Indian boys going out to sea;
A red herring swallowed one and then there were three."
She went on:
"A red herring that's the vital clue. Armstrong's not dead He took away the
china Indian to make you think he was. You may say what you like Armstrong's
on the island still. His disappearance is just a red herring across the track"

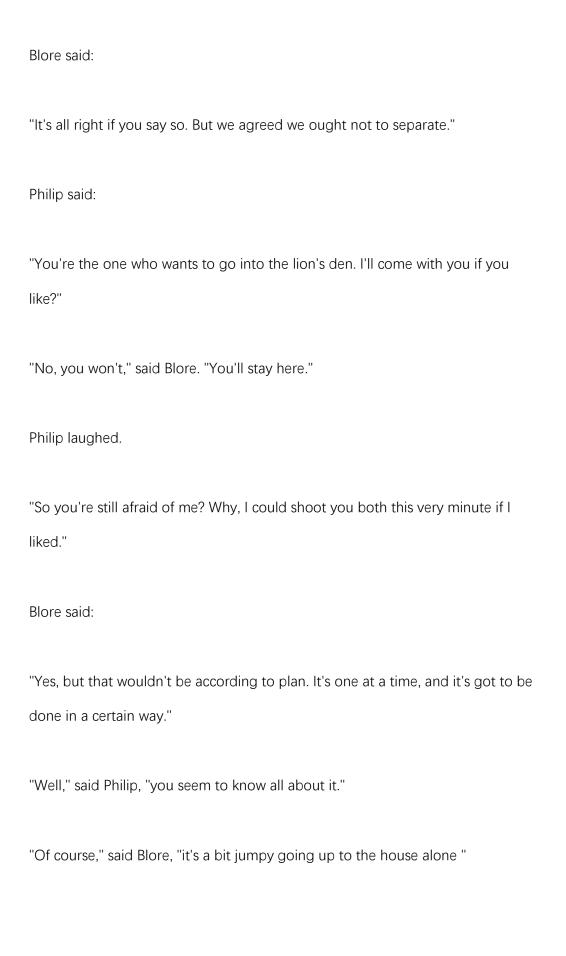
Lombard sat down again.
He said:
"You know, you may be right."
Blore said:
"Yes, but if so, where is he? We've searched the place. Outside and inside."
Vera said scornfully:
"We all searched for the revolver, didn't we, and couldn't find it? But it was somewhere all the time!"
Lombard murmured:
"There's a slight difference in size, my dear, between a man and a revolver."  Vera said:
"I don't care I'm sure I'm right."
Blore murmured:
"Rather giving himself away, wasn't it? Actually mentioning a red herring in the verse. He could have written it up a bit different."

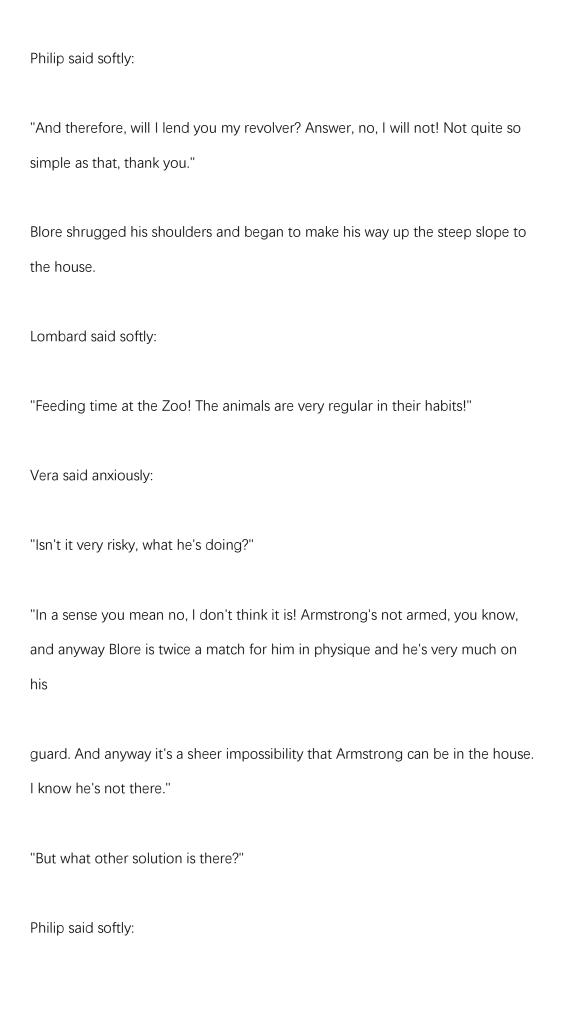
Vera cried:
"But don't you see, he's mad? It's all mad! The whole thing of going by the rhyme is mad! Dressing up the judge, killing Rogers when he was chopping sticks
drugging Mrs. Rogers so that she overslept herself arranging for a bumblebee
when Miss Brent died! It's like some horrible child playing a game. It's all got to fit in."
Blore said:
"Yes, you're right." He thought a minute. "At any rate there's no Zoo on the island. He'll have a bit of trouble getting over that."
Vera cried:
"Don't you see? We're the Zoo Last night, we were hardly human any more.  We're the Zoo"
II
They spent the morning on the cliffs, taking it in turns to flash a mirror at the mainland.

There were no signs that any one saw them. No answering signals. The day was
fine, with a slight haze. Below, the sea weaved in a gigantic swell. There were no boats out.
They had made another abortive search of the island. There was no trace of the missing physician.
Vera looked up at the house from where they were standing.
She said, her breath coming with a slight catch in it:
"One feels safer here, out in the open Don't let's go back into the house again."  Lombard said:
"Not a bad idea. We're pretty safe here, no one can get at us without our seeing him a long time beforehand."
Vera said:
"We'll stay here."
Blore said:



"I'm not going back to the house. I'm going to stay here in the open."
"Oh, come now, Miss Claythorne. Got to keep your strength up, you know."
Vera said:
"If I even see a tinned tongue, I shall be sick! I don't want any food. People go
days on end with nothing sometimes when they're on a diet."  Blore said:
"Well, I need my meals regular. What about you, Mr. Lombard?"
Philip said:
"You know, I don't relish the idea of tinned tongue particularly. I'll stay here with Miss Claythorne."
Blore hesitated. Vera said:
"I shall be quite all right. I don't think he'll shoot me as soon as your back is turned if that's what you're afraid of."





"There's Blore." "Oh do you really think?" "Listen, my girl. You heard Blore's story. You've got to admit that if it's true, I can't possibly have had anything to do with Armstrong's disappearance. His story clears me. But it doesn't clear him. We've only his word for it that he heard footsteps and saw a man going downstairs and out at the front door. The whole thing may be a lie. He may have got rid of Armstrong a couple of hours before that." "How?" Lombard shrugged his shoulders.

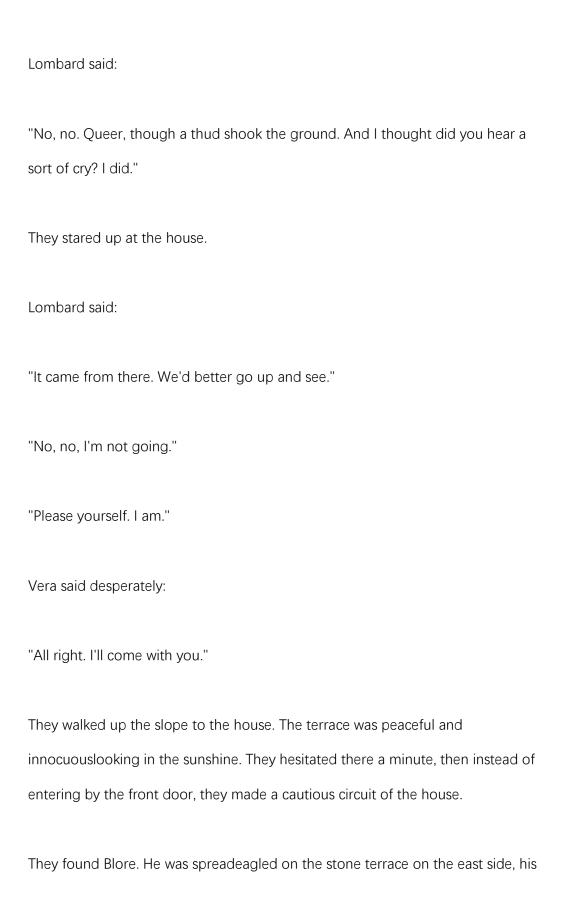
"That we don't know. But if you ask me, we've only one danger to fear and that danger is Blore! What do we know about the man? Less than nothing! All this expoliceman story may be bunkum! He may be anybody a mad millionaire a crazy business man an escaped inmate of Broadmoor. One thing's certain. He

could have done every one of these crimes."

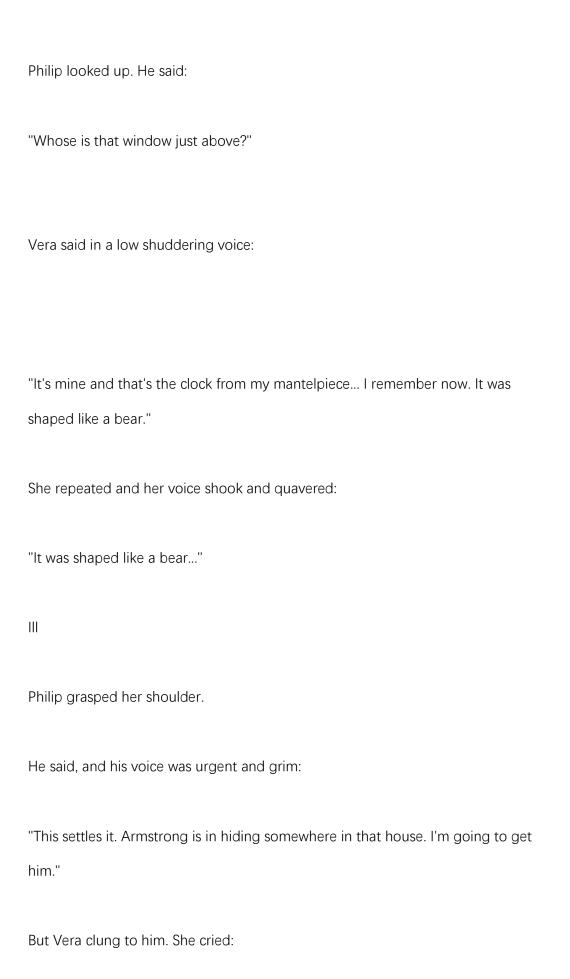


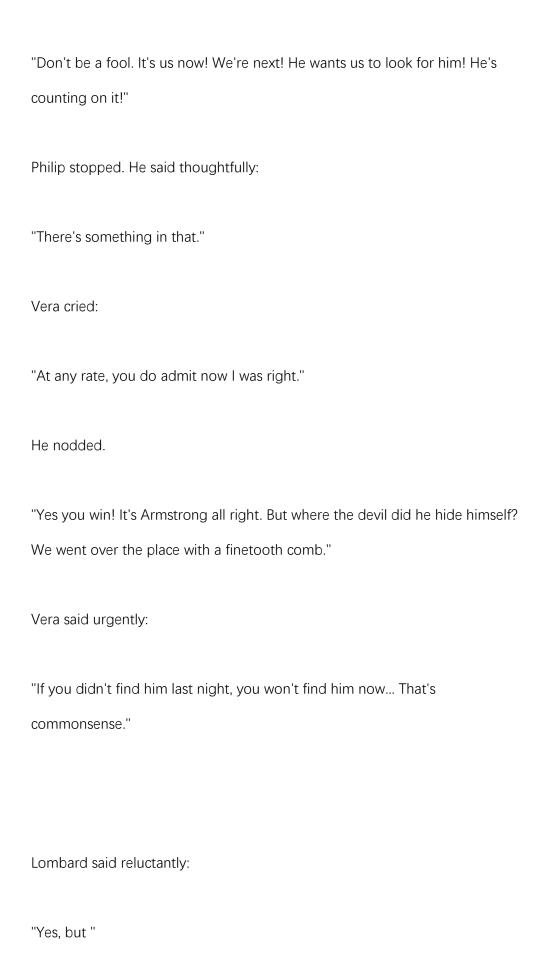




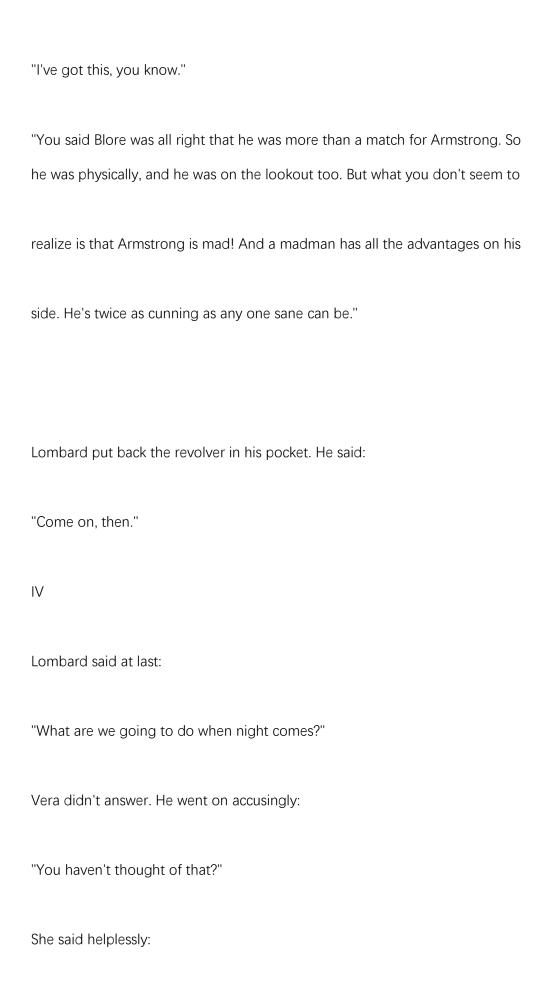


head crushed and mangled by a great block of white marble.

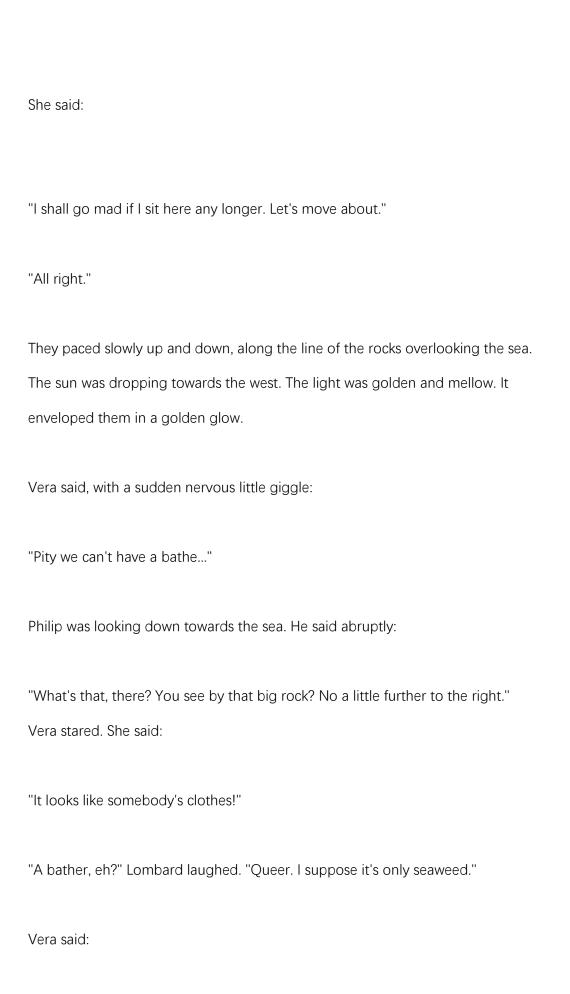




"He must have prepared a secret place beforehand naturally of course it's just
what he would do. You know, like a Priest's Hole in old manor houses."
"This isn't an old house of that kind."
"He could have had one made."
Philip Lombard shook his head.
He said:
"We measured the place that first morning. I'll swear there's no space
unaccounted for."
Vera said:
"There must be"
Lombard said:
"I'd like to see "
Mayo oxidali
Vera cried:
"Yes, you'd like to see! And he knows that! He's in there waiting for you."
Lombard said, half bringing out the revolver from his pocket:



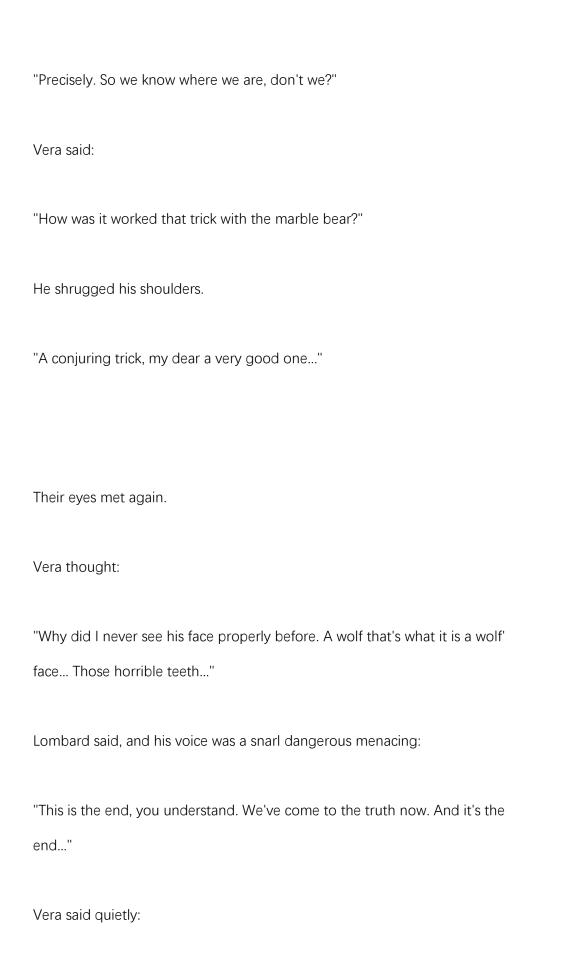




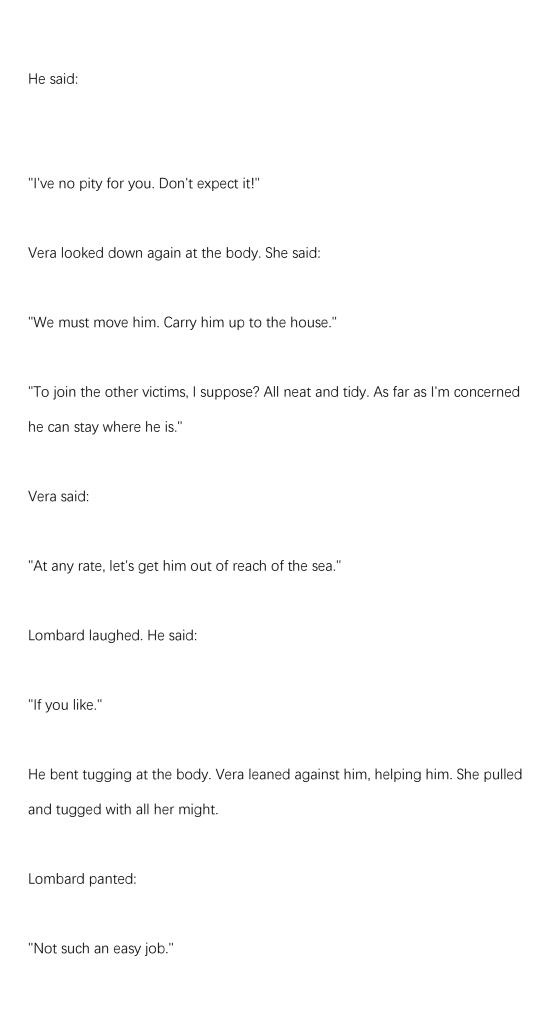
"Let's go and look."
"It is clothes," said. Lombard as they drew nearer. "A bundle of them. That's a boot. Come on, let's scramble along here."
They scrambled over the rocks.
Vera stopped suddenly. She said:
"It's not clothes it's a man"
The man was wedged between two rocks, flung there by the tide earlier in the
day.
Lombard and Vera reached it in a last scramble. They bent down.  A purple discoloured face a hideous drowned face
Lombard said:
"My God! It's Armstrong"

## Chapter 16

Aeons passed worlds span and whirled Time was motionless It stood still it passed through a thousand ages
No, it was only a minute or so
Two people were standing looking down on a dead man
Slowly, very slowly, Vera Claythorne and Philip Lombard lifted their heads and looked into each other's eyes
II
Lombard laughed.
He said:
"So that's it, is it, Vera?"
Vera said:
"There's no one on the island no one at all except us two"
Her voice was a whisper nothing more.
Lombard said:



"I understand"
She stared out to sea. General Macarthur had stared out to sea when only yesterday? Or was it the day before? He too had said, "This is the end"
He had said it with acceptance almost with welcome.
But to Vera the words the thought brought rebellion.
No, it should not be the end.
She looked down at the dead man. She said:
"Poor Dr. Armstrong"
Lombard sneered.
He said:
"What's this? Womanly pity?"
Vera said:
"Why not? Haven't you any pity?"



Lombard said as he straightened up:  "Satisfied?"  Vera said:  "Quite."  Her tone warned him. He spun around. Even as he clapped his hand to his pocket he knew that he would find it empty.  She had moved a yard or two and was facing him, revolver in hand.  Lombard said:  "So that's the reason for your womanly solicitude! You wanted to pick my pocket."  She nodded.  She held it steadily and unwaveringly.	They managed it, however, drawing the body clear of the high water mark.
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	She held it steadily and unwaveringly.

Death was very near to Philip Lombard now. It had never, he knew, been nearer.
Nevertheless he was not beaten yet.
He said authoritatively:
"Give that revolver to me."
Vera laughed.
Lombard said:
"Come on, hand it over."
His quick brain was working. Which way which method talk her over lull her into security or a swift dash
All his life Lombard had taken the risky way. He took it now.
He spoke slowly, argumentatively.
"Now look here, my dear girl, you just listen "
And then he sprang. Quick as a panther as any other feline creature  Automatically Vera pressed the trigger
Lombard's leaping body stayed poised in midspring, then crashed heavily to the ground.

Vera came warily forward, the revolver ready in her hand.
But there was no need of caution.
Philip Lombard was dead shot through the heart
III
Relief possessed Vera enormous exquisite relief.
At last it was over.
There was no more fear no more steeling of her nerves
She was alone on the island
Alone with nine dead bodies
But what did that matter? She was alive
She sat there exquisitely happy exquisitely at peace
No more fear

The sun was setting when Vera moved at last. Sheer reaction had kept her immobile. There had been no room in her for anything but the glorious sense of safety.

She realized now that she was hungry and sleepy. Principally sleepy. She wanted to throw herself on her bed and sleep and sleep and sleep...

Tomorrow, perhaps, they would come and rescue her but she didn't really mind.

She didn't mind staying here. Not now that she was alone...

Oh! blessed, blessed peace...

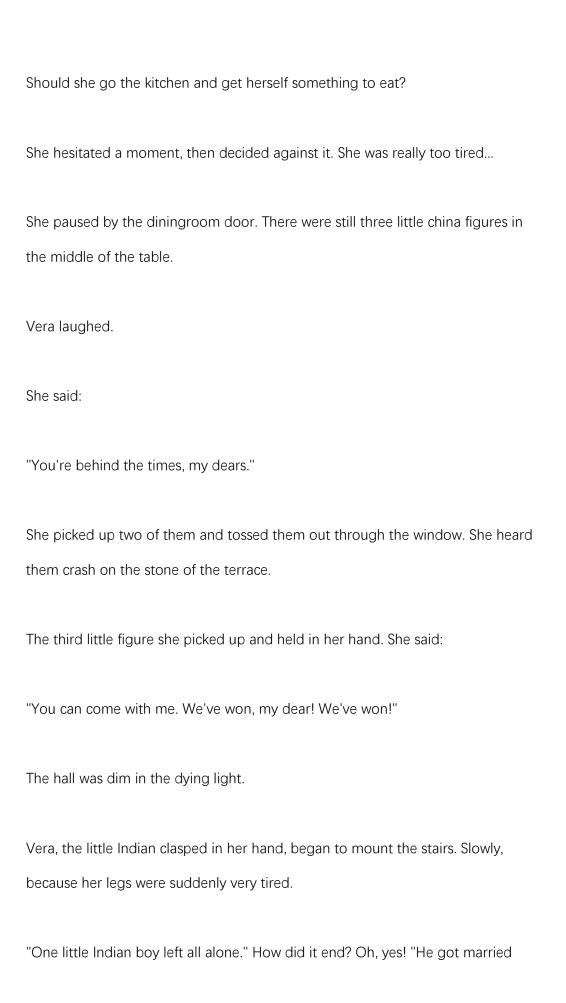
She got to her feet and glanced up at the house.

Nothing to be afraid of any longer! No terrors waiting for her! Just an ordinary wellbuilt modern house. And yet, a little earlier in the day, she had not been able to look at it without shivering...

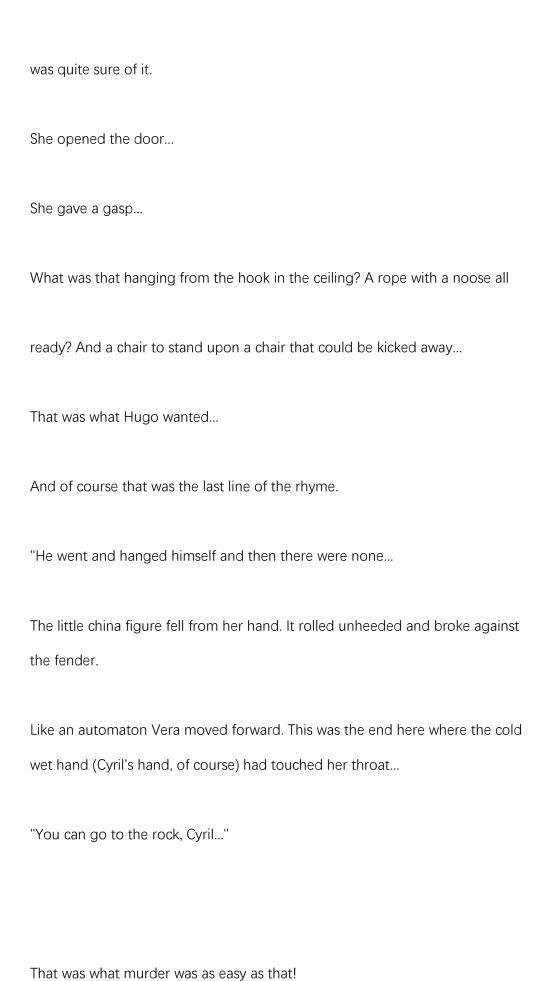
Fear what a strange thing fear was...

Well, it was over now. She had conquered had triumphed over the most deadly peril. By her own quickwittedness and adroitness she had turned the tables on

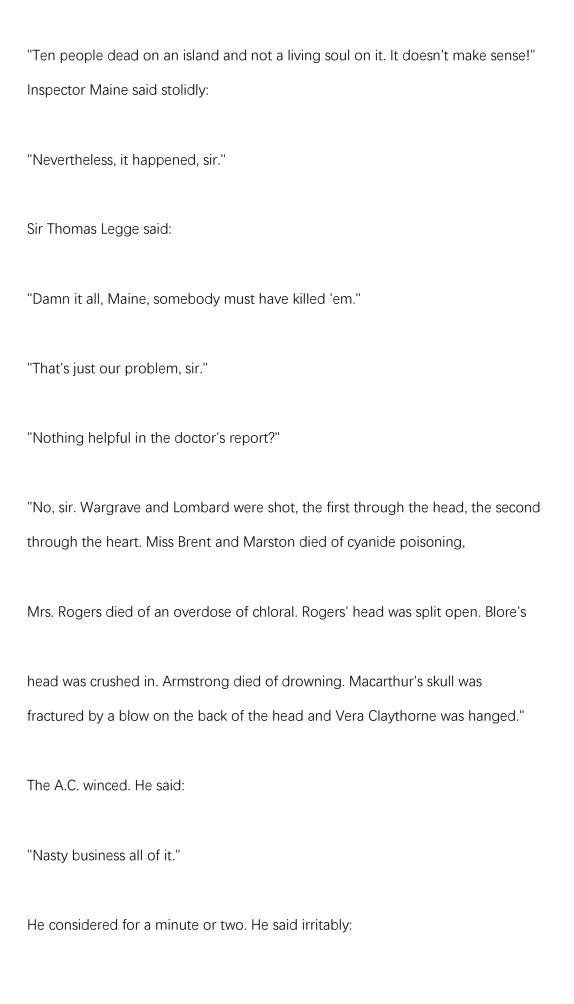
her wouldbe destroyer.
She began to walk up towards the house.
The sun was setting, the sky to the west was streaked with red and orange. It was beautiful and peaceful
Vera thought:
"The whole thing might be a dream"
How tired she was terribly tired. Her limbs ached, her eyelids were drooping.  Not to be afraid any more To sleep Sleep sleep sleep
To sleep safely since she was alone on the island. One little Indian boy left all alone.
She smiled to herself.
She went in at the front door. The house, too, felt strangely peaceful.
Vera thought:
"Ordinarily one wouldn't care to sleep where there's a dead body in practically every bedroom!"



and then there were none." Married... Funny, how she suddenly got the feeling again that Hugo was in the house... Very strong. Yes, Hugo was upstairs waiting for her. Vera said to herself: "Don't be a fool. You're so tired that you're imagining the most fantastic things..." Slowly up the stairs... At the top of them something fell from her hand, making hardly any noise on the soft pile carpet. She did not notice that she had dropped the revolver. She was only conscious of clasping a little china figure. How very quiet the house was. And yet it didn't seem like an empty house... Hugo, upstairs, waiting for her... "One little Indian boy left all alone... What was the last line again? Something about being married or was it something else? She had come now to the door of her room. Hugo was waiting for her inside she



But afterwards you went on remembering
She climbed up on the chair, her eyes staring in front of her like a sleepwalker's
She adjusted the noose round her neck.
Hugo was there to see she did what she had to do.
She kicked away the chair
Epilogue
Sir Thomas Legge, Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard, said irritably:
"But the whole thing's incredible!"
Inspector Maine said respectfully:
Inspector Maine said respectfully:  "I know, sir."



"Do you mean to say that you haven't been able to get anything helpful out of the Sticklehaven people. Dash it, they must know something."

Inspector Maine shrugged his shoulders.

"They're ordinary decent seafaring folk. They know that the island was bought by a man called Owen and that's about all they do know."

"Who provisioned the island and made all the necessary arrangements?"

"Man called Morris. Isaac Morris."

"And what does he say about it all?"

"He can't say anything, sir, he's dead."

The A.C. frowned.

"Do we know anything abut this Morris?"

"Oh, yes, sir, we know about him. He wasn't a very savoury gentleman, Mr. Morris. He was implicated in that sharepushing fraud of Bennito's three years ago we're sure of that though we can't prove it. And he was mixed up in the dope business. And again we can't prove it. He was a very careful man, Morris." "And he was behind this island business?"

"Yes, sir, he put through the sale though he made it clear that he was buying Indian Island for a third party, unnamed."

"Surely there's something to be found out on the financial angle, there?" Inspector Maine smiled.

"Not if you knew Morris! He can wangle figures until the best chartered accountant in the country wouldn't know if he was on his head or his heels!

We've

had a taste of that in the Bennito business. No, he covered his employer's tracks all right. "

The other man sighed. Inspector Maine went on:

"It was Morris who made all the arrangements down at Sticklehaven,
Represented himself as acting for 'Mr. Owen.' And it was he who explained to
the

people down there that there was some experiment on some bet about living on

a 'desert island' for a week and that no notice was to be taken of any appeal for help from out there." Sir Thomas Legge stirred uneasily. He said:

"And you're telling me that those people didn't smell a rat? Not even then?"

Maine shrugged his shoulders. He said:

"You're forgetting, sir, that Indian Island previously belonged to young Elmer Robson, the American. He had the most extraordinary parties down there. I've no

doubt the local people's eyes fairly popped out over them. But they got used to it and they'd begun to feel that anything to do with Indian Island would necessarily

be incredible. It's natural, that, sir, when you come to think of it."

The Assistant Commissioner admitted gloomily that he supposed it was.

Maine said:

"Fred Narracott that's the man who took the party out there did say one thing that was illuminating. He said he was surprised to see what sort of people these

were. 'Not at all like Mr. Robson's parties.' I think it was the fact that they were all so normal and so quiet that made him override Morris' orders and take out a

boat to the island after he'd heard about the SOS signals."

"When did he and the other men go?"

"The signals were seen by a party of boy scouts on the morning of the 11th.

There was no possibility of getting out there that day. The men got there on the afternoon of the 12th at the first moment possible to run a boat ashore there.

They're all quite positive that nobody could have left the island before they got

there. There was a big sea on after the storm."

"Couldn't some one have swum ashore?"

"It's over a mile to the coast and there were heavy seas and big breakers inshore.

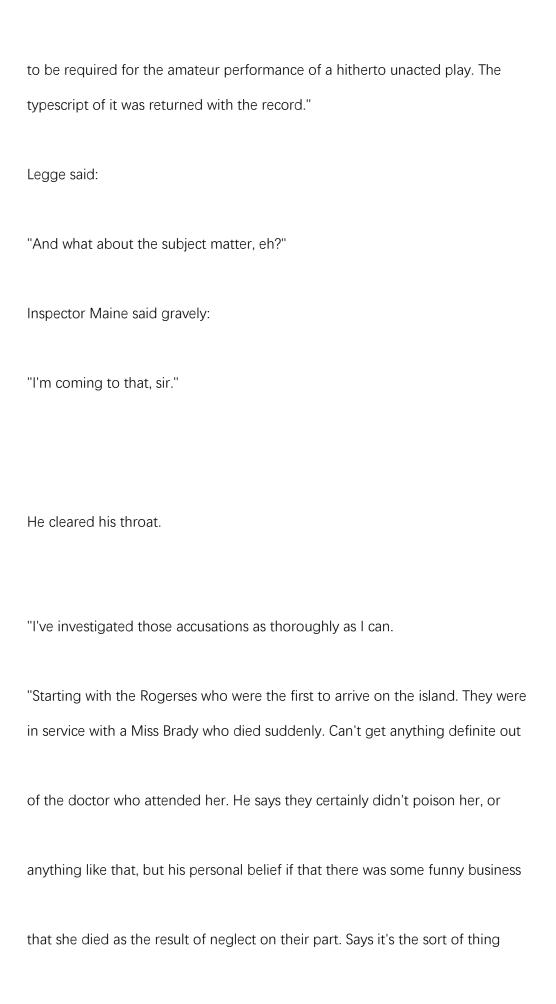
And there were a lot of people, boy scouts and others on the cliffs looking out towards the island and watching."

The A.C. sighed. He said:

"What about the gramophone record you found in the house? Couldn't you get hold of anything there that might help?"

Inspector Maine said:

"I've been into that. It was supplied by a firm that do a lot of theatrical stuff and film effects. It was sent to U.N. Owen, Esq. c/o Isaac Morris, and was understood



that's quite impossible to prove.

"Then there is Mr. Justice Wargrave. That's O.K. He was the judge who sentenced Seton.

"By the way, Seton was guilty unmistakably guilty. Evidence turned up later after he was hanged which proved that beyond any shadow of doubt. But there

was a good deal of comment at the time nine people out of ten thought Seton

was innocent and that the judge's summing up had been vindictive.

"The Claythorne girl, I find, was governess in a family where a death occurred by drowning. However, she doesn't seem to have had anything to do with it, and as a

matter of fact she behaved very well, swam out to the rescue and was actually carried out to sea and only just rescued in time."

"Go on," said the A.C. with a sigh.

Maine took a deep breath.

"Dr. Armstrong now. Wellknown man. Had a consulting room in Harley Street.

Absolutely straight and aboveboard in his profession. Haven't been able to trace

any record of an illegal operation or anything of that kind. It's true that there was a woman called Clees who was operated on by him way back in 1925 at Leithmore, when he was attached to the hospital there. Peritonitis and she died on the operating table. Maybe he wasn't very skillful over the op. after all he hadn't much experience but after all clumsiness isn't a criminal offence. There was certainly no motive.

"Then there's Miss Emily Brent. Girl, Beatrice Taylor, was in service with her.

Got pregnant, was turned out by her mistress and went and drowned herself. Not a nice business but again not criminal."

"That," said the A.C., "seems to be the point. U.N. Owen dealt with cases that the law couldn't touch."

Maine went stolidly on with his list.

"Young Marston was a fairly reckless car driver had his license endorsed twice and he ought to have been prohibited from driving, in my opinion. That's all

there is to him. The two names John and Lucy Combes were those of two kids he

knocked down and killed near Cambridge. Some friends of his gave evidence for him and he was let off with a fine.

"Can't find anything definite about General Macarthur. Fine record war service all the rest of it. Arthur Richmond was serving under him in France and was killed in action. No friction of any kind between him and the General. They were close friends, as a matter of fact. There were some blunders made about that time commanding officers sacrificed men unnecessarily possibly this was a blunder

of that kind."

"Possibly," said the A.C.

"Now, Philip Lombard. Lombard has been mixed up in some very curious shows

abroad. He's sailed very near the law once or twice. Got a reputation for daring

and for not being over scrupulous. Sort of fellow who might do several murders in

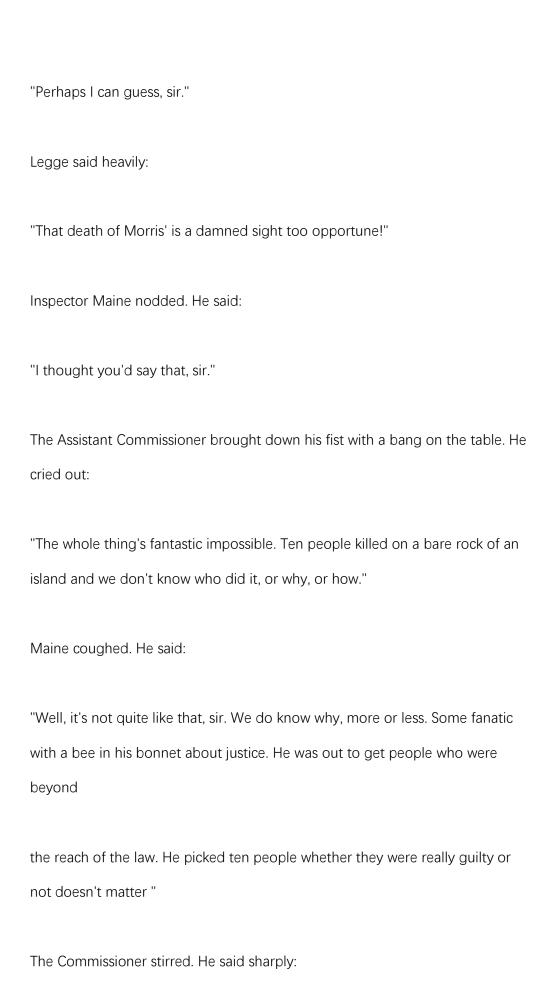
some quiet outoftheway spot.

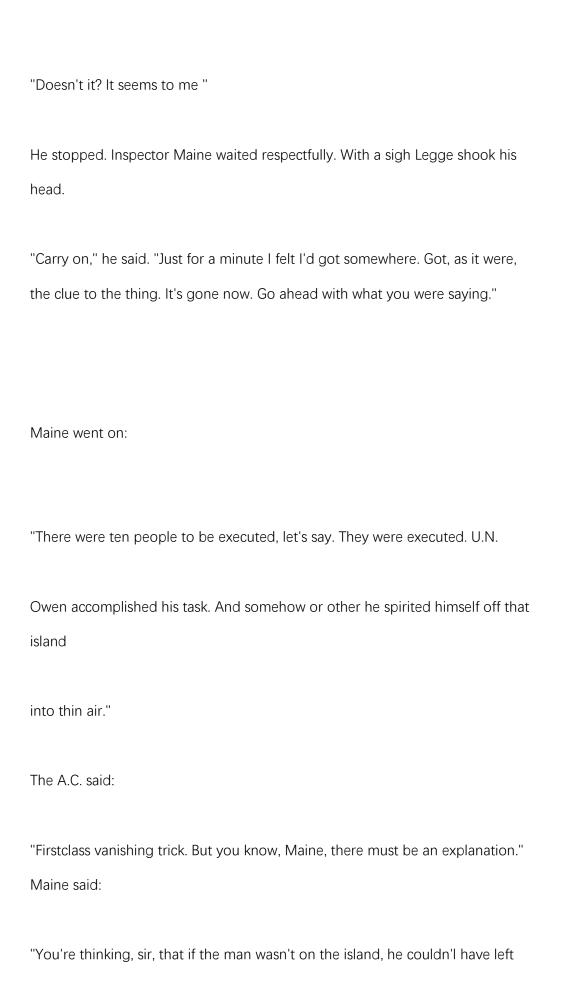
"Then we come to Blore." Maine hesitated. "He of course was one of our lot."

The other man stirred.

"Blore," said the Assistant Commissioner forcibly, "was a bad hat!"







the island, and according to the account of the interested parties he never was on the island. Well, then the only explanation possible is that he was actually one of the ten."

The A.C. nodded.

Maine said earnestly:

"We thought of that, sir. We went into it. Now, to begin with, we're not quite in the dark as to what happened on Indian Island. Vera Claythorne kept a diary, so

did Emily Brent. Old Wargrave made some notes dry legal cryptic stuff, but

quite clear. And Blore made notes too. All those accounts tally. The deaths occurred in this order: Marston, Mrs. Rogers, Macarthur, Rogers, Miss Brent,

Wargrave. After his death Vera Claythorne's diary states that Armstrong left the

house in the night and that Blore and Lombard had gone after him. Blore has

one more entry in his notebook. Just two words: 'Armstrong disappeared.'

"Now, sir, it seemed to me, taking everything into account, that we might find here a perfectly good solution. Armstrong was drowned, you remember. Granting that Armstrong was mad, what was to prevent him having killed off all the others and then committed suicide by throwing himself over the cliff, or perhaps while trying to swim to the mainland?

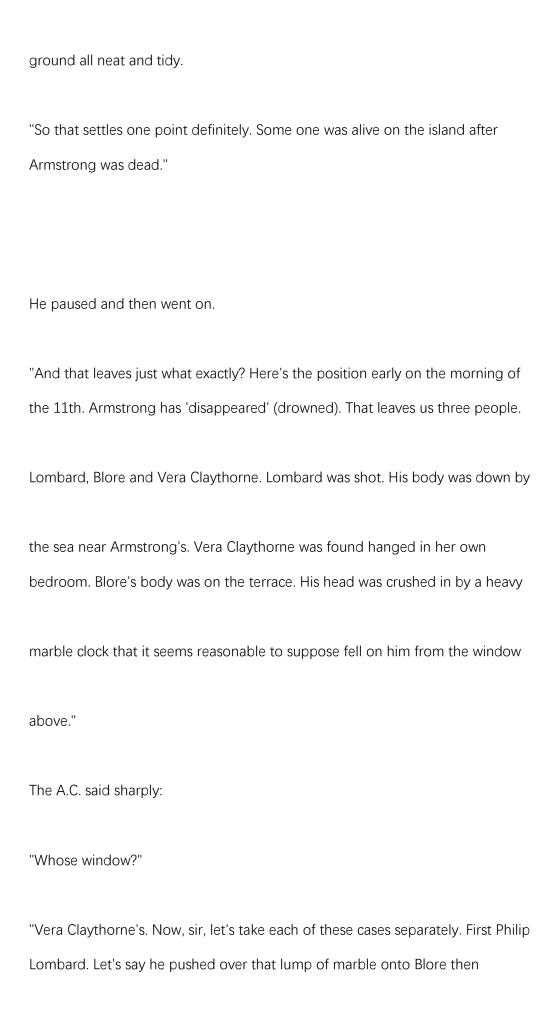
"That was a good solution but it won't do. No, sir, it won't do. First of all there's the police surgeon's evidence. He got to the island early on the morning of August 13th. He couldn't say much to help us. All he could say was that all the people

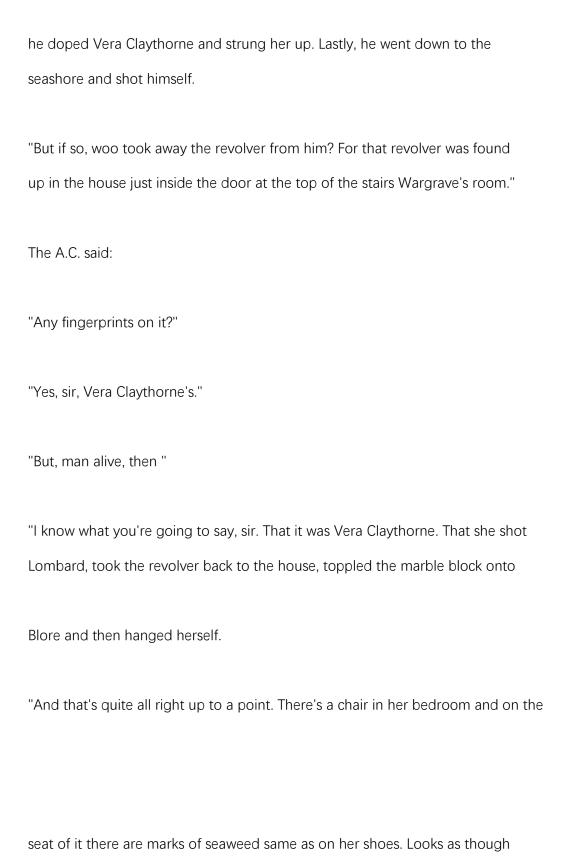
had been dead at least thirtysix hours and probably a good deal longer. But he was fairly definite about Armstrong. Said he must have been from eight to ten hours in the water before his body was washed up. That works out at this, that Armstrong must have gone into the sea sometime during the night of the 10th 11th and I'll explain why. We found the point where the body was washed up it had been wedged between two rocks and there were bits of cloth, hair, etc. on them. It must have been deposited there at high water on the 11th that's to say round about 11 o'clock A.M. After that, the storm subsided, and succeeding high water marks are considerably lower.

"You might say, I suppose that Armstrong managed to polish off the other three before he went into the sea that night. But there's another point and one you

can't get over. Armstrong's body had been dragged above high water mark. We

found it well above the reach of any tide. And it was laid out straight on the





she stood on the chair, adjusted the rope round her neck and kicked away the

chair.

"But that chair wasn't found kicked over. It was, like, all the other chairs, neatly put back against the wall. That was done after Vera Claythorne's death by some one else.

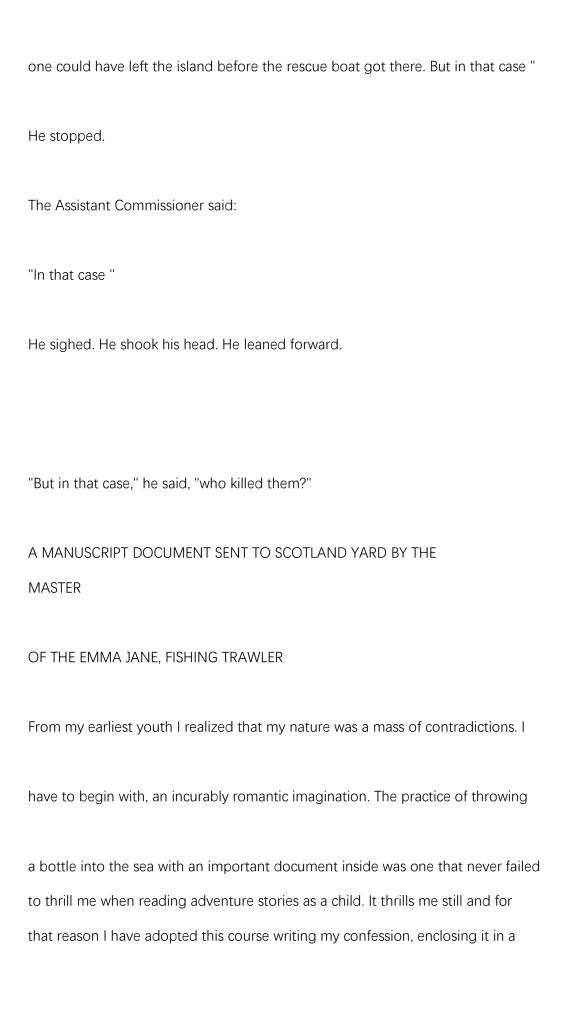
"That leaves us with Blore and if you tell me that after shooting Lombard and inducing Vera Claythorne to hang herself he then went out and pulled down a whacking great block of marble on himself by tying a string to it or something like that well, I simply don't believe you. Men don't commit suicide that way and what's more Blore wasn't that kind of man. We knew Blore and he was not the man that you'd ever accuse of a desire for abstract justice."

The Assistant Commissioner said:

"I agree."

Inspector Maine said:

"And therefore, sir, there must have been some one else on the island. Some one who tidied up when the whole business was over. But where was he all the time and where did he go to? The Sticklehaven people are absolutely certain that no



bottle, sealing the latter, and casting it into the waves. There is, I suppose, a

hundred to one chance that my confession may be found and then (or do I flatter

myself!) a hitherto unsolved murder mystery will be explained.

I was born with other traits besides my romantic fancy. I have a definite sadistic delight in seeing or causing death. I remember experiments with wasps with

various garden pests... From an early age I knew very strongly the lust to kill.

But side by side with this went a contradictory trait a strong sense of justice. It is abhorrent to me that an innocent person or creature should suffer or die by any act of mine. I have always felt strongly that right should prevail.

It may be understood I think a psychologist would understand that with my

mental makeup being what it was, I adopted the law as a profession. The legal

profession satisfied nearly all my instincts.

Crime and its punishment has always fascinated me. I enjoy reading every kind of detective story and thriller. I have devised for my own private amusement the most ingenious ways of carrying out a murder.

When in due course I came to preside over a court of law, that other secret instinct of mine was encouraged to develop. To see a wretched criminal squirming in the dock, suffering the tortures of the damned, as his doom came slowly and slowly nearer, was to me an exquisite pleasure. Mind you, I took no pleasure in seeing an innocent man there. On at least two occasions I stopped cases where to my mind the accused was palpably innocent, directing the jury that there was no case. Thanks, however, to the fairness and efficiency of our police force, the majority of the accused persons who have come before me to be tried for murder, have been guilty.

I will say here that such was the case with the man Edward Seton. His appearance and manner were misleading and he created a good impression on the jury. But not only the evidence, which was clear, though unspectacular, but my own knowledge of criminals told me without any doubt that the man had actually committed the crime with which he was charged, the brutal murder of an elderly woman who trusted him.

I have a reputation as a hanging judge, but that is unfair. I have always been strictly just and scrupulous in my summing up of a case.

All I have done is to protect the jury against the emotional effect of emotional appeals by some of our more emotional counsel. I have drawn their attention to the actual evidence.

For some years past I have been aware of a change within myself, a lessening of control a desire to act instead of to judge.

I have wanted let me admit it frankly to commit a murder myself. I recognized

this as the desire of the artist to express himself! I was, or could be, an artist in crime! My imagination, sternly checked by the exigencies of my profession, waxed

secretly to colossal force.

I must I must I must commit a murder! And what is more, it must be no

ordinary murder! It must be a fantastical crime something stupendous out of

the common! In that one respect, I have still, I think, an adolescent's imagination.

I wanted something theatrical, impossible!

I wanted to kill... Yes, I wanted to kill...

But incongruous as it may seem to some I was restrained and hampered by my innate sense of justice. The innocent must not suffer.

And then, quite suddenly, the idea came to me started by a chance remark uttered during casual conversation. It was a doctor to whom I was talking some ordinary undistinguished G.P. He mentioned casually how often murder must be committed which the law was unable to touch.

And he instanced a particular case that of an old lady, a patient of his who had recently died. He was, he said, himself convinced that her death was due to the

withholding of a restorative drug by a married couple who attended on her and

who stood to benefit very substantially by her death. That sort of thing, he explained, was quite impossible to prove, but he was nevertheless quite sure of it in his own mind. He added that there were many cases of a similar nature going

on all the time cases of deliberate murder and all quite untouchable by the

law.

That was the beginning of the whole thing. I suddenly saw my way clear. And I

determined to commit not one murder, but murder on a grand scale.

A childish rhyme of my infancy came back into my mind the rhyme of the ten

little Indian boys. It had fascinated me as a child of two the inexorable diminishment the sense of inevitability.

I began, secretly, to collect victims...

I will not take up space here by going into detail of how this was accomplished. I had a certain routine line of conversation which I employed with nearly every one

I met and the results I got were really surprising. During the time I was in a nursing home I collected the case of Dr. Armstrong a violently teetotal sister

who attended on me being anxious to prove to me the evils of drink by recounting

to me a case many years ago in hospital when a doctor under the influence of

alcohol had killed a patient on whom he was operating. A careless question as to

where the sister in question had trained, etc., soon gave me the necessary data. I

tracked down the doctor and the patient mentioned without difficulty.

A conversation between two old military gossips in my Club put me on the track of General Macarthur. A man who had recently returned from the Amazon gave me a devastating resume of the activities of one Philip Lombard. An indignant mem sahib in Majorca recounted the tale of the Puritan Emily Brent and her wretched servant girl. Anthony Marston I selected from a large group of people who had committed similar offences. His complete callousness and his inability

to

feel any responsibility for the lives he had taken made him, I considered, a type dangerous to the community and unfit to live. Exinspector Blore came my way quite naturally, some of my professional brethren discussing the Landor case with freedom and vigour. I took a serious view of his offence. The police, as servants of the law, must be of a high order of integrity. For their word is

perforce believed by virtue of their profession.

Finally there was the case of Vera Claythorne. It was when I was crossing the

Atlantic. At a late hour one night the sole occupants of the smokingroom were

myself and a goodlooking young man called Hugo Hamilton.

Hugo Hamilton was unhappy. To assuage that unhappiness he had taken a

considerable quantity of drink. He was in the maudlin confidential stage.

Without much hope of any result I automatically started my routine conversational gambit. The response was startling. I can remember his words

now. He said:

"You're right. Murder isn't what most people think giving some one a dollop of arsenic pushing them over a cliff that sort of stuff." He leaned forward, thrusting his face into mine. He said: "I've known a murderess known her, I tell you. And what's more I was crazy about her... God help me, sometimes I think I

still am... It's Hell, I tell you Hell You see, she did it more or less for me... Not that I ever dreamed. Women are fiends absolute fiends you wouldn't think a

girl like that a nice straight jolly girl you wouldn't think she'd do that, would you? That she'd take a kid out to sea and let it drown you wouldn't think a



During all this time of search my plan had been gradually maturing in my mind.

It was now complete and the coping stone to it was an interview I had with a

doctor in Harley Street. I have mentioned that I underwent an operation. My

interview in Harley Street told me that another operation would be useless. My medical adviser wrapped up the information very prettily, but I am accustomed

to getting at the truth of a statement.

I did not tell the doctor of my decision that my death should not be a slow and protracted one as it would be in the course of nature. No, my death should take place in a blaze of excitement. I would live before I died.

And now to the actual mechanics of the crime of Indian Island. To acquire the island, using the man Morris to cover my tracks, was easy enough. He was an

expert in that sort of thing. Tabulating the information I had collected about my prospective victims, I was able to concoct a suitable bait for each. None of my plans miscarried. All my guests arrived at Indian Island on the 8th of August.

The party included myself.

Morris was already accounted for. He suffered from indigestion. Before leaving

London I gave him a capsule to take last thing at night which had, I said, done

wonders for my own gastric juices. He accepted it unhesitatingly the man was a

slight hypochondriac. I had no fear that he would leave any compromising documents or memoranda behind. He was not that sort of man.

The order of death upon the island had been subjected by me to special thought

and care. There were, I considered, amongst my guests, varying degrees of guilt.

Those whose guilt was the lightest should, I decided, pass out first, and not suffer the prolonged mental strain and fear that the more coldblooded offenders were

to suffer.

Anthony Marston and Mrs. Rogers died first, the one instantaneously, the other

in a peaceful sleep. Marston, I recognized, was a type born without that feeling of moral responsibility which most of us have. He was amoral pagan. Mrs. Rogers,

I had no doubt, had acted very largely under the influence of her husband.

I need not describe closely how those two met their deaths. The police will have been able to work that out quite easily. Potassium Cyanide is easily obtained by householders for putting down wasps. I had some in my possession and it was

easy to slip it into Marston's almost empty glass during the tense period after the

gramophone recital.

I may say that I watched the faces of my guests closely during that indictment and I had no doubt whatever, after my long court experience, that one and all were guilty.

During recent bouts of pain, I had been ordered a sleeping draught Chloral

Hydrate. It had been easy for me to suppress this until I had a lethal amount in

my possession. When Rogers brought up some brandy for his wife, he set it down

on a table and in passing that table I put the stuff into the brandy. It was easy, for at that time suspicion had not begun to set in.

General Macarthur met his death quite painlessly. He did not hear me come up behind him. I had, of course, to choose my time for leaving the terrace very carefully, but everything was successful.

As I had anticipated, a search was made of the island and it was discovered that there was no one on it but our seven selves. That at once created an atmosphere of suspicion. According to my plan I should shortly need an ally. I selected Dr. Armstrong for that part. He was a gullible sort of man, he knew me by sight and reputation and it was inconceivable to him that a man of my standing should actually be a murderer! All his suspicions were directed against Lombard and I pretended to concur in these. I hinted to him that I had a scheme by which it might be possible to trap the murderer into incriminating himself.

Though a search had been made of every one's room, no search had as yet been

made of the persons themselves. But that was bound to come soon.

I killed Rogers on the morning of August 10th. He was chopping sticks for lighting the fire and did not hear me approach. I found the key to the diningroom door in his pocket. He had locked it the night before.

In the confusion attending the finding of Rogers' body I slipped into Lombard's

room and abstracted his revolver. I knew that he would have one with him in

fact, I had instructed Morris to suggest as much when he interviewed him.

At breakfast I slipped my last dose of chloral into Miss Brent's coffee when I was refilling her cup. We left her in the diningroom. I slipped in there a little

while later she was nearly unconscious and it was easy to inject a strong solution of

cyanide into her. The bumblebee business was really rather childish but somehow, you know, it pleased me. I liked adhering as closely as possible to my

nursery rhyme.

Immediately after this what I had already foreseen happened indeed I believe I suggested it myself. We all submitted to a rigorous search. I had safely hidden away the revolver, and had no more cyanide or chloral in my possession.

It was then that I intimated to Armstrong that we must carry our plan into effect. It was simply this I must appear to be the next victim. That would perhaps rattle the murderer at any rate once I was supposed to be dead I could move about the house and spy upon the unknown murderer.

Armstrong was keen on the idea. We carried it out that evening. A little plaster of red mud on the forehead the red curtain and the wool and the stage was set. The lights of the candles were very flickering and uncertain and the only person

who would examine me closely was Armstrong.

It worked perfectly. Miss Claythorne screamed the house down when she found

the seaweed which I had thoughtfully arranged in her room. They all rushed up, and I took up my pose of a murdered man.

The effect on them when they found me was all that could be desired. Armstrong acted his part in the most professional manner. They carried me upstairs and laid me on my bed. Nobody worried about me, they were all too deadly scared and

terrified of each other.

right.

I had a rendezvous with Armstrong outside the house at a quarter to two. I took him up a little way behind the house on the edge of the cliff. I said that here we could see if any one else approached us, and we should not be seen from the house as the bedrooms faced the other way. He was still quite unsuspicious and yet he ought to have been warned If he had only remembered the words of the nursery rhyme, "A red herring swallowed one..." He took the red herring all

It was quite easy. I uttered an exclamation, leant over the cliff, told him to look, wasn't that the mouth of a cave? He leant right over. A quick vigorous push sent

him off his balance and splash into the heaving sea below. I returned to the

house. It must have been my footfall that Blore heard. A few minutes after I had

returned to Armstrong's room I left it, this time making a certain amount of noise so that some one should hear me. I heard a door open as I got to the bottom of the stairs. They must have just glimpsed my figure as I went out of the front door.

It was a minute or two before they followed me. I had gone straight round the

house and in at the diningroom window which I had left open. I shut the window and later I broke the glass. Then I went upstairs and laid myself out again on my bed.

I calculated that they would search the house again, but I did not think they would look closely at any of the corpses, a mere twitch aside of the sheet to

satisfy themselves that it was not Armstrong masquerading as a body. This is

exactly what occurred.

I forgot to say that I returned the revolver to Lombard's room. It may be of interest to some one to know where it was hidden during the search. There was a big pile of tinned food in the larder. I opened the bottom most of the tins biscuits I think it contained, bedded in the revolver and replaced the strip of adhesive tape.

I calculated, and rightly, that no one would think of working their way through a

pile of apparently untouched foodstuffs, especially as all the top tins were soldered.

The red curtain I had concealed by laying it flat on the seat of one of the drawingroom chairs under the chintz cover and the wool in the seat cushion, cutting a small hole.

And now came the moment that I had anticipated three people who were so frightened of each other that anything might happen and one of them had a revolver. I watched them from the windows of the house. When Blore came up alone I had the big marble clock poised ready. Exit Blore...

From my window I saw Vera Claythorne shoot Lombard. A daring and

resourceful young woman. I always thought she was a match for him and more.

As soon as that had happened I set the stage in her bedroom.

It was an interesting psychological experiment. Would the consciousness of her own guilt, the state of nervous tension consequent on having just shot a man, be sufficient, together with the hypnotic suggestion of the surroundings, to cause her to take her own life? I thought it would. I was right. Vera Claythorne hanged herself before my eyes where I stood in the shadow of the wardrobe.

And now for the last stage. I came forward, picked up the chair and set it against the wall. I looked for the revolver and found it at the top of the stairs where the girl had dropped it I was careful to preserve her fingerprints on it.

And now?

I shall finish writing this. I shall enclose it and seal it in a bottle and I shall throw the bottle into the sea.

Why?

Yes, why?...

It was my ambition to invent a murder mystery that no one could solve.

But no artist, I now realize, can be satisfied with art alone. There is a natural craving for recognition which cannot be gainsaid.

I have, let me confess it in all humility, a pitiful human wish that some one should know just how clever I have been...

In all this, I have assumed that the mystery of Indian Island will remain unsolved. It may be, of course, that the police will be cleverer than I think. There are, after all, three clues. One: the police are perfectly aware that Edward Seton was guilty. They know, therefore, that one of the ten people on the island was not a murderer in any sense of the word, and it follows, paradoxically, that that

person must logically be the murderer. The second clue lies in the seventh verse of the nursery rhyme. Armstrong's death is associated with a "red herring" which

he swallowed or rather which resulted in swallowing him! That is to say that at that stage of the affair some hocuspocus is clearly indicated and that Armstrong was deceived by it and sent to his death. That might start a promising

line of inquiry. For at that period there are only four persons and of those four I am clearly the only one likely to inspire him with confidence.

The third is symbolical. The manner of my death marking me on the forehead.

The brand of Cain.

There is, I think, little more to say.

After entrusting my bottle and its message to the sea I shall go to my room and

lay myself down on the bed. To my eyeglasses is attached what seems a length of

fine black cord but it is elastic cord. I shall lay the weight of the body on the glasses. The cord I shall loop round the doorhandle and attach it, not too solidly, to the revolver. What I think will happen is this:

My hand, protected with a handkerchief, will press the trigger. My hand will fall

to my side, the revolver, pulled by the elastic will recoil to the door, jarred by the doorhandle it will detach itself from the elastic and fall. The elastic, released, will hang down innocently from the eyeglasses on which my body is lying. A

handkerchief lying on the floor will cause no comment whatever.

I shall be found, laid neatly on my bed, shot through the forehead in accordance

with the record kept by my fellow victims. Times of death cannot be stated with

any accuracy by the time our bodies are examined.

When the sea goes down, there will come from the mainland boats and men.

And they will find ten dead bodies and an unsolved prob	olem on Indian Island
Signed	

Lawrence Wargrave