

Just managed to get to the curb safely. Well, I recovered her parcels from the street, wiped some of the mud off them as best I could, tied up one again that had burst open with string and generally smoothed the old dear down. You know the sort of thing.

SIR WILFRID. And she was grateful?

LEONARD. Oh yes, she seemed very grateful. Thanked me a lot and all that. Anyone would think I'd saved her life instead of her parcels.

SIR WILFRID. There was actually no question of your having saved her life? *(He takes a packet of cigarettes from the desk drawer.)*

LEONARD. Oh, no. Nothing heroic. I never expected to see her again.

SIR WILFRID. Cigarette?

LEONARD. No, thanks, sir, never do. But by an extraordinary coincidence, two days later I happened to be sitting behind her in the theatre. She looked round and recognized me and we began to talk, and in the end she asked me to come and see her.

SIR WILFRID. And you went?

LEONARD. Yes. She'd urged me to name a day specially and it seemed rather childish to refuse. So I said I'd go on the following Saturday.

SIR WILFRID. And you went to her house at . . . *(He looks at one of the papers.)*

MATHEW. Hampstead.

SIR WILFRID. What did you know about her when you first went to the house? *(He perches himself on the down r. corner of the desk.)*

LEONARD. Well, nothing really but what she'd told me, that she lived alone and hadn't very many friends. Something of that kind.

SIR WILFRID. She lived with only a housekeeper?

LEONARD. That's right. She had eight cats, though. Eight of them. The house was beautifully furnished and all that, but it smelt a bit of cat.

SIR WILFRID. *(Rising and moving above the desk)* Had you reason to believe she was well off?

LEONARD. Well, she talked as though she was.

SIR WILFRID. And you yourself? *(He crosses and stands up L. of LEONARD.)*

LEONARD *(Cheerfully.)* Oh, I'm practically stony broke and have been for a long time.

SIR WILFRID. Unfortunate.

LEONARD. Yes, it is rather. Oh, you mean people will say I was sucking up to her for her money?

SIR WILFRID. (*Disarmed.*) I shouldn't have put it quite like that, but in essence, yes, that is possibly what people might say.

LEONARD. It isn't really true, you know. As a matter of fact, I was sorry for her. I thought she was lonely. I was brought up by an old aunt, my Aunt Betsy, and I like old ladies.

SIR WILFRID. You say old ladies. Do you know what age Miss French was?

LEONARD. Well, I didn't know, but I read it in the paper after she was murdered. She was fifty-six.

SIR WILFRID. Fifty-six. You consider that old, Mr. Vole, but I should doubt if Miss Emily French considered herself old.

LEONARD. But you can't call it a chicken, can you?

SIR WILFRID. (*Crossing above the desk and sitting r. of it*) Well, let us get on. You went to see Miss French fairly frequently?

LEONARD. Yes, I should say once, twice a week perhaps.

SIR WILFRID. Did you take your wife with you?

LEONARD. (*Slightly embarrassed.*) No, no, I didn't.

SIR WILFRID. Why didn't you?

LEONARD. Well—well, frankly, I don't think it would have gone down very well if I had.

SIR WILFRID. Do you mean with your wife or with Miss French?

LEONARD. Oh, with Miss French. (*He hesitates.*)

LEONARD. You see, she got rather fond of me.

SIR WILFRID. You mean, she fell in love with you?

LEONARD. (*Horried.*) Oh, good Lord, no, nothing of that kind. Just sort of pampered me and spoiled me, that sort of thing.

SIR WILFRID. (*After a short pause.*) You see, Mr. Vole, I have no doubt part of the police case against you, if there is a case against you which as yet we have no definite reason to suppose, will be why did you, young, good-looking, married, devote so much of your time to an elderly woman with whom you could hardly have very much in common?

LEONARD. (*Gloomily.*) Yes, I know they'll say I was after her for her money. And in a way perhaps that's true. But only in a way.

SIR WILFRID. (*Slightly disarmed.*) Well, at least you're frank, Mr. Vole. Can you explain a little more clearly?

LEONARD. (*Rising and moving to the fireplace*) Well, she made no secret of the fact that she was rolling in money. As I told you, Romaine and I—that's my wife—are pretty hard up. (*He moves and stands above*

*his chair.*) I'll admit that I did hope that if I was really in a tight place she'd lend me some money. I'm being honest about it.

SIR WILFRID. Did you ask her for a loan?

LEONARD. No, I didn't. I mean, things weren't desperate. *(He becomes suddenly rather more serious as though he realized the gravity of that.)* Of course I can see—it does look rather bad for me. *(He resumes his seat.)*

SIR WILFRID. Miss French knew you were a married man?

LEONARD. Oh, yes.

SIR WILFRID. But she didn't suggest that you should bring your wife to see her?

LEONARD. *(Slightly embarrassed.)* No. She—well, she seemed to take it for granted my wife and I didn't get on.

SIR WILFRID. Did you deliberately give her that impression?

LEONARD. No, I didn't. Indeed I didn't. But she seemed to—well, assume it, and I thought perhaps if I kept dragging Romaine into it she'd well, lose interest in me. I didn't want exactly to cadge money from her, but I'd invented a gadget for a car—a really good idea it is—and if I could have persuaded her to finance that, well, I mean it would have been *her* money, and it might have brought her in a lot. Oh, it's very difficult to explain—but I wasn't sponging on her. Sir Wilfrid, really I wasn't.

French?

LEONARD. None. None at all.

SIR WILFRID. Tell me something about the housekeeper.

LEONARD. Janet MacKenzie? She was a regular old tyrant, you know, Janet was. Fairly bullied poor Miss French. Looked after her very well and all that, but the poor old dear couldn't call her *her* own when Janet was about. *(Thoughtfully.)* Janet didn't like me at all.

SIR WILFRID. Why didn't she like you?

LEONARD. Oh, jealous, I expect. I don't think she liked my helping Miss French with her business affairs.

SIR WILFRID. Oh, so you helped Miss French with her business affairs?

LEONARD. Yes. She was worried about some of her investments and things, and she found it a bit difficult to fill up forms and all that sort of thing. Yes, I helped her with a lot of things like that.

SIR WILFRID. Now, Mr. Vole, I'm going to ask you a very serious question. And it's one to which it's vital I should have a truthful answer. You