

then a year in prison. That was news. Mind you, at college we'd always said Swann would end up in jail. That cash box. Everybody knew Alfred didn't take that money, you did.

**LESGATE.** (*Reddens, stands.*) Thanks for the drink. I take it you won't be wanting that car after all.

START



**TONY.** Don't you want me to tell you why I brought you here?

**LESGATE.** (*Beat.*) Yes, I think you'd better.

*(During the next speech, TONY drops his limp, takes out his handkerchief, and wipes fingerprints off anything LESGATE touched.)*

**TONY.** As I say, it was quite a coincidence, seeing you in The Grape and Vine, just down the street from that flat. I asked about and found that you rented a room above the pub. You weren't Lesgate yet. The owner of The Grape and Vine knew you as "Pryce-Jones." I liked the hyphen. Would you mind passing me your glass? Thank you so much. You see, since that first night at the pub, I've been following you. I was hoping that, sooner or later, I might catch you at something, so I could, well, not to put too fine a point on it...

**LESGATE.** Blackmail me?

**TONY.** Influence you. After a few weeks, I got to know your routine which made it a lot easier.

**LESGATE.** Rather dull work.

**TONY.** It was, a bit, at first, but you know how it is, you take up a hobby and the more you get to know of it the more fascinating it becomes. You became *quite* fascinating. In fact, there were times when I felt that you belonged to me. You moved from The Grape and Vine and took lodgings in South Kensington under the name "Asprey." Six weeks later, you disappeared, owing

six weeks rent and fifty pounds borrowed from your landlady.

(**LESGATE** reaches for the brandy.)

If you want another drink, do you mind putting on these gloves? Your new lodgings were in Belsize Park. There Mr. Asprey became Mr. Waterhouse. Mr. Waterhouse left *those* lodgings owing fifteen weeks rent and somewhat richer for his brief encounter with a Miss Wallace. Miss Wallace was in love with you, wasn't she? I suppose she thought you were growing that handsome mustache to please her. Poor Miss Wallace. By summer you'd moved to another flat owned by a Mrs. Van Dorn whose late husband left her two hotels and a very large apartment house. That's where you became Captain Lesgate. The only trouble is, Mrs. Van Dorn does rather enjoy being courted, and she is very expensive. Perhaps that's why you've been trying to sell her car for over a month.

**LESGATE.** Mrs. Van Dorn asked me to sell it for her.

**TONY.** I know. I called her up earlier today. She only wanted eight hundred.

(*Beat.*)

**LESGATE.** Where's the nearest police station?

**TONY.** Opposite the church, two minutes walk.

**LESGATE.** Suppose I go there now?

**TONY.** What would you tell them?

**LESGATE.** I shall tell them you're trying to blackmail me into...

**TONY.** Yes?

**LESGATE.** Murdering your wife.

**TONY.** And if you did, I'd say you came here tonight, half drunk, and tried to borrow money on the strength that we were at college together. When I refused you said something about a letter belonging to my wife. As far as I could make out you were offering to sell it to me. I gave you what money I had and you gave me the letter. It has your fingerprints on it. Remember?

Then you said if I went to the police you'd tell some crazy story about my wanting you to murder my wife. But before we go any further, consider the inconvenience. I'd have to tell the police Captain Lesgate's name is really Swann. The tricky thing there is that C.A. Swann died four years ago. Yes, I found the obituary. Motoring accident, body burned beyond recognition. I take it whomever you put behind the wheel was your first victim.

**LESGATE.** What do you mean, "first"?

**TONY.** Well, I mean to say, I *assume* he was the first, just as I assume the second was Miss Wallace. She was in all the papers. Middle-aged woman found dead from drug overdose. No one knows who gave the stuff to her. But we know, don't we? Poor Miss Wallace. And now you're planning to marry Mrs. Van Dorn, am I right?

**LESGATE.** Smart, aren't you?

**TONY.** Not really, I've just had time to think things out, put myself in your position. That's why I know you're going to agree.

**LESGATE.** Why?

**TONY.** For the same reason that a donkey with a stick behind him and a carrot in front goes forwards and not backwards.

**LESGATE.** Tell me about the carrot.

**TONY.** Five thousand pounds in cash.

**LESGATE.** For a murder?

**TONY.** For a few minutes work. At no risk. I do think a honeymoon with Mrs. Van Dorn would be preferable to the hangman's noose. Five thousand pounds should see you safely married and on the Continent. You'll find it makes such a difference to have money in your pocket.

**LESGATE.** This five thousand pounds, where is it?

*(TONY opens the briefcase, shows its contents to LESGATE.)*

Is that the five thousand pounds she..?

**TONY.** Uh hm.

**LESGATE.** How much is there?

**TONY.** The full amount. I don't think you'll do a runner, not with Mrs. Van Dorn in your future and me knowing about Miss Wallace and the rest. ← END

**LESGATE.** When would this take place?

**TONY.** Tomorrow night.

**LESGATE.** Tomorrow?! Not a chance.

**TONY.** It's got to be tomorrow, I've arranged things that way.

**LESGATE.** Where?

**TONY.** Approximately where you're standing now.

**LESGATE.** How?

**TONY.** Tomorrow evening, at exactly eight o'clock you will enter the house by the street door. The street door is always unlocked.

*(TONY opens the front door, steps into the hall and points to the fifth step of the staircase.)*

You'll find the key to the front door under the stair carpet out in the hall. On the fifth step.