The Kynsard Affair

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The Sole Survivor *and* The Kynsard Affair

Roy Vickers was born in 1899, and educated at Charterhouse, Brasenose College, Oxford, and enrolled as a student of the Middle Temple. He left the University before graduating in order to join the staff of a popular weekly. After two years of journalistic choring, which included a period of crime reporting, he became editor of the *Novel Magazine*, but eventually resigned this post so that he could develop his ideas as a freelance. His experience in the criminal courts gave him a view of the anatomy of crime which has been the mainspring of his novels and short stories. Not primarily interested in the professional crook, he writes of the normal citizen who is taken unawares by the latent forces of his own temperament. His attitude to the criminal is sympathetic but unsentimental. *The Department of Dead Ends* and *Murdering Mr Velfrage* have already been published as Penguins.

The Kynsard Affair

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The Kynsard Affair

The clue to the Kynsard mystery was the life-and-death story of Gibbern, the fat-headed murderer. His fat-headedness had helped him in the first instance—he killed his wife in a manner so lacking in ingenuity as to attract no initial suspicion. He would never have been caught if he had not been such a little ass of a man—fundamentally, an honest ass.

This element of honest asininity—this childishly simple murder—awakened the interest of all classes. There is reason to believe that more than one man said to himself: 'That's the blue print for murder. Gibbern would have got away with it if he hadn't been an honest ass. Now I, as it so happens, am not an honest ass. Therefore . . .'

The Kynsard affair followed with somewhat indecent haste.

On the morning of Gibbern's execution there was the usual crowd outside the prison, the usual handful of enthusiasts demonstrating against capital punishment. At eight o'clock, Local Superintendent Halsdon, satisfied that there was no likelihood of disorder, was walking back to his station when he spotted a small Morris saloon car illicitly parked in a blind alley, formed by the prison on one side and a factory on the other.

The July sun was playing on the windows of the car, wet from recent rain, so that he could not immediately see inside. The doors were locked. He noted the registration number, and was turning away when a cloud reduced the dazzle.

He whipped out his control key and opened the door.

Sprawling over the back seat, under a rug and a newspaper, lay a naked woman, dead. Head and face had been battered. Even so, he could see that it was the face of a comparatively young and comely woman. Auburn hair too! He perceived that she had been dead for some hours.

The corpse, as such, did not unnerve Halsdon. He was in full possession of his faculties. He knew it was foolish to speak to a corpse—still more foolish to say:

'Hi! D'you think I was born yesterday!'

His imagination was struggling to fit his discovery into his own pattern of human behaviour, even at its most eccentric, most maniacal. Here was gross absurdity. Not because a woman lay murdered in a car, but because the car had been parked at that spot.

Gibbern's wife had been found in a car, battered to death, in circumstances which suggested the work of an unknown pervert. Here was another woman, battered to death, found in a car parked at the nearest possible point to the gallows on which Gibbern had just paid his penalty. Could a maniac have committed murder as a practical joke? But even a maniac would insist that a joke should have a point, however maniacal. This joke had no point because, after the verdict, Gibbern had confessed. That body in that car at that spot and at that hour was a sublime insult to human intelligence.

Perhaps he reminded himself that a policeman must consider murder, not as a metaphysical riddle, but as a murder. He ran the few paces to the main road and beckoned to a constable.

With the constable beside him, he drove the car to the mortuary adjoining the district police station.

It was assumed that this was not a local murder. Better to call in Scotland Yard sooner than later.

Detective Inspector Turley had handled the Gibbern case. He was in the middle thirties, but looked ten years older—which was an advantage in many ways. After sticking for some years in the lower grades he had been recognized as an able man, possessing the talent of encouraging the talents of others and coordinating the results.

Beside him in the car sat his aide, Detective Constable Rawlings, a promising youngster, short-listed for promotion. Following was the nucleus of a staff.

A few minutes after Turley arrived, the doctor was ready to make his report.

'There were two blows on the face, inflicted before death,' said the doctor. 'There were three blows on the crown of the head, the second of which caused death. She has been dead about twelve hours. Subject to microscopic confirmation, I would say the weapon was of wood with smooth edges.

'Aged twenty-four to twenty-eight; wearing a wedding ring. Height approximately five feet five. That auburn hair is natural, but it has been tinted up. A good-looking girl I should say—straight nose, well-shaped jaw. Hands long and narrow: she wasn't a typist, nor a pianist. No operations, but she had a

small accident some time ago necessitating a couple of stitches.' He added a technical location of the scar.

'Where do they keep that, doctor?' asked Turley.

'Say an inch and a half above the waist-line,' smiled the doctor. 'I've—er—cleaned up the face a bit—surgically, I mean—so that her people will be able to recognize her. If you have to publish a photograph, it will be all right. A good man, choosing his angle, could get a perfectly natural photograph.'

'What staggers me, Mr Turley,' said Superintendent Halsdon, when the doctor had gone, 'is the car being dumped there. Gibbern! Same sort o' murder! Looks as if the murderer was a maniac sort of hypnotized by Gibbern and couldn't keep away.'

'Could be!' agreed Turley politely. 'Have you done anything about the car?'

'Registered owner—Miss Elizabeth Trotwood of Cranebrook Mansions, West Central.'

'Elizabeth Trotwood!' ejaculated Turley. 'That's a new one! Ever read Charles Dickens, Super? "Betsy Trotwood"—character in *David Copperfield*. Looks like the name's phony.'

'Her ration book will settle that. I've sent a man to Cranebrook Mansions, believin' you'd approve, Mr Turley.'

'Quite right! Let's see the doctor's description again.'

Rawlings, knowing what would be wanted next, handed his

chief the official Missing List. Turley quickly found something.

'This looks like it, Super. "Height five feet five, auburn hair, grey-green eyes, aged twenty-six. Distinguishing marks, nil. Reported at six last night by husband, Arthur Kynsard, barrister-at-law"—I know of him: does a lot of railway work in the courts—"further inquiries by same at midnight and eight-fifty this morning." There's his home address in St John's Wood and chambers in Lincoln's Inn. You might ask him to call.'

While Turley was retiring to the room that had been placed at his disposal, with an outer room for his staff, there came a ring from Halsdon's man at Cranebrook Mansions.

'Okay, sir! Flat taken in the name of Elizabeth Trotwood. Description tallies—auburn hair and the rest of it. These are small flats but not cheap. From what the caretaker has let fall, I'd say they're mostly love-nests. All quiet and orderly. Where good-class City men come to see the special girlfriend. Trotwood has a friend. But the caretaker doesn't know his name nor anything about him. Description: middle-aged, shortish, fattish, with a loud voice; laughs a lot. Any orders, sir?'

'Find where the Morris car was kept and try and pick up something from the garage. Don't be too long. The Yard have started and we don't want to overlap.'

By which he meant that the Yard would get the credit, and might just as well do the work.

Within twenty minutes a high-powered Chrysler drew up and a constable stepped forward to investigate.

'My name is Kynsard.'

'Right, sir! The superintendent is expecting you.' The constable knew why: to register sympathy, he opened the door of the car. He was mildly surprised to notice that the rear was stacked with unframed pictures. The gentleman didn't look that sort. One picture caught his eye—a modernistic Medusa, the snakes about the head looking like corkscrews.

'Second door on the left, please, sir.'

Kynsard was tall, slender, alert, in the early thirties. His physical appearance was an asset to him as a barrister, for he looked like a youthful version of a Lord Chancellor. Broad jaw, long thin lips, wide-set eyes, heavy lidded, and massive brow.

'Is my wife here, Superintendent?'

'Well, we don't know that it is Mrs Kynsard—'

'You said there had been an accident. If she is here and not in hospital, it means she is dead.'

'Now look here, sir! You may be alarming yourself for nothing, and I hope you are. We asked you to call because the description is like the description you gave the Yard of your wife. But in these cases, it's nothing for us to call a dozen or more people who've all given a close description, and quite often it turns out not to belong to one of 'em.'

'Yes, of course!' He smiled—it was a good smile that was often effective in court. 'Thank you, Superintendent. You've helped me to pull myself together. This sort of work can't be pleasant for you—I mustn't make it worse.'

'That's all right, sir. If you feel steady, we'll go and get it over.'

Kynsard lagged a little when following the local superintendent across the yard to the mortuary. Then he braced himself, the broad jaw thrust slightly forward.

A sheet had been placed over the body, covering it to the chin. Kynsard gazed down at the face. He turned to the superintendent and nodded slowly.

Outside the mortuary he spoke.

'That is my wife, Superintendent.'

'I'm very sorry—very sorry indeed, Mr Kynsard!'

'Thank you. How was she killed? It didn't look like a road accident.'

'We think—in fact we know, sir—that the poor lady was murdered. And I'm afraid that, after you've signed the declaration, we must ask you to see Inspector Turley. He'll want all the information you can give him.'

2

Dealing decorously with stricken relatives was a part of Turley's routine. Part of his routine, too, was to begin by suspecting a husband when a wife was murdered. True that a barrister would probably think of a safer way of shedding an unwanted wife. Perhaps this wife was not unwanted.

This kind of witness would certainly be out of the ordinary. For one thing, a lawyer would know that, as husband, he would be top of the list of suspects. He would know the difference between suspicion and evidence, and would not trouble to impress his innocence on the police.

After an exchange of civilities, Kynsard sat back in his chair, arms folded, waiting for Turley.

'Are you quite certain that deceased is your wife? I ask, because a painful mistake is sometimes made on these occasions.'

'Quite certain!'

'In the description you filed at Scotland Yard, you stated that your wife had no distinguishing marks?'

'None!' He amended: 'Unless you would count a small scar a little above the waist. She cut herself there some years ago.'

'Did you look for that scar?'

'No. It wasn't necessary.'

Identification being settled, they could begin.

'Well now, Mr Kynsard, you'll know the kind of detailed information I want.'

'You'll find I shall need your help—I've done very little criminal work.' After a moment's pause Kynsard, as it were, opened his case.

'I last saw my wife yesterday morning when I left for chambers, about nine twenty. Over breakfast, I had mentioned that I was not appearing in court and she suggested we should have lunch together. I agreed, and she said she would book a table at Blainley's, in the Strand. She got up and telephoned there and then.

'When I turned up at Blainley's, she was not there. I took up the reservation and had lunch by myself. I ought to have been alarmed then—she had never done that sort of thing before—but, frankly, I was merely annoyed.

'I arrived home a little before six, just before our cook-general left. She works from ten until six—the only staff we have—we've put part of our house out of use. She was indignant because my wife had not been home all day and there was no food in the house, and Mrs Tremman—my wife's mother—was coming to dinner.

'Now, my wife didn't make that kind of mistake. I was pretty certain then that something must have happened to her. So I rang Scotland Yard.

'Mrs Tremman turned up about seven. We were soon working up each other's anxiety. I'm afraid I made myself a bit of a nuisance to your people. Mrs Tremman concentrated on ringing the hospitals. I drove her home after making my last inquiry of Scotland Yard—round about midnight. That's all I can tell you.'

'What about dinner?'

'Mrs Tremman foraged and found some canned stuff—we had a scratch meal in the kitchen.'

Very clear and concise for a bereaved husband, thought Turley.

'As far as you know, was the deceased carrying any considerable sum of money?'

'As far as I know—no. From my knowledge of her habits I'd say that it's extremely unlikely. She has an account at the local branch of the Metropolitan Bank. She hated jewellery and wore none.'

'I'd like to check up at the Metropolitan. The usual housekeeping account, I suppose?'

'Rather more than that. In addition to what I handed her, she had eight hundred a year of her own.'

'Had she control of her capital?'

'Nothing there, Inspector!' Kynsard smiled. 'Income derived from a trust created by her father's Will, in favour of his wife

and daughter. The only person to profit by her death is her mother—who gets the eight hundred a year. I doubt whether my wife has made a Will. If she has, it can only cover cash in her current account and her personal belongings—clothes, gadgets, and pictures.'

'Valuable pictures?'

'No. Bought as a means of helping her hard-up artist friends. She's always trotting them round to obscure exhibitions. The back of my car is loaded with alleged masterpieces at the moment.'

'Artists!' exclaimed Turley, as if he had uncovered something, 'Any extra-special artist friend?'

'Not among the men.' Again Kynsard's smile smoothed a rough passage. 'I think I know how to go on from there. Our marriage was not a success. But we both made the best of it. We were polite and considerate—at least, she was, and I hope I was.'

'You never discussed divorce?'

'In effect, no. Neither of us wanted somebody else—I'm too busy for gallivanting. In fact, it was the volume of work I have to get through that was partly to blame. I'd no time to afford her reasonable companionship.'

'So she spent a good deal of time—not in your society?'

'Of course! But she always told me where she had been—and always gave all the details. She was—vivacious and rather

voluble. I'm convinced there was no man in her life. She had a special woman friend. Nearly all her chatter was about this friend.'

'That woman might be useful. Can I have her name and address?'

'I don't know it. Barbara—that's my wife's name—had the common trick of spattering her conversation with first names. "I was just leaving the art school with Madge when Leonard ran after us"—that kind of thing! I never knew who was who—and I never cared enough to inquire. In the jumble of first names, one stands out through constant repetition. The name of Betsy. That was the special friend.'

Elizabeth—Betsy. Charles Dickens. Betsy Trotwood. The phony name. Turley was groping for the link.

'If you can remember anything at all about Betsy that would help us to pick her up—?'

'Wait a minute! There's some damn silly key-word!' Kynsard stroked his chin, then exploded: 'Titania! Titania Underwear! About three months ago my wife showed me—in one of those glossy women's weeklies—an advertisement photo of the usual pretty girl, grinning in cami-knicks, or whatever they call 'em at the moment. She said the girl was Betsy and asked me if I didn't think they were like each other—which I didn't. Presumably, the Titania people will be able to help.'

'That's fine, Mr Kynsard!' Turley made a note. 'This girl is a professional model, then?'

'She may be. But I rather fancy she's an artist who occasionally does that sort of thing for pocket-money. She probably has other resources. For instance, she has a car—a small Morris saloon. Frequently lent it to Barbara, as I more or less monopolize our Chrysler. I've seen the Morris two or three times in our garage when Barbara had borrowed it.'

'As far as you know, had your wife an appointment with Betsy yesterday?'

'Not to my knowledge.'

The details of the car, reflected Turley, would be published in the later editions.

'Mr Kynsard, the deceased was found in a Morris saloon owned by Elizabeth Trotwood.'

'Trotwood!' echoed Kynsard. '"Betsy Trotwood"! It sounds as if she'd been reading Dickens. Not that it matters. I suppose it must be the same Betsy. Does she admit knowing my wife?'

'We haven't had time to contact her.'

Turley's intuition warned him to break off, now that the link had been dropped into his hand. The caretaker at Cranebrook Mansions had given a description which tallied with that of Barbara Kynsard. This part of the case, he thought, was going to be easy.

That the girls were one and the same was at least a working hypothesis. Kynsard knew it, or did not know it. If he did know it, his pretence of ignorance would strongly suggest his

guilt. No more questions until more facts had been gathered elsewhere.

Turley was making the routine speech of thanks for helpful information, when Kynsard interrupted.

'I can give you a small point relevant to my wife's movements—though technically it's hearsay. Before I came here, Mrs Henson—that's our cook-general—told me that my wife must have left the house in a very simple house-dress and wearing indoor shoes. No hat or coat. No bag.'

Turley was impressed.

'That was before ten, or your maid would have met her? What was the simple house-dress like?'

'I don't know.' Kynsard's tone was bitter. 'I have absolutely no eye for women's dress.'

As Kynsard left the room, young Rawlings appeared in the doorway.

'Plenty for you, Rawlings. Get hold of the man who shared that flat in Cranebrook Mansions: we want to swop yarns with him. And check this tale with Blainley's restaurant in the Strand.' He gave details.

'Very good, sir. There's a queer customer in with the super. Said he might be able to help us, but he'd talk only to the inspector in charge. He looks as if he'd got something.'

A minute later Turley heard footsteps and a rasping,

cackling laugh in the corridor. The local superintendent opened the door for a shortish, tubby, middle-aged man. His clothes were expensive, as was his attaché-case, but the effect of gentility was negatived by a diamond ring.

'Luck's in! It's Detective Inspector Turley!' he exclaimed, on a laugh. 'Saw you just after you'd given your evidence in the Gibbern job.'

'What is your name?' asked Turley.

The other turned round, noted that the local superintendent had gone and that the door was shut.

'I read about this little affair in the noon editions. So's not to waste your time and mine—that car she was found in! Is it a Morris saloon, registered number DV 2165?'

'It is,' said Turley. 'I must have your name.'

'Girl under thirty, auburn hair—sort of greeny eyes—about an inch taller than me? Let me finish. Got a small scar about here?' He pointed to the beginning of the outward curve of his person.

'Correct. Sit down, please, and tell me your name.'

'I'll tell you more than my name—which is Flanch, Samuel, fruit and vegetable wholesaler, Covent Garden. I'll tell you *her* name—Elizabeth Trotwood—called her Betsy. You're wondering why I'm walking into trouble like this. I'm not such a mug as to keep anything back when you boys mean business. *Ha-ha!*'

The laugh was a nervous affectation. Turley recognized the type—crude, inclined to flashiness of dress and manner, but commercially respectable.

'Keep going, Mr Flanch,' he prompted.

'That poor kid was my only bit o' fun, Inspector, and I don't want the missis to know. Get me?'

'Queering your pitch wouldn't help us.'

'S'right! I ran a flat for her—in Cranebrook Mansions, West Central. Bought her that car. Paid this bill only yesterday for her clo'es . . .' He smacked down a receipted bill. 'Cor, I shall miss her! She was a good sort, Inspector, apart from—well, she was a good sort.'

'Wait a minute!' Turley had rung his bell.

'Rawlings, this gentleman is Mr Flanch, who shares the flat in Cranebrook Mansions. Take him to see if he can identify the body. Then p'raps you'll come back here, Mr Flanch.'

3

Some five minutes later Rawlings returned.

'He identified her as Trotwood, sir. Took him a minute or two, but he was in no doubt about it.'

'Well, where is he?' demanded Turley.

'He was a bit flattened out. Broke down outside the mortuary—said he must step across the road and have one before he could tackle you, sir.'

After a couple of double brandies, Samuel Flanch was ready to face his ordeal. His anxiety now seemed to be focused on his wife.

'You think I've been deceiving my wife, Inspector, and you're quite right, if you look at it the wrong way. But it was for her own good. She's an invalid and it would be bad for her health if she thought I'd been telling her lies. Now, I've come forward of my own free will to save you trouble. And one good turn deserves another, eh?'

Turley reassured him and put the usual questions.

'I last saw Betsy three nights ago—Monday, that was. We had a bit of a row—that's why I haven't seen her since, though I was going to make it up. Showed you that bill, didn't I?'

'What was the row about?'

'You're muddling me, Inspector, if you don't mind me saying so. Better take things in their proper order.' He opened his dispatch-case. 'Look here. I popped in at that flat this morning before I came on here—thought this might be wanted.'

He produced a women's weekly magazine, folded back at a full-page advertisement in colour.

Turley gazed at an attractive young woman in Titania underwear.

'That's Betsy! Good-lookin' kid, eh? And mind you, you don't want to go thinking things just because she's dressed like that—they're only sort of stage clothes, if you look at it the right way. These girls are skilled workers and there's no hanky-panky about the job.'

'You were going to tell me why you quarrelled.'

'I'm telling you. Those clo'es! In those studios, it's one thing. What I didn't like was, she went and ordered herself a couple o' sets same as she's wearing in that picture. It didn't seem decent to me, and I told her so. Yesterday, I thought p'raps I was being a bit pernicketty, so I paid the bill and meant to give her the receipt last night.

'I got to the flat about six. She never turned up. I was riled because I had to wait alone in the flat till eleven. It was no good going home earlier. You see, I'd told my missis—'

'Quite so! Had Betsy gone out in the Morris?'

'Must of! I looked in at the Tythrop Garage this morning, before I came on here. Car wasn't in its place. I reckoned there was just the chance she might have lent it to a particular friend of hers—a girl, I mean—who used to borrow it, off and on.'

'Who was the friend?'

'Last kind of friend for a kid like her you'd think of! Class! A lady! Wife of a well-known lawyer an' all! I don't hold with mentionin' names, only you're bound to find out. I gotter think of myself in this mess.' Flanch lowered his voice. 'Mrs Arthur Kynsard—Barbara, they call her. How those two came to be friends—search me!'

Turley nodded. Everything seemed to be adding up. In each phase of her double life, the girl referred to her other self as her 'friend'.

'Did Betsy tell you that, Mr Flanch, or did you find it out for yourself?'

'Both! She told me, but I thought she was swanking. One day, she showed me one o' those toff's papers. "Here you are, Sam," she says. "Don't you think she's like me? Everybody takes us for sisters", she says.'

'Were they alike?' asked Turley.

'Not so's you'd notice. You can see for yourself, if you'll give me a minute.' He turned back to the attaché-case and this time produced the *Illustrated London News*.

Turley was shown a three-inch flashlight photograph of a woman in furs beside a man in evening dress. *Mr and Mrs Arthur Kynsard were among the guests of the management at the re-opening of the Cosmopolitan Theatre.*

Turley looked again at the Titania advertisement in the women's magazine. The lusciousness of the coloured display was distorting. He covered the cami-knicks with blotting paper

and concentrated on the head.

'There's a resemblance, all right,' he muttered.

'It was her husband that interested me,' said Flanch. 'You see, a group of us thought we'd have a smack at the railway over some charges they'd clapped on us. He appeared for the railway. Shall I forget him! After he'd done banging at me, I had to step out and have a couple.'

Turley opened on another line.

'Do you know whether Trotwood was her real name?'

'I didn't bother myself or her with that kind o' question. Why should I care? Come to that, I shouldn't wonder if it turned out she'd got a husband tucked away somewhere.'

'Would it surprise you, Mr Flanch, if I were to tell you that Betsy Trotwood and Mrs Barbara Kynsard were one and the same person?'

'Surprise me!' A rich, throaty laugh rumbled round the room. 'It wouldn't surprise me, because I'd know you were talking through your hat—begging your pardon—I'd know you were mistaken in your supposition. Why, look at those photos! You can say they'd be mistaken for sisters, but that's only girl's chatter. Anyone could tell they're not the same girl. Style, for one thing. You can't see that Mrs Kynsard standing up in front of a lot of all-sorts to be photographed in her whatsernames.'

Turley could draw no immediate conclusion from the photographs.

'Mr Flanch! You will read in the later editions that, before you came into this room, Mr Kynsard identified the body as that of his wife.'

'*Did* he!' Samuel Flanch lolled back in his chair, contorting his features in profound bewilderment. When he spoke, it was Turley's turn to be surprised.

'Well, he can have her! I gotter forget poor Betsy, and that's as good a way as any. Besides, it lets me out.'

Turley was not satisfied.

'Are you ready to believe that this girl you knew as Betsy must have been Mrs Kynsard—leading a double life?'

'I gotter think o' my missus now!' ejaculated Flanch. 'I came here of my own free will to help you out. And now you tell me it's all set without me butting in.' He repeated: 'That lets me out.'

'It doesn't let you out!' snapped Turley. 'We don't care who she is, except in so far as it helps us to find who killed her. When I first suggested to you that she might be Kynsard's wife, you laughed. How did you know I was talking through my hat? —that was what you said.'

'And I apologized for being so rude, if you remember,' evaded Flanch. 'I was the one who was talking through his hat.' He bounced to his feet. 'I'm going to hop it, Inspector, if you've no objection to same. If that gentleman says she's his wife, it's okay by me. What's the good o' me kicking up a lot o' dust saying I don't think she is?'

'One minute! Was Betsy a professional model?'

'I shouldn't say she was a regular professional. There was that one firm that used to photograph her—and that wasn't every week.' He added: 'I've got an idea she used to sell artists' pictures on commission—or try to. One time, the Morris was bung full o' such pictures, and she told me she was helping her friend Barbara to sell them—or exhibit them or something. Looney pictures, mostly! There's one in the bedroom now, standing against the wall. Girl's head with snakes coming out of it. Gives me the creeps.'

'Was she in a job?'

'Shouldn't think so. I wouldn't call her greedy, but she did cost a bit. Never had any cash of her own.' He added: 'I knew her nature, but I didn't know much else about her, nor where she came from—sort of posh orphanage, maybe. We'd meet mostly at the flat—go out for dinner—have a day together in the country sometimes. She was a pally sort.'

Turley had finished with Flanch for the moment. He made a few inquiries of the local superintendent, then called Rawlings.

'Cami-knicks! Panties! Step-ins! You wouldn't know what I mean, but the Titania Company will show you. Look at this ad. That's Trotwood, that was! Pick up anything you can from Titania about her. Ask 'em to lend us the original photographs. If there's one of her decently dressed, so much the better. Try *Illustrated London News* for the original of this photo of the Kynsards. Ask the Tythrop Garage, near the flat, for all they can give you about the Morris.'

'I'll go myself, sir.'

'You won't. There's a bit o' diplomacy waiting for you. Get this. Deceased is probably Kynsard's wife and Flanch's mistress. Same girl. But Flanch doesn't believe she was Kynsard's wife. He's pretending he does believe it, because he's scared stiff his wife will find out about the girl and he wants to step out of the case.

'You'll say—or you ought to—that what Flanch does or doesn't believe doesn't matter. Quite right, boy! But it is just possible they're not the same girl, so we've got to check.'

'Meaning that Kynsard or Flanch might have given a phony identification, sir?'

'It doesn't have to be phony. May have been made in good faith. But it's odds on their being the same girl. If Betsy and Barbara are not one, you have two girls looking much alike, each having a scar on the tummy made by two stitches—at exactly the same spot. All the same, it's short of absolute certainty.

'Assuming there are two girls like each other—and remembering that the doctor admitted he had tinkered the face up a bit—Kynsard may have suggested to himself that it was his wife. He came here in an agitated state, expecting to find his wife. So we'll have an independent identification. The Kynsard girl's mother—Mrs Tremman. She may be at Kynsard's house. I want you to go personally, smooth her over and get her to come here and identify.'

4

Arthur Kynsard lived in a house that had been built for his great-grandfather. It had the advantages and drawbacks of a mid-Victorian mansion. Though barely four miles from Buckingham Palace, it stood in its own acre, with outbuildings which had formerly housed three horses, two carriages, and a coachman with wife and family. As it was almost impossible to obtain a gardener, the garden created the illusion of extreme poverty. Rambler roses blocked the paths to the one-time tennis and croquet lawns, now a tangle of matted grass and seeding thistles. Kynsard had to content himself with keeping the carriageway clear of brambles.

Returning from the police station, Kynsard drove in by the rear gate, opening on what had been a lane in 1870, had become a side street, and now, through bombing, again bore the semblance of a lane.

Mrs Tremman, his mother-in-law, sat in the bow window of the drawing-room, watching the open gate of the miniature drive.

Margaret Tremman was a very young fifty—could still carry auburn hair. She was clever with dress. In recent years, enforced exercise in the form of housework had given her flesh a firmness it had lacked in the thirties. She had an intuitive

grace of body which enabled all but very young and very old men to ignore her age.

In temperament, she was of the type that brought vitality to the drawing-room in the days of middle-class ascendancy. As a mother, she had been guilty of all those common failures which no one notices except the child. Deeply, if unconsciously, jealous of Barbara, even at school age, she had systematically kept the girl younger than her years.

As a mother-in-law, she had been a success. Kynsard thought her decorative and amiable. He approved of her, being unaware that she fancied he was attracted to her.

Kynsard, entering the house through the kitchen quarters, was in the drawing-room before Mrs Tremman knew he had arrived.

Her eyes searched his face. The woodenness she found there told her the essential truth.

'She's dead, Arthur?'

He took her hand, slender like Barbara's, enveloped it.

'I won't try to break it gently—you aren't that sort,' he said. 'Barbara has been killed.' He added enough detail to head off irrelevant questions.

'Oh! Like that awful case everybody was talking about! Gibbern! They ought not to be allowed to print such things.'

She prattled while she tried to grasp that her daughter had

been murdered. Presently she looked up at him.

'You knew!' she exclaimed.

He shrugged, said nothing.

'You knew this morning. Before you went to the police station—before the police rang up.'

'Yes. I think I knew even before that. Last night, while I was trying to go to sleep, I had the feeling that it had happened.'

Mrs Tremman said it was a terrible shock. She said everything which she believed she ought to say. She told a meandering anecdote bearing on telepathy.

'But it's funny you should get a thought-wave from her. You and poor Barbara weren't very close, were you!'

'No! It wasn't a complete success, Margaret.'

'Poor boy! I guessed it, of course. I was always grateful for your loyalty to her, Arthur.'

She waited in vain for him to say what a good mother she had been. She sighed and cried a little, albeit gracefully. She reminded herself of her many kindnesses to her daughter and of her forbearance. Youth was charming but exasperating. It would be hypocritical to deny that poor Barbara had been difficult. As a mother, she had been robbed of her natural authority when her husband tied up the property in that ridiculous trust. He had believed that it would be Barbara who would eventually enjoy the double income. Well, he was

wrong!

'This is the police, by the look of it,' said Kynsard as a car turned into the drive. 'They'll probably keep calling here at all hours. I'll see them in the dining-room.'

'If they should want me, you can tell them I'm not being hysterical,' she said.

'You're being very brave. I always knew you would be if anything happened.'

He really was a very dear boy, she thought, as he left the room. And so clever, with a successful career stretching before him. It was good to reflect that her brother had been of great help to Arthur by briefing him so often for the Railway. True that her brother had said that Arthur was a lucky find. But the fact remained that she herself—indirectly—had brought him the most lucrative part of his practice. She stood in front of the massive Victorian overmantel and adjusted her make-up, resolving that she would not cry again. She had barely finished when Kynsard returned.

'I say, Margaret—I'm awf'lly sorry—but the police want you to go with them to identify her.'

'I don't mind. I'm living on my nerves, I suppose. Anyhow, I intended to see her. Don't look so worried, dear.'

'It's worse than you think. I won't have them taking you there unprepared.' He put both hands on her shoulders. 'Barbara's face was injured—there's a slight distortion which might give you a shock.'

'You were silly enough to say just now that I'm a brave woman. I'm not really, but I have a certain self-control. I promise you I won't break down or anything.'

'There's more in it than that. The distortion—I was in some doubt myself for a few seconds. Of course, I satisfied myself—completely and absolutely—that it was Barbara.'

'I shall be able to do the same.'

'Yes, but—there's something I must tell you which has been kept from you. Do you remember, in our first year, you gave her for her birthday a magnificent set of scissors in a crocodile case?'

'I remember, certainly! But what *are* you leading up to, Arthur?'

'When we went down to Devonshire that year she took the scissors with her.'

'Why? She wouldn't want them on holiday.'

'Never mind—she took them. And she had an accident. Ran the point of one of them into her chest—look at me—about where I'm pointing. There was a doctor staying in the hotel. He put stitches in, and by the time we came back to Town it was more or less all over.'

'But why did you have to make a mystery of it? I've never known poor Barbara suffer in silence.'

'She said you'd be upset, because the scissors had been your

gift. Some superstition about scissors and knives bringing bad luck.'

'What utter nonsense! She knew I wasn't superstitious—in that way!'

'I didn't go into that. The point is that the scar remains. And if the police ask you for identifying marks on the body it is better you should know. Otherwise—'

He broke off.

'Otherwise?' she asked.

'Otherwise, Margaret, the police may ask you to make a second visit, to make sure—and start a debate about it on the spot—and that, my dear, would tear your nerves to ribbons and make you ill.'

A smile spread from her lips to her eyes and enveloped him.

'Dear Arthur! You do take such care of me! But you're simply not to worry about me. I'll remember what you've said. Are you coming with me?'

'I think you'd better go with them. The Chrysler is still bunged up with those pictures. I'll clear them out now. Pick you up at the police station.'

A minute later she came back into the room.

'They're not quite ready to start. That young detective is talking to Mrs Henson. I wonder what he's bothering her about

—she'll give notice if we aren't all very careful. He asked her to take him upstairs!'

'Only checking up. The police check every statement you make. Be careful not to give them any more information than they ask. For instance, that point about the scissors! You can volunteer that statement, because it's part of the identification. But if you add—unasked—that you actually got the information from me, they'll come back to me to re-check—then back to you.'

'You're over-anxious, Arthur,' she said. She added, talking partly to herself: 'I can't think why Barbara didn't want me to know. It can't have been for the reason she gave you.'

Kynsard stayed with her until she left in the police car. On his way to the garage, he was stopped in the hall by Mrs Henson, the cook-general, a prim, embittered widow of thirty.

'Is Mrs Tremman going to stay here, sir?' The question veiled a threat.

'Certainly not! She'll leave after lunch. I suppose you can put up something for us—it needn't be anything special?'

'Yes, sir. I've found the ration books.' She lowered her voice. 'Have they caught the man yet?'

'No. But they seem to think they will. As I daresay you know, the car has been traced to a friend. A Miss Betsy Trotwood. I've never met her myself, though I believe she has been here in my absence. Do you know anything about her?'

'I've never seen her. But Mrs Kynsard often mentioned her —she used to gossip a good deal about where she was going and who was coming to see her. That young detective asked me about her and I told him what I've told you . . . *Ooh!*'

'Thought of something, Mrs Henson?'

'Day before yesterday we were bringing down those pictures —same as you've got in the car now, sir. And Mrs Kynsard said: "Before I forget, I must tell Betsy about George's —'Methoosah'" it sounded like, meaning one of those pictures. And when I came down to the hall I heard her on the telephone saying you were taking some pictures in the Chrysler and she said: "In that case, you'd better bring the Methoosah here, and they can all go in together".'

Kynsard nodded. It was the way Barbara talked. Mrs Henson had unconsciously imitated her.

'If the police ask you again, it would be as well to mention that you heard Mrs Kynsard speaking on the phone to Miss Trotwood. After lunch, when Mrs Tremman has gone, I'd be glad if you'd help me bring those pictures in. I'll stack them in the garage now. I must hurry or I shall keep Mrs Tremman waiting at the police station.'

5

After lunch, Margaret Tremman was in no hurry to go home: they adjourned to the drawing-room—cosy in spite of its size and its jumble of periods. Arthur Kynsard had been unable to do anything to the house. Some of the furniture bought by his great-grandfather had survived better than the Edwardian additions, which seemed flimsy and pretentious in the era of austerity.

Since returning from the police station, they had not spoken of Barbara. Margaret was intrigued by Arthur's demeanour. Was he grieving at all, she wondered.

'We are holding ourselves in—that will create a complex,' she said. 'Don't you want to know how I got on at the police station?'

'If you're sure you feel like talking about it,' he invited.

'The police were very gentle and sympathetic. But they did ask one or two irritating questions, and I was glad you had told me about the scissors. Thank heavens that part of it is finished!'

'But it isn't. If they don't find the man in a few hours, they will trace Barbara's own movements as far back as they can, interview all her friends—'

'That's what I'm afraid of. It was all a little awkward. They asked me if I knew a friend of hers called Betsy Trotwood. In spite of everything, I nearly laughed. I don't suppose the police read Dickens.'

'She's real! Dickens took his names from London shop-fronts. You'll find them nearly all in the telephone book today.'

'Arthur, did you ever meet Barbara's Betsy Trotwood?'

'I never actually met her.'

'Nor heard her voice? Nor saw her handwriting? Nor met anybody who knew her?'

'True, but irrelevant.'

'You know I'm never irrelevant! When Barbara was a little girl and had been naughty, she never denied outright what she had done. She always said "Betsy" had done it. An imaginary projection of herself. It was Betsy who broke things and lost things. Betsy who stole the jam. Not that she ever did really steal jam—children didn't before the war—but you know what I mean.'

'The Betsy you're talking about', said Kynsard, 'never had any toys of her own. *This* Betsy has a Morris saloon, which Barbara used to borrow. It's been in the garage here more than once. It was registered to Elizabeth Trotwood. It was the car in which Barbara was found. Mrs Henson believes she heard Barbara speaking to Betsy on the telephone.'

Margaret thought it over.

'Betsy did have toys—the toys Barbara was tired of. And Barbara could be heard talking to Betsy.'

'You're on the wrong line, my dear,' said Kynsard. 'I've

never seen the Trotwood girl, but I can show you a photo of her.' He went to the bamboo paper-rack—a survival from the nineties—rummaged at the back of it, then laid an out-of-date weekly before her, showing a full-page advertisement in colour.

'Titania! I wear that myself. But what—is *this* the girl?—the model?'

'That is the real Betsy Trotwood.'

Margaret looked more closely at the photograph, then laughed.

'Well, old boy, that seems to me to prove that I'm right, not you!'

Kynsard glared at her in bewilderment.

'If you look at that photo closely,' she explained, 'you'll see that this girl is remarkably like Barbara herself. The nose is not quite the same. And this girl's teeth are a wee bit more prominent. And the auburn is redder than Barbara's, but that may be the colour printing. I daresay you know, by the way, that Barbara tinted—the natural colour faded when she was twenty-three.'

His fixed glare disconcerted her.

'I mean'—Margaret tapped the advertisement page—'this is a real young woman, of course! But I don't suppose for a moment that her name is Betsy—still less Betsy Trotwood. And I don't suppose Barbara had ever seen her, except in this

advertisement.'

He turned his back on her and paced the room.

'Have you forgotten', he demanded, 'that Elizabeth Trotwood is registered as the owner of the car? It's a futile discussion. The police will look up that girl—'

'And find she was Barbara—Barbara making her dream life partly real, identifying herself with an unknown girl physically like her. Arthur, we're being rather absurd about this. I want to tell you something about yourself which I'm afraid you won't like very much. May I?'

'Go ahead.'

'You don't want to believe that this Betsy Trotwood business was a waking fantasy, because you shrink from admitting to yourself that poor Barbara was just a little bit mentally unbalanced. Her father was a pronounced eccentric—as I found to my cost.'

'Well, I'm damned!'

'I don't mind your being damned, dear boy, but I do mind your being offended.'

'I'm not offended!' He gave a sharp laugh. 'You've got hold of the butt end of a truth the wrong side up. I *did* think she was insane. But I've known for two years that she was not.'

'How could you be sure?'

'I had her examined. She didn't mention it to you, because she didn't know.' With calculated effect, he continued: 'Did she tell you about Lady Maenton and the mechanical mouse?'

'I didn't know you knew the Maentons.'

'We don't—*now*! Your brother very decently introduced us. Maenton was likely to be useful to me. We got them to a cocktail party, here. Barbara was at her best—witty and gay and looking lovely. Lady Maenton was sitting where you are. I was over there. I heard some chatter about mice. A minute later there came a shriek from Lady Maenton. Barbara had loosed a toy mouse—a thing that goes by clockwork, runs round in a circle. And Barbara was roaring with laughter—expecting everybody else to laugh with her.'

'Oh, Arthur, I'm so sorry!' Margaret Tremman was profoundly shocked.

'There had been one or two practical jokes before we were married. I was—well—puzzled. On our honeymoon she played some childish trick with my shaving tackle. Three months after we got back here, the mouse episode occurred. I was more alarmed than angry.

'In our first year, this nursery-age joking became a feature of our life. She used to buy mechanical contraptions at a toy shop—things that unexpectedly squeaked or popped or squirted water. I used to lose my temper sometimes. A day or two after we'd made it up, something would go pop in the bathroom—or when I opened my brief-bag in chambers there'd be some jack-in-the-box effect. And we had to laugh about it when I came

home in the evening.

'When she had flu—you remember?—we'd been married two years then—I conspired with old Dr Watkins to call in Sir William Turvey, pretending he was a gynaecologist. He came twice. Put her through his hoop—me, as well—made me tell him all I could about her.'

'Did he ask about her heredity?'

'Not exactly. Home influence.'

'I hope you gave me a good character?'

'He told me that she was as sane as he and I. He explained that nearly every adult has layers of juvenilism. He instanced middle-aged men who were always hanging round their old school—intelligent women who secretly dress dolls and play with them. There was no treatment. The only action to be taken was to warn her not to make a fool of herself to anyone but me.

'I duly warned her. She didn't take it seriously—thought I was being "stuffy". That meant I couldn't let her loose among professional connexions. We had to remodel our habits. That was the beginning of the estrangement. She joined an art school—made her own circle of friends—including Betsy.'

'Including Betsy!' echoed Margaret, with a tolerant smile. 'Did she stop the practical jokes at home?'

'Yes. Oddly enough, I missed them. They were damned irritating, but they did show that she was happy. There was only one more—about three months ago—and then, like a fool,

I lost my temper over it.'

'She told me,' put in Margaret. 'You were absorbed in reading that awful Gibbern case. And she got herself up in your wig and gown—'

His thoughts slid away. It was the wig-and-gown joke that had given him, to his own astonishment, an impulse to murder his wife.

For a moment he had shocked himself. Then he laughed it off. The murder impulse was probably felt by thousands of decent persons of both sexes who never did anything to express the impulse in action. Why, he himself had once felt how pleasant it would be to murder an ill-tempered judge who had bullied him! And one of the waiters at Blainley's! And now and again Mrs Henson! Occasionally some non-criminal did turn the impulse into action. Some thirty or forty persons a year in the whole country. Gibbern had been one of those.

But Gibbern was an ass—an honest ass who had committed himself to lying and couldn't put the lies over. A sensible man would stage his murder so that he need tell no lies. He would build the murder into his own routine.

In the days that followed, he pursued the idea as an idle exercise. In the practice of murder, there were two main methods. The first was to conceal the body. The austerity era made this easier than it used to be. On the fringe of London there were still a number of bomb-shattered houses, factories, and other buildings which had not been cleared—could not be cleared for yet another five years or more.

There was, for instance, the wreckage of that cider factory—with a flooded basement—which he had often noticed when driving to Rubington, where Barbara's mother lived.

But that method would not be useful to a husband who wished to murder his wife. If the concealment were successful, he would eventually have to apply for leave to presume death. Moreover, concealing the body was inartistic as well as dangerous. It fell into the category of the unplanned murder—at best, only to be used as a desperate device if something should go wrong with the plan.

Gibbern's idea was sound. Make no attempt to conceal the body. Let it be found—and have your tale ready.

The exercise developed into a work of art, constructed of common sense and an exact knowledge of the rules of evidence. He soon perceived that to have a tale ready would merely be to repeat Gibbern's mistake.

There must be no tale at all. No statement of fact that could not be proved. No theory of the crime.

Gibbern had been unable to distinguish between suspicion—which automatically falls on a husband—and evidence. He had been unable to endure being suspected and had tried to dispel suspicion by explanation. It was the job of the police, not of Gibbern, to explain how Mrs Gibbern came to be murdered.

Suppose he himself wanted to murder Barbara. The time to choose would be between breakfast and the arrival of Mrs Henson. And up to the moment of murder there must be no unusual behaviour, requiring special explanation. In placing

the body for discovery he would not say he had done this or that, which he had not done. He must be able to describe his own movements truthfully, simply omitting to mention the presence of a corpse.

That was the formula. Have only one thing to remember—don't mention the corpse.

Moreover, Gibbern had shown anxiety about his 'missing' wife too soon. He had failed to create circumstances justifying anxiety.

Now if, say, he had asked his wife to telephone for a table for lunch . . .

'. . . and although I'm her mother I never blinded myself to her faults. And I say her vanity would never have let her do it. Don't you think I'm right?'

Margaret Tremman had been prattling on—he had not the least idea what she was asking him.

'I don't follow how the vanity comes into it.'

'She would have been conspicuous in the street in that dress and in those awful old shoes. Mrs Henson says one toecap had come partly unstitched but Barbara wouldn't allow her to throw them away. I have the same weakness myself for an old pair. I wouldn't let you see me in my house-shoes for the world!'

'Hm! That's a riddle for the police!'

'If she was enticed out of the house like that, I can tell the

police that the murderer had no eye for women's clothes.'

'Good heavens!' He regarded her with what might have been admiration. 'That's very astute of you, Margaret.'

'Not very!' she protested. 'And, anyhow, it's nonsense! You couldn't "entice" Barbara to go out like that. She'd make you wait while she changed.'

Margaret was pleasantly aware that she had reclaimed his full attention.

'It's my opinion', she continued, 'that poor Barbara was killed in this house—or in the garden, it might be—before Mrs Henson arrived.'

For a time he said nothing. Then:

'Possibly you're right. For myself, I haven't the ghost of a theory of how it all happened.'

6

The local police were successful in the one assignment with which Detective Inspector Turley entrusted them—the movements of the Morris car in their own district.

The first three hours had yielded a series of negatives. A number of persons passing the spot at relevant times during the night had failed to notice a parked car in the blind alley. Suddenly the negatives coalesced into a positive. The last person who had *not* seen the Morris car was a constable whose spell of duty finished at eight in the morning.

He had 'taken up a position' at the mouth of the blind alley as the clocks were striking seven thirty. He had remained there until approximately a quarter to eight.

Therefore the Morris had been driven into the blind alley between seven forty-five—when the crowd was collecting outside the prison—and eight five, when Superintendent Halsdon had found it.

At five thirty Detective Inspector Turley held a conference in his room at Scotland Yard. Present were his two chief subordinates, Wallsend and Swilbey, both detective sergeants —also young Rawlings, who arrived just in time.

'We'll hear what you have to say first, Rawlings.'

'Morris car, sir. Taken out of the Tythrop Garage by Trotwood at twenty to seven last night. Mileage total then thirty-four thousand three twenty-six.'

'Huh! Why the blazes do they keep a log of their clients' mileage?'

'Not of every client. Only those who complain about the tyres supplied by the Tythrop. Trotwood complained recently. The day before yesterday they fitted two new ones. I

telephoned Superintendent Halsdon, who gave me the present reading—three thirty-three—approximately seven miles. I checked distances on the map. Tythrop to the prison, five miles. Tythrop to Kynsard's house, three miles. Kynsard's house to prison, four miles. All calculations to the nearest mile only. At that, the reading is consistent with the car having been driven from Tythrop to Kynsard's house and from there to the prison.'

'Good bit o' work, Rawlings!' Turley was inclined to be formal at these conferences. 'It doesn't make a lot of sense at present, but that's not your fault. Did the garage tell you how she was dressed?'

'The man said he didn't notice anything special about her dress, except the nylons. She had the ordinary woman's bag in one hand and an unframed picture in the other, which she put into the car.'

Turley made a note. Rawlings went on:

'Clothes and underclothes, sir. At Cranebrook Mansions I could find no trace of the house-frock nor of the old house-shoes in which Mrs Kynsard is believed to have left home before ten o'clock.'

'I was at the flat when he came,' put in Wallsend. 'Helped him search. They certainly weren't there.'

'That ticks that off,' said Turley. 'Mrs Kynsard didn't go to the flat and change.'

'Shoes same size,' continued Rawlings. 'One pair identical—

in lizard skin with the back part of the shoe cut wedge-shape. Other clothing—two walking-suits, one pinafore frock, two evening dresses. Coney-skin coat. Underwear, night-dresses, shoes, and stockings, which I have listed. In a cardboard box with Titania trade markings I found one—"set" I think they call it, sir—similar to that shown in the advertisement.'

'That links on,' said Turley. 'Flanch said she had bought two sets. Maybe she was wearing the other set.'

'A point about the Titania line, sir. When I was at Kynsard's house this morning I got the servant to take me to Mrs Kynsard's room. There was no factory stuff there. The underclothes were art-and-crafty. The girl told me that Mrs Kynsard had them hand-made by sort of artist people. Very fine work it was.'

'Nothing in that!' said Turley. 'The girl was running two personalities. Art-and-craft for Kynsard—glamour for Flanch. What about you, Wallsend?'

'Not my lucky day, sir!' Wallsend was a temperamentally gloomy man who would report his own successes as if they were failures. 'It's a two-roomed flat with bathroom and kitchenette. Clean and well kept. I got nothing out of it. Not even a bit o' the girl's handwriting. The caretaker hadn't seen her for ten days. He's not a porter—lives with his wife in a basement flat, not on Trotwood's staircase, either. He doesn't see the tenants except by chance or when there's some complaint.'

Turley turned up the notes on his interview with Flanch.

'"Girl's head with snakes in bedroom"?' he read aloud.

'Snakes in the bedroom, sir?'

'The chief means a picture,' cut in Swilbey. 'I've seen that one, sir. Got it in my report.' Presently Swilbey was explaining: 'I've been working on the Morris. A few women's things in the dash-boot—lipstick and the rest of it. Checked with Kynsard's maid. Same lipstick. Galley proofs of the catalogue of an art exhibition. Seven items have underline saying "lent by Mrs Arthur Kynsard".

'Now there were a lot o' pictures in Kynsard's Chrysler yesterday. He pitched them out of the car at lunchtime today, and in the afternoon the maid helped him carry them back to the house—they're not heavy but they're awkward to carry. They were stacked up in the morning-room. I counted 'em. There were eight, not seven. And one o' them was a girl's head with hair looking like snakes.'

'Let's see those catalogue proofs,' said Turley. He glanced down the long strips, without immediate result.

'What about trying under "Medusa", sir?' suggested Rawlings.

'Ah! Here we are. "Medusa. Artist: George Penton". We'll get that picture and ask Flanch if it's the one he saw in Betsy's bedroom.

'You, Rawlings, remind that garage man that the girl was carrying a picture and ask him if he noticed any snakes—only don't put it that way. If that girl was carrying those snakes at

that time it looks as if she went straight to Kynsard's house. I'll take care of that end myself. Keep going, Swilbey.'

'Continuing the Morris, sir,' resumed Swilbey. From a pocket case he produced a theatre ticket issued by an agency—a stall for the matinee next Saturday at the Parnassus Music Hall. 'That was on the floor by the driving seat, might have dropped out of the dash-boot. I checked at the agency. Two stalls were ordered on the phone yesterday by Flanch and were delivered at his warehouse at approximately three fifteen. The warehouse was shut. Flanch was standing outside waiting for the messenger. As a rule, the agency would issue the two seats on one ticket. Flanch asked 'em to make out two tickets.'

'Three fifteen!' echoed Turley. 'Flanch says he didn't see the girl yesterday. Looks like we're getting a move on.'

'Maybe, sir. Flanch couldn't have sent her that ticket by post—it couldn't have reached her before she took the Morris out at six forty. He might have sent a messenger—I haven't seen him about it—thought I'd better report first. I've sent a man to find out Flanch's office hours.'

'Right! You can see Flanch about it. Don't frighten him.' Turley planted his elbows on the notes and dossiers and leant over his table.

'Now, boys, we have enough to get started. We'll take the identification first. So far, the photographs have carried us nowhere. I sent 'em to the experts, all lumped together. The Titania one; the one of Mr and Mrs Kynsard together; two cabinet photos of Mrs Kynsard from her house; and the death

photos. I asked the experts to say whether the photographs were of three girls, of two girls, or of one girl. Opinion is about equally divided as to whether there are two girls or one girl. Only one expert said there were three girls. Another expert thought he saw some difference in the teeth. I'm having a dentist take a cast of the jaw and teeth of deceased.

'Fingerprints of corpse. None in Mrs Kynsard's bedroom. The housemaid, expecting the police, had cleaned up before we came. Two clear prints on the toilet things in the flat at Cranebrook Mansions. That's a clue that it's the same girl; but it's not evidence, because they are stated to have been friends. If that's true, Barbara—Mrs Kynsard—may have been to the flat at any time except when Flanch was there.

'Now, we've been paying too much attention to this question of one-girl-or-two. We're going to settle it in here, right away. Until further orders, you, Swilbey, will go ahead on the assumption that Barbara Kynsard and Betsy Trotwood are the same person. That means you'll concentrate on the Barbara line. Don't be frightened of that house-dress and those shoes. Barbara may have bought a new rig-out unknown to the maid.

'I want you, Wallsend, to work as if you *knew* there were two girls. Your first job is to find Trotwood—alive or dead. That means you'll be keeping a wide eye on Flanch, in close liaison with Swilbey. So far, Flanch has no alibi.

'Swilbey, you've got a deadline at six forty, when your Barbara Kynsard took the Morris from the Tythrop. She may have been killed a minute or so later. She may have been alive for another hour or so. That's the best the doctor can do for us.

'Now for Kynsard. He was in his house talking to his maid at six. Talking to his mother-in-law, Mrs Tremman, at seven. Mrs Tremman was with him until about midnight, when he drove her to her house in Rubington.

'Forward of the six-forty deadline, there's only the twenty minutes' gap—beginning six forty—in Kynsard's alibi—unless he's in conspiracy with Barbara's mother, which is obviously punk. If you can't trace the Morris from the Tythrop, you'll have to work back of the deadline.'

'That suits me, sir.' Swilbey chuckled. 'And as Flanch is an honorary husband, as you might say, it works out on the Gibbern model. Kynsard or Flanch. One of 'em faking a pervert murder.'

'Some of you boys ought to've been poets,' grinned Turley. 'I didn't say anything about Gibbern. Only, that Morris didn't travel very far. Never left the built-up area. Hardly gives a maniac a fair chance.'

7

'That lets me out!' repeated Samuel Flanch as he walked from the police station in search of a taxi. He repeated it several times in the hope of convincing himself. It was a great

pity that he couldn't make a yarn of it in his trade club. 'Hi, taxi!'

On the whole, the interview had run along the lines he had planned, until that extraordinary business about Betsy being Kynsard's wife. Might be a good thing—might really let him out. After all, it didn't matter what they called her. The inspector had not questioned any of his statements. Kynsard saying she was his wife didn't upset anything he had said about her as Betsy Trotwood.

Retrospectively, he listened to his own voice, talking to the inspector. The dress bill—yes; the time he went to the flat last night—the general circumstances of the flat and his relations with the girl—if the police checked up, it would come out a hundred per cent okay.

There was that bit about his missing her, about her being a good sort. No means of checking that sort of thing. He laughed so loudly that the driver glanced over his shoulder.

He became grave, almost wistful. Come to think of it, he *would* miss her. He had said she was a good sort: even that was true, in a way. And that she was pally. Funny how it happened sometimes that when you thought you were telling lies you were really telling the truth.

It was eighteen months, as near as made no matter, since he had picked her up outside that art place in Chelsea. Full of surprises from the first, she had been. And full of surprises to the last, if you cared to put it like that.

He had been surprised when she accepted his invitation to

come and have a bite at the Palais de Danse, surprised again when he found that she could hardly dance at all and so thought that he was very good.

When he kissed her, he guessed that she was an errant wife, a bit inclined to be ashamed of herself until you jollied her out of it. Lemonade was what she drank, except sometimes, when she would take all the gin you'd let her have, and then she'd be solemn as an owl and a bit of a nuisance. Meaning to say that she would only have a drink when she felt her nerve was failing.

The best-looking kid he had ever had to do with, and the jolliest, most times. There was something about her—made you sort of forget everything.

Never knew where she came from. Nor where she thought she was going to, until she told him—and that spoilt everything. He didn't think she was a Londoner. He judged by her speech, which was a mixture of Cockney and posh, with a bit of Scotch and maybe a splash of Irish—she had probably travelled about a bit and lived with different kinds of people.

For all he knew, she might have been a little queer in the head. That would account for the last fortnight, which had been a bit thick.

Those eighteen months had slipped by like winking. No more fun now! Why had he cried like that at the police station? Must have been in love with her in a sort of way. Cor, what an end to everything! There wouldn't even be anything to remember except the nightmare of the last fortnight, when she

had suddenly demanded that he should fix a divorce and marry her.

'What part of Covent Garden d'you want, sir?'

'This'll do.'

He crossed 'the Garden' from the end of Henrietta Street, took out his latchkey, and admitted himself to his one-room office. There were a few letters on the floor, which he picked up and put in a green canvas bag kept for that purpose. The room, like most of its kind, was sparsely fitted—gave no indication of the prosperity of its tenant. A writing-table, wall maps of railways: two telegraph boards—on which were pinned notices from the railways and the haulage companies.

He sat down at the table, took from a drawer a small notebook, with entries in pencil, and checked his figures. Presently his eye was caught by an envelope, creased, under the ornamental corncob that served as a paperweight. On the envelope was scrawled in his own handwriting *Me*. He stared at it, unable to remember anything about it.

The envelope bore the imprint of a theatre-ticket agency. Inside was a single ticket for a stall for the matinée at the Parnassus on Saturday.

He remembered now. They were to carry on as usual for a bit, while he explored the question of divorce and marriage. He had given her the other ticket, telling her that he expected to turn up late. She was to take a seat, and he would join her as soon as he could.

Shan't go by myself, he reflected. Give the ticket to somebody. No, that was the kind of thing that often led to a lot of trouble. He lit a match and burned envelope and ticket.

After half an hour with the notebook, he locked up and walked two hundred yards to his warehouse on the other side of Long Acre. It was a small affair, employing six hands and two male clerks. He opened his letters, none of which required individual attention and passed them to the senior clerk. The business, except for the buying, ran more or less automatically.

He went out to lunch, returning to the warehouse to keep an eye on things before closing at three o'clock. He was preparing to leave, when a man walked in whom he guessed to be from the Yard.

'Mr Flanch? I'm from the Yard. Shan't keep you a couple o' minutes. Check up, you know. You start early in your business, I believe?'

'This morning,' said Flanch, 'I got here about half past six, half an hour late, as I'd had ignition trouble. Bloke's mending it now. Tuesdays and Thursdays I'm here much earlier—generally about three. My business is rather specialized and I mostly know what's coming.'

'And you were here in the warehouse for some time?'

'No. Just looked in and went over to my office in the Garden. Part of the time I was in the market, buying.'

'Were you buying, for instance, between seven thirty and eight thirty?'

'No.' Flanch was uneasy. 'It's a bit of a job to remember when you tie it down like that. Part of the time I was in my office—don't remember any callers about then. I stepped over and had a bit o' breakfast at that place at the corner. I'm a regular there, though that won't help you much, as there are a good few others.'

'That's quite all right, Mr Flanch, and thanks very much.'

It was a pity, thought Flanch, that the police couldn't get it over in one sitting. Thanks very much and all that! Some men would find it getting on their nerves if there was going to be too much of it.

At three o'clock he abandoned his intention of going straight home. He went to the club and ordered tea, gossiped until the mid-afternoon editions arrived.

'Murder Maniac's Victim Identified.' 'Well Known Barrister's Wife.' 'Mystery Girl Missing.' Two papers republished the photo of Kynsard and his wife, from which a third, the *Echo*, had cut out Kynsard.

But Flanch's immediate interest was on the 'mystery girl'.

The police are anxious to get in touch with a glamorous photographer's model who has the Dickensian name of Betsy Trotwood. Miss Trotwood (picture back page) bears a striking physical resemblance to the murdered woman. This, coupled with the fact that they were known to each other and were on friendly terms, is believed to be of importance. Miss Trotwood is missing from her flat in Cranebrook Mansions, W.C., and so far all efforts to trace her have failed.

On the back page was the same photograph of Betsy 'by courtesy of Titania Ltd'. He grimaced. A strain of prudery

made him hate those photographs—even if the whatsernames were only a sort of stage-clothes.

He settled down to reading the accounts. They agreed as to the facts, which were meagre, but differed in the trimmings. All accepted the maniac theory. The *Echo* alone emphasized the 'macabre note' of the car having been parked at the prison wherein Gibbern was being hanged.

They had started an intensive search for Betsy. Well, he had known they would, as soon as the inspector showed he believed Kynsard's identification. That meant that his own courageous visit to the police station had been wasted. The police would keep on bobbing up at him, asking questions about her. Sooner or later Louie, his wife, would tumble to what was going on.

Funny, he thought, how his deep love for Louie hadn't been touched by his feeling for Betsy. The latter must have been, he supposed, simple lust with a bit o' soft stuff on top. He had blubbered like a kid outside the mortuary—because it came to him suddenly that Betsy had given him a lot of fun.

Poor Louie was nothing to look at now—had been physically non-existent for ten years, apart from her paralysis. And that, he told himself almost daily, was his fault.

The paralysis had resulted indirectly from a car smash, their first car. He himself had been publicly exonerated. Indisputably, the accident had been caused by the drunkard who had run into him. But Samuel Flanch believed that he would have been able to dodge the drunkard if he had not

himself 'had a couple' at the last stop.

He had escaped with a few scratches, but Louie was condemned to a pair of crutches for life. She had never reproached him because she believed what the judge had said when he sentenced the drunkard. He did not guess that she had found compensation in her own way. In fact, his gentleness and solicitude made her regard him as an ideal husband. He was aware only of a lively sense of guilt—of a hopeless indebtedness to his wife.

'I couldn't find anything wrong with your ignition, Mr Flanch. And your feed's all right, too. Sorry I'll have to charge you five bob for the examination.'

'That's all right, boy. These things happen. Why I remember once . . .'

He spun out the anecdote, having discovered an inexplicable reluctance to hurry home.

He had a pleasant, roomy house, with a well-kept garden, on the outskirts of Golders Green. With his prosperity he had not changed his point of view. Thus he was one of the tiny class in England which alone had no difficulty in getting servants and gardeners and the like. Nothing would induce him to regard his servants as anything but additional members of his family. He ate with them, quarrelled with them, and chaffed them, with complete spontaneity. Each side would have been shocked at the idea of giving or receiving notice.

Driving into the small garden garage was a close fit, and you had to wriggle out afterwards. He looked round for his wife,

then went into the house through the kitchen.

'Oh, there you are at last, Sam!' exclaimed Ella, his housemaid. 'Louie's been expecting you for an hour or more.'

'Couldn't get away. She ought to be sitting in the garden on a nice day like this.'

'Well, she isn't, that's all! She's in the little room.'

The little room was her particular sitting-room, but it contained an armchair for him.

'Couldn't get away before!' he breezed. He bent and kissed the prematurely wrinkled face. 'Wot cheer, me old china!'

She made no response. On her lap was the mid-afternoon edition of the *Echo*. Well, of course she would have read all about everything! For a gentle, mild woman, she had an astonishing interest in murder cases—liked discussing the details over and over again. But why was she looking so gloomy over this one?

He dropped into the armchair.

'Anything gone wrong, Louie?'

'I got something on my mind,' she answered.

Her hands were strong and deft. She turned herself in her chair, so that she could see the door. 'I don't want Ella to hear what I'm saying.'

This looked bad.

'Something on your mind, eh!' Samuel Flanch laughed immoderately. 'All right, then! Out with it.'

'I don't know how to out with it, and that's part of the trouble. Sam, I've been reading the paper.'

He felt his heart thumping, took out a cigarette but did nothing with it, fearing his hand might be trembling. These long silences were breaking his nerve.

'That maniac murder, d'you mean?'

She nodded.

'Well, old dear, what about it?'

She was looking out of the window.

'We don't often have to put things into words with each other, so it's difficult to begin,' she said. 'Right now, I'll say I've got nothing to complain of. You've been as good to me, and as kind, as a man can be to a woman. And I'd give up my life for you, Sam, and anything else that would do any good—and be glad in the bargain, if it helped you.'

'Look here, Louie, you're scaring me stiff! What's it all about?'

'I'm only asking you this, so that I can help you if you need help.' The *Echo* slid from her lap to the floor. She pointed down at it. 'Did you kill her, Sam?'

'Cor strike O'Reilly!' The laugh this time was a positive bellow. 'If that doesn't beat the foot-an'-hand! Fancy you going and asking me a thing like that!'

She looked at him hard. Under her gaze, he laughed again.

'It was the way you talked about Gibbern.' She was explaining, not apologizing. 'Every night from when they first had him up, and we were talking about it in here, you used to say he was a rabbit who lost his head. He'd got a good idea, you said, and he'd thrown it away because he was a rabbit. It was such a good idea, you said, that a man could do it all over again and still get away with it, if he wasn't a rabbit. And in the paper it says this murder *is* almost the same thing over again. And left up at the prison, too!'

So that was all! The cigarette was twisted and unsmokable. He took out another and lit up.

'Most people talk like that about a good murder,' he said. 'You say to yourself, "Now if I'd been doing this job I'd have taken care to do so-and-so". It's a sort of game. Why, you were talking like that as much as I was!'

Again her eyes rested on his. He grinned at her until she looked away.

'Very well, Sam!' she said. 'Let's say no more about it.'

She was not looking at him any more. She was again looking into the garden, fixedly, meaninglessly. The silence lengthened—with it, his unease. After some minutes he asked:

'You haven't got anything else on your mind, by any chance?'

'I haven't anything else bar the murder on my mind,' she answered with unwonted precision. 'But I haven't been quite straightforward with you.'

She paused for a moment, looked confused.

'Sam, I know about Miss Trotwood! I know you've been her lover—if you can call it that—for eighteen months. And I don't mind. I know the best of men can't help their nature. And me being like this—'

'Chuck it, Louie!' he begged. The reminder of the accident was unbearable. He shifted in his chair, put one hand over his eyes, like a shamed child.

'All right, old girl! I'm sorry you know about that. It seemed more decent, in a way, not to tell you. But I never took anything from you to give to her.'

'I know you didn't, dear. There's nothing to worry about there. Years ago I told myself you would do something o' that.'

'It was a bit thick, telling you lies about business, but it had to be done. I was pretty careful with that part of it. I suppose you guessed up a girl. Women always do.' He reflected. 'But what I'd like to know, now we're talking about it—who told you it was that particular girl?'

'Miss Trotwood herself! She came to see me last Thursday.'

'Oh my God!' Samuel Flanch collapsed. The cigarette fell from his hand. Presently it burnt through to his knee and he smacked it out.

'She told me she wanted you to marry her because she was going to have a baby. She said you had asked me to fix a divorce, which of course I would have done—but you told her I wouldn't agree, and you wanted another week to talk me over. And the week was to end today, but she didn't think you meant to do anything about it.'

'The baby was a bluff!' he muttered.

'I think she believed it, Sam, whether it was true or not. I thought she was a nice girl. Well behaved and well spoken. I was very sorry for her, in a way.'

Samuel decided that admission would be the safest course.

'I did tell her all that. I'd decided to drop her and I wanted a bit of time to wind things up.' Suddenly his depression vanished. 'Anyway, she's done a bunk! If you read the paper again, you'll see the police want to find her, because she's like the other woman. They were friends. They'll probably call her on the wireless tonight—make out she's lost her memory.'

The laugh came back. Louie waited until it had died away.

'She told me something she said she'd never told you. She was married herself. To a man in a good position who didn't love her, so she didn't love him. She said he would be glad to divorce her as soon as she asked him.'

'That may be true for all I know or care. She's gone. The flat's empty.'

'I think her husband is Mr Kynsard.'

As he said nothing, she went on:

'I tore off a piece of the newspaper and put it over Mrs Kynsard's furs. She was very like the girl who came to see me.'

'They *are* alike. That's what's worrying the police. But they're not the same. They were friends, I tell you.'

'Well, Sam, I hope you're right. But you didn't know she had a husband, so I don't see how you can know who he was or wasn't.'

What a fool he had been to deny that Betsy was dead! It was the way Louie had put it to him. He had started telling lies to prevent himself being suspected of the murder.

Just like Gibbern, the rabbit.

'And it does seem funny', continued Louie, 'that she has run away, after coming to see me like that. And me telling her I'd do whatever you asked me about the divorce.'

'I don't see it's funny at all,' he protested. 'She couldn't keep up the bluff about the baby, so she took herself off. Blurry good thing, too! I'm through with her. I'm through with fooling around with girls—I've learnt my lesson!'

He could not leave it at that. Like Gibbern, he felt the

irresistible urge to explain.

'You've got it inside out, matey! If that girl is Mrs Kynsard, she can't be Betsy. How do I know! I told you they were friends, didn't I? Paper says so too, doesn't it! All right! I tell you, I've heard Betsy talking on the telephone to her friend, Barbara Kynsard. You can't ring yourself up on the telephone and talk to yourself.' He bellowed with laughter. 'That's a good one, eh, Louie?'

Louie made no answer. He saw that she did not believe him. Wiping the palms of his hands, he went out into the garden.

8

Margaret Tremman lived in a comfortable brick bungalow in the prosperous suburb of Rubington. On returning, she cleared off arrears of housework. Dusting the furniture assisted a process of mental stocktaking. Today marked the end of a phase in her life which had disappointed her. A new phase was beginning, with an income doubled by the death of Barbara.

'I won't give way! The feeling of shock will pass,' she told herself, and felt that she was being rather splendid.

A self-centred woman, too vain in her womanhood to

pretend that the loss of her daughter would darken her life, she hoped for a second marriage or, as next best, a sympathetic friendship, with passionate moments. She shrank from the word 'lover', which connoted furtive week-ends and a vague shabbiness.

Part of the process of not giving way was to prepare herself an evening meal: she was still in the preliminary stage, when Detective Inspector Turley arrived unexpectedly. He was not her kind of man, but she was sensitive to the suggestion of toughness behind that mild and even—yes, sympathetic—manner. So she took him into the drawing-room and gave him coffee.

Turley opened with the unscrupulous assertion that women's dress was always a stumbling block to Scotland Yard. Mrs Tremman believed him, and was soon expounding the significance of Barbara's house-frock and unmended shoes.

'As I told my son-in-law, I firmly believe that my daughter met her death in her own house. Or at least in the garden. Almost anything could happen in that garden. It's such an awful wilderness. Of course, Mr Kynsard can't help it, but—'

'At what time would you say it happened?'

'Why, it *could* only have happened between her husband leaving for chambers and the arrival of Mrs Henson at ten.'

Dead end! The doctor had stated definitely that death could not have occurred until the early evening at the earliest. Turley dropped that line.

'It's your opinion that Mrs Kynsard was leading a—second life—as Betsy Trotwood?'

'I gave you my reasons. I may be wrong, of course.'

'And you may be right. We have not found that you are wrong. But we have found that the woman known as Betsy Trotwood was getting into that car—the car in which your daughter was found—at twenty minutes to seven last night.' He added: 'She took it out of the garage in Central London and drove away in it herself. How does that fit in, Mrs Tremman?'

Margaret Tremman came as near to gaping as she would ever permit herself.

'At twenty to seven!' she repeated. She became abstracted, and presently explained: 'I'm trying to think what time it was when I arrived at their house. The six fifteen from here—a wretched train!—is due at St John's Wood Station at six fifty. I got a taxi at once, which is wonderful nowadays. If the train was punctual I must have been talking to Arthur—that's Mr Kynsard—about seven o'clock.'

'Why is the time so important?' asked Turley with deliberate naïveté.

'Oh, it doesn't matter in the least, because it all came to nothing.'

Turley had had experience of that kind of conversation and merely waited.

'Arthur opened the door to me and paid my taxi. I saw he

was preoccupied. In the hall he told me about Barbara, pretending he wasn't alarmed, which he was. He talked a lot about dinner, to cover his anxiety—he never notices what he or anybody else eats. I myself wasn't worried at that time because, of course, I knew Barbara much better than he did. She often used to forget when we had guests coming. So when he said he thought he heard Barbara I thought he had too.'

She had lost her way again. Turley tried an indirect question.

'Did *you* think you heard Mrs Kynsard?'

'I thought I did, but I wasn't positive. Besides, I wasn't all keyed up and listening, as he was. He said: "I think I hear the garage doors". They're the kind that make a grinding noise, you know. "I'll be back in a minute!" I went into the drawing-room and waited. As he didn't come back at once I assumed that Barbara *had* turned up and that they were having a row about it in the garage.'

'Did you have to wait long?'

'Ever so long! Twenty minutes, I should think.'

'Didn't you feel like going out to see what they were doing?'

'I have always tried to avoid being the traditional mother-in-law,' she simpered.

'No one could call you that, Mrs Tremman.' Turley saw she had taken it, and went on: 'The traditional mother-in-law would have asked some sarcastic questions about being kept waiting for twenty minutes. Especially as Mrs Kynsard was *not* in the

garage—nor anywhere else, as I understand it?'

'Oh, I never make a fuss over little things like that! Arthur looked so pathetic when he had to tell me it was a false alarm. And he'd got himself so dirty that I sent him off to wash.'

Turley tried to look as if a plum had not fallen into his mouth.

'You see, when he found that the garage doors had not been opened, he wondered what had made the noise. He thought someone might be prowling in the garden—an obviously stupid suggestion! But the poor boy was a mass of nerves by then. Soon he suggested I should ring up the hospitals.'

'What was he doing while you were ringing up?'

'I don't suppose he was doing anything—probably wandering about the house and looking helpless. He's a brilliant lawyer but not very clever at anything else.'

So he was not beside her at the telephone.

'How many hospitals did you ring up?'

'I didn't count. About half-an-hour's worth. Then we had a picnic in the kitchen. And then we preyed on each other's nerves until about twelve, when he drove me home in the Chrysler. To show you what a state he was in, he made me promise to ring him at a quarter to one, by which time he expected to be home. It's only about six miles to St John's Wood, though it takes such a shamefully long time in the train.'

'Did you ring him up?'

'Yes, but he didn't answer.' There was more coming. 'So I rang again about one, and all he said was that there was no news. I think he felt lonely. He made a very long story of how he'd had some engine trouble on the way home and had to leave the Chrysler at the garage and walk home. As it's only one minute's walk from the Three Stumps Garage, he needn't have been so sorry for himself. It was just that the poor boy didn't want to be alone with his thoughts.'

Or perhaps because the poor boy wanted to establish an alibi, thought Turley. Yet, as an alibi, it didn't seem to fit in. The Morris might have come to the house at seven. Kynsard might have committed the murder while Mrs Tremman was waiting in the drawing-room. If he had done so, he could gain nothing by proving that he had driven straight home after leaving Mrs Tremman. Turley had picked up a line, but no more.

The sun was still shining when he reached Kynsard's house.

'I would like to see the garage, Mr Kynsard. Mrs Tremman told me you thought someone was trying to get in at about seven last night. What exactly happened?'

'Nothing,' said Kynsard as they stepped into the garden. 'I thought I heard the garage doors. As I had left them locked, I assumed that my wife had borrowed the Morris again and was putting it away.'

Kynsard unlocked the panel doors. The runners, travelling on rusty rails, emitted a shrill groan.

'That's loud enough!' exclaimed Turley. 'And I should say it's not above thirty yards to the house. I wonder what *did* make the noise you heard?'

'So do I,' said Kynsard. 'They make the same noise when they're being shut. I thought at first that I must have heard them being shut. I sprinted to the rear gates—at the end of this drive there—that give on to the lane. They were open, but I had left them open myself. There was nothing in the lane. I scouted about the garden, though I hardly know why. Then I unlocked these doors and looked inside. In effect, everything was as you see it now.'

The garage could have housed six large cars. The Chrysler stood near the centre. On the concrete floor were a large number of tracks and oil drips. It was as if Kynsard parked his car in a different position every time he returned.

The garage was dirty and ill-kept. At the far end an upright iron-runged ladder gave access to the upper quarters.

'Did you look up aloft?'

'No. I haven't been up there since I was a small boy—and I imagine no one else has. If you want to go up, I don't guarantee those rungs will hold you.'

'I'll chance it.'

While Kynsard waited below, Turley climbed the ladder.

Dust was thick upon the upper floor and there were no footprints in the dust. Nevertheless, he explored a one-time hayloft and four small living-rooms in an advanced state of decay. He reckoned Kynsard was right in saying no one had been there for many years.

Down the ladder. At the foot, he shook some of the dust from his hands. The reverse angle of the light revealed something he had missed.

He pointed to a patch on the concrete floor, almost dead centre, bent over it.

'This has been scrubbed—and very recently!' he announced.

'Has it!' Kynsard laughed. 'How amazing!'

'It has been scrubbed,' repeated Turley. 'Have you any idea why, Mr Kynsard?'

'None whatever! To me, frankly, it's incredible. It's almost impossible to get anything scrubbed nowadays.'

A lawyer knew when not to answer questions, reflected Turley.

'You'd like a wash and brush-up, wouldn't you? You're pretty well covered in dust, for which I feel I ought to apologize.'

Turley accepted the offer, and they went back to the house. When Turley returned to the hall after cleaning up, there was a knock on the front door.

Kynsard opened it to a strikingly handsome young man in a shabby sports suit with a flowing tie and a confident manner.

'Mr Kynsard, presumably. I am George Penton. I am very sorry to intrude upon you at such a time, sir. I have been given to understand that the late Mrs Kynsard was very kindly sponsoring a small work of mine for exhibition at the Rantoul Galleries.'

Kynsard nodded.

'I'm afraid that arrangement will fall through. What can I do for you?'

'If I'm not being a plague, could I have my picture back? A Medusa, you know!'

'Come and pick it out, will you.' To Turley, Kynsard added: 'Excuse me a moment, Inspector.'

Turley contrived to place himself within earshot of the morning-room. He heard Penton ask:

'I say! Is that chap a police inspector? Good lord! Could I slip out by your back door?'

'I'll chance being disbarred and give you free legal advice,' said Kynsard. 'It never pays to run from the police unless you've committed a murder and mugged it.'

'The police', grinned Turley, entering the room, 'only want to know where you live, Mr Penton.'

'I live in what's left of Theobald's Road, Number—'

'Then I'll give you a lift back if you like, and I can put you through the third degree while I'm driving.'

With his Medusa under his arm, Penton got into the police car.

'Darned thirsty weather!' remarked Turley when he had driven out of the neighbourhood. 'What about a beer?'

'Sorry, I'm broke! I can't buy back.'

'That's all right. We'll have one on the Government.'

Penton insisted on bringing his picture with him, attracting a certain amount of attention. Turley piloted him into a corner of the saloon.

'Here's mud-in-your-eye! When did you last see Mrs Kynsard?'

'I've never seen her. A friend told me that she was good at influencing dealers. And the friend—'

'A friend with auburn hair?'

Penton looked miserable.

'I see you know the whole story!' he exclaimed. 'Look here, I wish you'd tell me why she's bolted. Yesterday evening she never gave me the slightest hint. In fact, we had another date.'

'Suppose we begin at the beginning. You tell me what you know about Betsy and I'll see if I can contribute anything.'

'You've contributed some excellent beer!' Penton took a long, grateful swig. 'What do I know about her? Virtually nothing. She's one of those girls you feel you've known all your life, and that's all you ever do know about her. She picked me up about a fortnight ago when I was carrying the Medusa. She said: "Oh do let me look!" and then we went back to her flat, which is run for her by a greasy sort of chap, but I always went before he came, so I've never seen him. She knows something about painting.'

Turley endured while Penton explained how much and how little the girl knew about painting.

'And she offered to push your work, did she?'

'I don't know about pushing. I don't know that I would care to be pushed. One is not, after all, a toothpaste. If one's work is any good, one asks only that it should be seen. This means crawling round people who are influential enough to get one's work inserted in someone's else exhibition. Otherwise, one is never even approached. How many people have got Betsy's guts?'

'There you beat me!' confessed Turley. 'I gather she was getting you an exhibition through Mrs Kynsard?'

'Certainly not! The most she could do was to wangle me in with a mixed crowd of impressionists, many of whom, between ourselves, are absolutely n.b.g. All the same, I jumped at it. Dear Betsy, as I daresay you know, is hopelessly

unbusinesslike. No method! She got me listed in this exhibition and then did nothing about it. As late as yesterday afternoon I was horrified to find my picture still in her bedroom. She said: "Oh heavens! Barbara reminded me and I forgot again. I'll have to take it round this evening."

'As it was pretty close to the greaser's time, we got up and left the flat, with the Medusa. We had a drink in the Red Lion, and I persuaded her to give the greaser a miss and come back and dine with me after she had delivered the picture.

'She refused to let me go with her, giving the absurd excuse that I looked too shabby. I wondered what was really in her mind, and now I know—unless you are going to tell me I'm wrong.'

'Let's have your theory first.'

'My *facts* first!' said the artist. 'You know perfectly well she can't have had anything to do with the murder of Mrs Kynsard. Betsy wouldn't have taken the trouble to deliver my picture if she had been mixed up in some garish plot to spoil the exhibition.'

'Why did she bolt, then?'

'It's my belief that she suddenly felt she couldn't stand the greaser any more—that she must make a clean cut at once, while the mood was on her, and get in touch with me later on. She knew my address.

'But I only thought that out this afternoon, and I hope you can confirm it. Last night I felt so rotten when she didn't turn

up for dinner that I decided to get drunk. It's none too easy to get drunk nowadays. It cleaned me out. Hence my warning that I couldn't buy any beer.'

'The Government invites us to have another,' said Turley. The Government, he decided, was getting value for money.

'Can I have a look at your picture?' he asked, when the mugs had been refilled. 'Ah! That's the kind that makes you look twice and think a bit. I shall have to take this away with me. It's a pity the Government doesn't buy pictures, but I daresay we could squeeze out a small rent for the loan of it. And if you'd like a quid on account—here it is.'

'Do you know,' said Penton profoundly, 'that until this evening, I've had a totally wrong idea of the police. Tonight, my vision has been broadened. Here's a health unto His Majesty!—which means thanks awf'lly for the quid, old man!'

As Turley entered his room at the Yard, the house telephone rang.

'Heard you'd just come in, sir,' said Swilbey. 'Flanch will be here any minute.'

'Have him sent here. And come right along yourself. I've been horning in on your assignment.'

By the time Turley had given his facts, Flanch was announced and Swilbey took over. In his senior's presence he used the suave approach.

'Sorry to drag you up at this time, Mr Flanch, but you said you didn't want us to call at your place.' He produced the agency ticket for a stall at the Parnassus for next Saturday's matinee. 'Can you tell us anything about that?'

Flanch took the ticket, read part of the inscription aloud. He knitted his brow to indicate an effort of memory.

'There!' Samuel clapped his knee and laughed. 'I'll be forgetting my own name next! I bought that for Betsy. One for myself too. A few of us are giving a farewell lunch to one o' the boys on Saturday and I reckoned I might be late.'

'When did you give it to her?'

'You win! Blamed if I can recollect.'

'It's important, Mr Flanch. Let's see if we can help you. When did you buy the ticket?'

'I ordered both by telephone. Girl brought 'em along—but which day it was, search me!'

'It was yesterday,' said Swilbey. 'The girl delivered it to you outside your warehouse, where you were standing waiting for her. And the time was close on three fifteen.'

'Wait a minute—don't tell me—I've got it now!' Samuel was showing animation. 'I didn't give it to her—leastways, not into her hand. I left it in the flat for her when I was in there waiting for her. Wrote a note to that effect—with a bit o' soft stuff about making up our row. Dessay you found that too, unless she had the sense to burn it.'

Swilbey waited until Samuel had finished laughing.

'You left that flat at eleven?'

'S'right!'

'So she couldn't have picked it up before eleven! She was dead before eleven, Mr Flanch.'

Samuel licked his lips, then plunged in.

'Before we go any further, who was dead?' he demanded aggressively. 'You say Betsy. Mr Kynsard says Mrs Kynsard.'

'So your only answer is that you were mistaken when you identified the corpse—marks on the chest and all? Your only answer is that there are two women? Is that the alibi, Mr Flanch?'

'Who's talkin' about alibis!' blustered Samuel. 'And now I come to think of it, I don't remember seeing that ticket and the note I'd written with it—I don't remember seeing it on the table when I came back from buying those cigarettes. That would be about seven forty-five, as I told the inspector this morning.'

'You didn't tell me anything about buying cigarettes,' said Turley. 'You told me you entered the flat about six and left it about eleven.'

'Well, if I didn't happen to mention it, I apologize, that's all!' whined Flanch. 'I came of my own free will to tell you what I thought might help you. When it's a matter o' murder, you don't keep your mind on buying fags and theatre tickets.'

'Did you find a tobacconist open at seven forty-five, Mr Flanch?'

'I knew they'd be shut. I went to a pub—'

'What was the name of the pub?'

'Gimme a minute—the big one on the corner of Cranebrook Street—the Spread Eagle.'

Samuel waited, alert for the next question. But no question came from the detectives. Only a silence which Samuel was unable to endure.

Again that irresistible urge to explain.

'Look here! It's all quite natural if you look at it the right way. I got there at six. I was riled she wasn't there—stamped about a bit. Then I thought I'd go home and cook up a tale for the missus, washing out the other tale. I put the ticket ready for Betsy and wrote the note. Thought I'd give Betsy another ten minutes and turned on the radio. After a bit I found I'd got no more cigarettes. Then I went out, same as I told you. You can't go into a pub just to buy fags, so I had a couple o' Scotch. Then I changed my mind about going home. When I got back to the flat I didn't notice the theatre ticket had gone. You started talking about it and I remembered it had gone.'

'All right!' Detective Inspector Turley paused, lit a cigarette, taking a long time over it. 'As you say, Mr Flanch, it's all quite natural if you look at it in the right way. Sorry we had to trouble you to come up to Town. If Detective Sergeant Swilbey has no more questions, we needn't take up any more of your

time.'

Samuel's jaw dropped. His forehead glistened. He was too astonished to feel anything but fear.

'Well—if that's all—' the laugh broke out again. 'If that's all, I'll say good night, gentlemen.'

'Good night,' chorused the detectives. It took Samuel quite a long time to rise, walk to the door, and open it. The silence so oppressed him that he closed the door behind him with reverential gentleness.

Swilbey shrugged, by way of protest at letting Flanch go.

'Flanch gave that ticket into Betsy's hand,' he asserted. 'We know that, but we don't know at what time.'

Turley nodded assent.

Swilbey went on: 'You've instructed me to regard the two girls as one girl. Okay! Betsy-Barbara takes that picture along at six-forty. Betsy-Barbara's mother and husband are waiting for her to turn up for dinner. Don't tell me she drove home, dumped the picture and then drove off again. That would have spoilt all her double-life stuff. So if there's only one girl, it points that Kynsard killed his wife in his own garage about seven.'

'That's about what I'm thinking,' agreed Turley.

'You're thinking *that*, sir?' Swilbey was taken aback. 'What about that picture? Kynsard wouldn't have left that lying about

for us to pick up. Being a lawyer, especially, he'd have known it was dynamite.'

'Hm! Ought to have kept my mouth shut,' grinned Turley.

'And another thing, sir! If Kynsard's guilty and Flanch isn't, what's the point of Flanch telling us those lies? What's he hiding? That he saw Barbara-Betsy about six-forty and gave her a theatre ticket? Why shouldn't he? Yet there he was in that chair, sweating blood to make us believe he didn't see the girl at all that night.'

'Have it your own way!' grinned Turley. 'Suppose there are two girls, if you like?'

'If there are two girls, Barbara is murdered and Betsy disappears. What say Flanch and Betsy murdered Barbara, laying that picture as a trail to Kynsard?'

While Turley was pondering his answer, Swilbey added:

'Take it that way, and you get Kynsard acting reasonably. He hears the garage doors, same as he says. Those two slip the picture into the Chrysler and as they can't get away before Kynsard comes, they hide. He thinks there's someone prowling in the garden and he's right. That explains why he didn't destroy the picture.'

'*If* there are two girls! *If* Betsy and Flanch murdered Barbara!' Turley shook his head. 'Cutting out the "ifs", we have one girl and one picture. I'm going along myself now to get Kynsard's views on modern art—with snakes on!' Turley chuckled. 'If Wallsend finds a real Betsy, we'll try that line of

yours.'

Kynsard had found Barbara's diary—was beginning to study it intensively when Turley reappeared.

He received his caller with a resigned smile and took him into the drawing-room. Turley declined the offer of a drink.

'Then you'll find I'm quite good at coffee. Black or white?'

'Black, please.' Turley was glad of the diversion. Here was the most difficult man he had ever tackled. The technique which generally brought results from the criminal classes would be useless. Moreover, it would be a waste of time to try to trap this man, who was himself a skilful cross-examiner.

'I'm on the track of those pictures you were to take to the exhibition.'

'Then I'm not much use. I was merely the carrier. We loaded them up the night before last. I was going to take them last night as soon as I came home. I don't even know when the exhibition opens.'

'You don't drive to chambers in your car?'

'It's quicker by Underground.'

'How many pictures were there?'

'Half a dozen or so. I didn't count.'

'The catalogue says seven "lent by Mrs Kynsard". Would that be about right?'

'I should think so.'

'They were loaded into your car on Tuesday evening, remained there throughout Wednesday and today until this afternoon?'

'They remained in the car until I left to collect Mrs Tremman at the police station. I took them out before starting. Shortly after three this afternoon Mrs Henson and I brought them into the morning-room.'

'You'll wonder why I'm pressing you about these pictures—'

'Not really! I know you have to plough up an immense amount of ground. At a guess, you're trying to trace Betsy Trotwood through those pictures. Betsy was concerned with the exhibition in some way. Mrs Henson heard my wife speaking to Betsy on the telephone about it.'

'If it isn't troubling you too much, Mr Kynsard, would you mind counting those pictures standing against the wall in the morning-room?'

Within thirty seconds Kynsard returned.

'Seven,' he announced.

'Add the one which that young artist took away when I was here and you get eight.'

'Correct. A Medusa treated impressionistically.'

No more skirmishing, decided Turley. Give him a straight wallop and see what happens.

'That Medusa was being loaded into the Morris car—by the lady calling herself Trotwood—at twenty to seven last night.'

'Really! Then how the devil did it get here?'

'That's what I've come to find out, Mr Kynsard.'

'I wish you luck, Inspector.'

'At twenty to seven', continued Turley, 'that Morris started from Cranebrook Street. Plenty of traffic about at that time. It would take about twenty minutes to cover the three miles. At seven approximately you think you hear someone in the garage. You go out to investigate—'

'And find no one!'

Turley said nothing.

'A most eloquent silence, Inspector!' Kynsard laughed good humouredly. 'So you believe that I found the fair Betsy in the garage, that after taking delivery of the picture, I promised I would never tell anybody that she had brought me that picture. And even when this horror descends on us and the police want to know everything we can tell them—even when Betsy herself absconds—I go on stoutly denying that Betsy brought me that picture of the Medusa.'

No skirmishing. No fencing. Try another wallop.

'If there's no explanation from you, Mr Kynsard, I think you know as well as I do what view our legal department is likely to take.'

'I don't. I can't for the life of me see a legal point in it anywhere.'

'They may say that Mrs Kynsard turned up here in the Morris at seven and that you killed her.'

Kynsard rose from the sociable on which he was lounging. The daylight was fast fading. He switched on the centre light, returned to the sociable, and sat with the light full on his face.

'Inspector! That seems to me such an outrageously *silly* remark that I'm sure we must be at some cross-purpose. I must have missed something. Did you, or did you not tell me that, at twenty to seven, *Betsy Trotwood* got into that Morris with that picture? You did? And it was *Betsy* who took twenty minutes to drive here? At what point does my wife come on the scene?'

'Our case is that Betsy Trotwood was Mrs Kynsard.'

'Oh-h! Mrs Tremman's theory of a substitute personality, which she expounded to you this morning!'

'In the Betsy Trotwood personality, she had a lover,' said Turley. 'The lover identified the body of your wife as Betsy Trotwood.'

'How damned unfortunate!' exploded Kynsard. He had the

air of a man exasperated by a vast annoyance. For a minute or more, he seemed oblivious of the detective's presence, following his own train of thought. 'I apologize for saying you made a silly remark. You have an uncomfortably strong *prima facie* case.'

'I'm glad you appreciate that, Mr Kynsard. You'll realize that it's absolutely essential to give me an answer about that Medusa.'

'But I don't know the answer—any more than I know who scrubbed that bit of the garage floor—if it was scrubbed. Just a minute! Let's see how strong your case is. I'll take your assumption that Barbara equals Betsy Trotwood. Then, Barbara turns up at seven *with* the picture, *in* the Morris. I go out to the garage, remain there long enough to murder her. Weak spot! How do I know she's going to turn up at that time? Why take the enormous risk of murdering her there and then in a most hurried and unprepared manner when I could have chosen my own moment? Let that pass. Let all the weak spots pass. Stick to the strong ones. I club her to death—then there's your point about the washed floor. I wash the bloodstains—probably dry up the mess later with petrol.'

'Run the Chrysler in and out to cover the tracks of the Morris,' put in Turley.

'I cover the tracks of the Morris. All this mopping up being done, of course, after I've driven Mrs Tremman home at midnight. From seven until after midnight the body of my wife remains in the garage, while I act a natural distress at her non-appearance. Ring up Scotland Yard—*Phew!* That's a bit risky,

Inspector. Incite Mrs Tremman to ring the hospitals. After taking Mrs Tremman home, I get back here about one—'

'Why does it take you so long to do a double journey of twelve miles on a clear road?'

'My exhaust manifold came loose. I cobbled it up, but it came loose again in the last half mile. I did a stretch of the main road making a row like a machine gun. As I was afraid of flame under the bonnet, I put her in the Three Stumps all-night garage at the end of the road, and collected her in the morning. But let's get on with my hypothetical murder.

'Having arrived, I say good night to Mrs Tremman on the telephone, telling her not to worry, and so on. Then I slip out into the garage and mop up as described. I'm wondering how the devil to get rid of the body. (I'm a bit of a moron, Inspector, to land myself in a hole like that, but let that pass, too.) I have about two hours before daylight. I suddenly remember that Gibbern is being hanged in the morning. This gives me an idea. I strip the body to suggest a maniac murder and put a maniac's flourish on it by dumping the car at the prison. Hm! That's a *prima facie* case all right.'

The man was extraordinarily good at taking wallops, thought Turley. Give him one more.

'By a chance, we happen to be able to prove that that Morris travelled approximately seven miles after leaving the Tythrop Garage. It's three miles from there to your house and four miles from your house to the prison.'

'That gives you a useful dovetail!' said Kynsard admiringly.

He sat back and sighed. 'Damned unfortunate for me! Mrs Tremman's substitute-personality nonsense unexpectedly backed up by that other identification! That identification, by the way, will break under cross-examination—don't forget that scar on the chest. In the meantime, I suppose you will arrest me on suspicion?'

'I can't avoid it, Mr Kynsard, if you don't give me any kind of answer.'

'I'm grateful for your personal attitude, Inspector, but I can't make any answer except a string of denials, not one of which I can substantiate.'

'Don't let's worry about substantiation in the first instance,' pleaded Turley. 'If you'd only give me your own version of how that picture got there—'

'I haven't a version—'

'—I needn't necessarily proceed to arrest.'

'I don't see how you can dodge arrest,' said Kynsard thoughtfully. 'Of course, I don't want to be arrested. But, after all, it won't amount to much.'

As Turley muttered his astonishment, Kynsard explained:

'Let's look at this thing in its proper proportions. You have a *prima facie* justification for arresting me on suspicion. I shall give you twenty-four hours, and then I shall demand a charge or release. If I am charged with the murder of my wife, I shan't even bother to reserve my defence. I shall tear your case to

pieces in the magistrate's court. How and why? Because your case is based on the *supposition* that my wife led a double life as Betsy Trotwood. On that supposition, it's a cast-iron case. If my wife got into that Morris at six forty with that picture, you will doubtless succeed in hanging me. But she did not. Betsy Trotwood, a different person, got into that car.'

'Come to that, Mr Kynsard, my view of the case is the same as yours,' said Turley, with some unease. 'But so far you haven't proved that Betsy is a different person.'

'I don't have to. You have to prove they're the same, and you think you can do it with this lover's identification, and the rest of it. Now I cannot, of course, know for certain that my wife did not have a lover, though I regard it as extremely improbable. But I have the complete moral certainty that she was not Betsy Trotwood.

'It is only some twelve hours since you found the body of my wife. In that short time, you cannot have established independent evidence that Betsy Trotwood never existed. Unfortunately, I have no relevant information about Trotwood. But I decline to believe that a woman—who has a lover, you say—a photographer's model and so on—can disappear without leaving any evidence of having existed. I know, Inspector, that you will make every effort to find Trotwood. And I believe that your efforts will be successful—and that you will torpedo your own case.'

Turley admitted to himself that he was wavering. He could safely use his discretion in the matter of arrest. This type of man would never run away.

'I'm sure I hope we shall, Mr Kynsard. In the meantime, we have not a single lead to Trotwood's separate existence.'

'Nor have I. Half a minute, though! Before you arrived this evening I unearthed a diary of my wife's. Let's look through it together.'

The diary had a cover of tooled leather, the whole about the size of a passport—an expensive article.

On the inside flap was an inscription in a round curly hand:

'*B. with love from B.*'

Turley turned the pages of the diary, noting only the handwriting.

'That's not your wife's hand!' he exclaimed, pointing to the inscription.

'No, it isn't! I never noticed that. A hundred pounds to a biscuit it's Betsy's.'

Turley turned forward to the latest entry, of two days ago. Kynsard was looking over his shoulder.

'*A. horribly polite about taking pictures.*'

'She means me,' explained Kynsard. 'Makes one feel rather a pig!'

Turley went back through a week of trivialities.

'"B. paid back £5—wish she hadn't—has to get money from that man",' Turley read aloud.

'Begins to look like Betsy, doesn't it?' suggested Kynsard.

Turley had turned back five weeks—with sporadic allusions to 'B'—before he came to a decisive entry.

'We've got something here!' he exclaimed. '"5 June. Met B. at Astorelle's. Her appointment went wrong. Let her have mine, as she has to be photographed tomorrow." Who's Astorelle?'

'I don't know. Hang on!' Kynsard left the room, to return with the telephone book. '"Astorelle Limited. Posticheurs. Ladies' Hairdressers".' Kynsard's laugh betrayed excitement for the first time. 'If the management have recorded that incident—if they remember two auburn-haired women chattering in a friendly flutter, my mother-in-law's theory will collapse. And so will your case, old man!'

'And I shall be as pleased as anybody,' said Turley. 'Can I take this diary with me?'

'My only objection is that, in the event of my being charged, that would be real evidence for the defence. You must remember, you gave me a bit of a shock just now. I don't want to be too cockahoop. Copy all you like, but I think I'd better hang on to the original.'

Turley thought it over.

'Very well! We'll try Astorelle's first.'

9

Turley's second conference was held at midday, some twenty-eight hours after the discovery of the body.

'What about Astorelle's, Wallsend?'

'Proof that there were two girls, sir. But that was my assignment anyway. We haven't really gained anything.' Wallsend was as gloomy as ever. 'It's a posh place. Line of cubicles, with an operator in each, and the guv'nor walking about seeing everybody's satisfied. The regular clients stick to a particular operator.

'On 5 June, Trotwood and Mrs Kynsard came in together having met outside, the guv'nor thought. Trotwood had made a mistake in her date and Mrs Kynsard said Trotwood could have her appointment—they were both regulars for the same operator. Trotwood's hair-do used to go on Mrs Kynsard's account, but was itemized separately on Mrs Kynsard's bill. The guv'nor showed me the books. He said the girls were much alike to look at, but not so's you wouldn't know one from the other—he'd have thought they were sisters. But the girl operator who did them both said she knew they weren't sisters. Girls talk a lot when they have their hair done, the operator said, and Trotwood's was a different class o' talk.'

Turley decided that the evidence was conclusive. He turned to Swilbey.

'We shall have to alter the wording of your assignment. The girls are not the same girl.'

'The murder is the same murder,' returned Swilbey. 'The assignment I'd like is what I said last night. Flanch, with Betsy as accessory, killed Barbara Kynsard.'

Turley was doubtful.

'Motive isn't our business, of course, but I must say I always feel more comfortable when I know what it is. Anyway, take your own line there, Swilbey. Wallsend, no change—you're still on Betsy.'

'Yes, and I ought to have picked up something by now, sir,' moaned Wallsend. 'When Betsy left the Tythrop Garage she must have gone up in smoke, as far as I can see.'

'According to Flanch,' Turley reminded him, 'Betsy went back to the flat about six forty-five. She picked up the theatre ticket and said: "Now I'm going to bolt for it without taking any of my clothes, so as to give Sergeant Wallsend a proper headache." Flanch doesn't know we found the ticket in the Morris. You go on from there, keeping in step with Swilbey.'

When reports from all sources had been considered, Turley summed up.

'I don't want you all to kid yourselves that this is one of those open-and-shut cases where you can't go wrong.' When

the mutterings had subsided, he went on: 'Led by me, you believed that Barbara and Betsy were one. We know now they aren't. They weren't so much alike that anybody commented on it until they were asked about it. The bashing and the doctor's tinkering-up may have produced a sort of third face, so that those who knew Betsy would say in good faith: "That's Betsy, though the face looks a bit different due to the bashing", and those who knew Barbara would say the same—er—'

'*Mutatis mutandis*, sir?' suggested Rawlings.

'That's about right, boy. The corpse was identified as Barbara by her husband and her mother. Both volunteered that statement that there was that scar on the chest, though the corpse was not inspected below the chin. Anyway, husband and mother! You can't beat that. You don't have to. The jury will believe them and no one else. Hold that thought.

'Flanch identified her as Betsy. Before going to the mortuary he also volunteered the statement about the scar. How did he know that Mrs Kynsard had that scar? He denied that Betsy could be doubling as Barbara. But when I told him Kynsard had identified the body as that of his wife, Flanch withdrew his own identification.

'We don't have to answer these questions. We just have to find evidence of how Barbara Kynsard was killed. We don't even have to find Betsy Trotwood, as far as this case is concerned. But looking for her may take us somewhere. And when we find her, she may tell us something. That's the set-up.'

'What the newspapers call "clues",' muttered Wallsend

miserably. 'We got a plateful o' clues and no evidence.'

Rawlings waited long enough to give Swilbey a chance to speak and then:

'That scar, sir. Barbara may have been living a double life without any special reference to Betsy. I mean, it's just possible she may have had an affair with Flanch. He's a wolf if ever there was one! And if he got gummed up between the two girls —'

'Huh! Sell that to the films!' snorted Swilbey. 'What say Barbara told Betsy about her scar, and Betsy passed it on to Flanch? Maybe Flanch killed her for a better reason than that!'

Rawlings subsided. No one was ready to support the theory that Flanch had been Barbara's lover.

The inquest was held on the next day. After formal evidence had been given, including evidence of identification by Kynsard and Mrs Tremman, the inquest was adjourned for a month. On the day following, the funeral took place.

In those three days Samuel Flanch lost a stone in weight. The strain of waiting for the police to have another bang at him was breaking his nerves. He had all the answers ready, but no one came to ask the questions. There was no means of explaining anything to anybody.

On the fourth day after the discovery of the body, Samuel arrived home unexpectedly in the early afternoon. A spell of

fine weather had set in. Louie was in the garden.

'Ha! There's me old trouble-an-strife! I want you to come inside, mate. Got something for you to sign.'

He raised her with practised gentleness from the pseudo-rustic bench and slipped her crutches into position.

In the little room he produced a formal-looking document of abnormal size. On the wall was a tradesman's calendar. He took it down to act as a table, gave her his fountain-pen.

'We'll want Ella to be a witness.'

'I must know what it is I'm to sign, Sam.'

'Read it, then, if you don't trust me.' The laugh was as vociferous as ever.

She adjusted her spectacles, opened out the document.

'I don't understand it—it seems a lot of rigmarole to me.'

'So it is! I didn't want you to bother your head with it, but as you feel that way about it, I'll tell you.'

He had been jolly for the first time since their conversation about Betsy. Now he became solemn.

'First you gotter listen to a bit o' talk. Serve you right, old dear, for askin' questions. Know what I told you the other night about me being through with girls? I meant it, all right. Only, I started thinking. You know what I am and I know what I am

and I don't trust myself with a bit o' skirt—me going up to Town every day and staying all hours. My place is here with you—doin' a bit o' gardening in summer. Out of temptation's way, if you understand me. Told you I'd learnt my lesson.'

'But what about the business, Sam?'

'I've sold it!'

'Oh dear! How're we going to live without the business?'

'You know, Louie, you always were one to ask silly questions! D'you think I hadn't thought o' that? I got thirty thousand quid for the business. Thirty thousand jimmy-o-goblins! That's more'n you'd any idea I was worth, isn't it?—and you're wrong, because I'd have got more if I'd waited. Wanted to get it off me chest.'

'But why were you in that hurry?'

'Cor, let me finish, will you! We're not going to put thirty thousand pounds on a horse. We'll neither of us ever see it. It's already gone to an insurance company. Joint life annuity. You don't know what that means. It's the rigmarole there in your lap. It means they're going to pay me seventeen hundred quid a year. Knock off income-tax—gives a thousand a year and small change over. About what we're living on now, first an' last. Wait a minute! If anything happens to me, you get the seventeen hundred—that's to say the thousand odd—every year as long as you live. You can live to be a hundred—they'll go on paying and smiling just the same.'

'Why should anything happen to you? And what sort of

thing?'

'There you go! Who said anything was going to happen to me! I said *if*. I can live to a hundred too, if I want to. All you gotter do is sign here. Makes you a party to it. Hi, Ella!'

Mrs Flanch signed without comment. Ella, perceiving that some grave family business was being transacted, witnessed the signature in a silence that radiated general disapproval.

When she had left the room the silence held, making Samuel feel that he had done something disreputable.

'Cor blimey! Here I've given up the business I built up from nothing, made you comfortable for life and you don't even say "thank you".'

'You've made me very *un*comfortable,' she said. 'You'll soon get tired of gardening, and I don't know what you think you're going to do at home here in the winter—Oh, what does it all *mean*, Sam?'

'Just what I told you it means, and nothing else. What's the matter with you, Louie?'

Her voice was barely audible as she answered:

'I'm frightened.'

Samuel's head had ached steadily for the last twenty-four hours. He pressed his hands over his brow.

'You got to pull yourself together, mate, or we shall both go

looney. Don't talk—listen! We've been married twenty—twenty-four years. In that time I've told you lies about being at business, et cetera, when I was really with Betsy. It was the same lie every time, dressed up—ought to count as one lie only.'

'You needn't count it at all, because I knew it. You were always so straight with me that I knew at once when you did tell a lie.'

'Have it your own way. You'll know whether I'm lying now: *I—did—not—kill—Betsy—Trotwood!*'

'I believe you, Sam!' She added: 'Do the police think you did?'

'I dunno!' The admission was torn from him. 'I dunno what they think, and that's a fact!' He got up, placed the document she had signed in its envelope. 'I'm going out to register this.' He added over his shoulder: 'Whatever they think or don't think, you'll be all right for money.'

The next day the war of nerves ended with a polite request by telephone to call on Detective Inspector Turley at Scotland Yard.

10

In the last few days, Samuel Flanch had made the discovery that he was a sensitive man, that he reacted to the moods of others, that this peace of mind could be affected by commonplace objects. No one could call him starchy, yet he felt he had lost something worthwhile when Detective Inspector Turley called him 'Flanch' instead of 'Mr Flanch'.

Turley was not being tough. He simply looked up when Flanch was shown in, then looked back at the papers on his desk. He said, almost absentmindedly, 'Sit down, Flanch,' and took no further notice of him for something like three minutes.

On the desk were photographs of Barbara Kynsard, living and dead. Nothing in that! A photograph of Cranebrook Mansions. Of Tythrop Garage; of the pub at the corner, and a long shot of the street. Samuel found himself trying to add up the photographs. He started violently as his eyes were drawn to the wall behind the inspector. Perched on a shelf was that looney picture of a girl's head with snakes. He felt the creeps coming back in a more disturbing form.

Towards the end of the three minutes, Turley spoke on the house telephone. 'Waiting for you,' he said. He pulled another lever and again said: 'Waiting for you.' A third lever, 'Come along, Rawlings.'

Detective Sergeant Swilbey came in, then his colleague, Wallsend. Both sat down without even glancing at Samuel. Then young Rawlings arrived with a dispatch-case and sat at the desk opposite Turley. Samuel furtively wiped his hands on

his jacket. He remembered that all his life he had been, perhaps, a little over ready to call other men rabbits.

Turley swivelled his chair and faced Samuel.

'So you thought you could tell us what it was good for us to know, and leave the rest out! That's what the small-time crooks do.'

'I never did! I approached you of my own free will—'

'We've heard that once. Of your own free will, you told us the corpse was Betsy, when you knew it wasn't.'

Samuel Flanch let out a long breath as if from a blow in his middle.

'How long have you known Mrs Kynsard?'

'Never seen her in my life. I told you I hadn't.'

'How did you know about that scar?'

Samuel made a hissing noise as if he were reclaiming the breath he had lost.

'I didn't know. I knew Betsy had a scar, like I described. If her friend Barbara had one too, it wasn't my fault.'

Turley and the detectives exchanged glances but no word was spoken.

'We'll leave that for a minute. You gave us a little poem

about what you did at that flat on Thursday night. You went out to get cigarettes; you left the theatre ticket on the table with a love letter; and when you came back, after getting the cigarettes, Betsy had been in and out and taken the ticket. You'd better listen to Detective Sergeant Wallsend.'

'Time of Flanch's entering the flat unknown, believed to be about six.' Wallsend was reading from his own report. 'Radio started in flat about six fifteen, turned on very loud. Mr Richards, occupying flat below, at or about six thirty, ascended to No. 17 intending to request that radio be lowered. He knocked several times but could get no answer. He tried again at nine and at nine thirty with the same result. The radio continued until close-down, and started again at six next morning. It did not cease until eleven, when Flanch was seen to enter the flat and remain there for a few minutes.'

'Don't say anything yet, Flanch,' put in Turley. 'We're going to show you how you stand. Carry on, Wallsend.'

'Tests established that both the bell and the knocker can be distinctly heard throughout the flat while radio is playing at its loudest. Summary of Flanch's movements: Was in flat before six thirty, but had left it by then and did not return until the following morning. Movements unknown between six thirty and eleven forty approximately, when he returned to his home. Next morning, he arrived at his warehouse at six thirty, half an hour later than usual, saying this was due to ignition trouble. Denied by garage mechanic. Between seven and nine in the morning, movements unknown.'

Turley resumed charge of the proceedings.

'We know you met Betsy round about six forty and gave her that theatre ticket. We don't know why she bolted. We don't know what you or she or both of you did with the Morris. But you can see that we're considering the possibility—mind, I only say possibility—that you, in that Morris, met Mrs Kynsard and murdered her, and that Betsy bolted because she didn't want to give evidence—that you hid the Morris with the body until something after seven in the morning and then took it to where it was found.'

'Cor-strike-o-Reilly!' The laugh bellowed a sudden confidence. 'That's a mountain out of a molehill if you like, Inspector!' The four unresponsive faces chilled him. 'I've been a fool—I can see that, now it's too late. Not sure I hadn't better keep my trap shut.'

'That's up to you. You sold your business yesterday for spot cash, didn't you?'

That, guessed Samuel, would justify arrest. No good telling them about the joint annuity. Might make it worse.

'I'll take a chance,' he said. 'I did go out for cigarettes, same as I said. Didn't think about that radio. When I was having my drink I stood by the window, with one eye on the Tythrop Garage. I saw Betsy come from the opposite direction—that's to say, not from the flat. She was carrying a picture and she went on to the Tythrop.

'I wasn't going to rush after her. I finished my drink and took it easy to the Tythrop. She was coming out, in the Morris. I stopped her with a bit o' chaff, but she was stand-offish. I put a

foot on the running-board, and tried to sweeten her up. She said she didn't want the ticket. I put it in the dash, telling her she could give it me back later if she didn't want it. She said she'd been trying to find Barbara, but couldn't. She was going to take that picture and put it in Kynsard's Chrysler along with the others, and she'd see me on Saturday at the Parnassus if she felt like it. That wasn't good enough for me. I jawed a bit. Then she said she wouldn't be back at the flat till late. I said: "A boy-friend, p'r'aps", and she let in the clutch and I had to jump for it. I didn't believe it was a boy-friend—'

'Why not?'

Samuel hesitated.

'I dunno. I just didn't. I thought she was going to spend the evening with Barbara. I went back to the pub and had another. Then I got the rats. I don't suppose it's much good my telling you what I did, because I can't prove it. I went up to the West End and picked up a girl—wouldn't know her again if I saw her. Got back home a bit after half past eleven after looking in at the Tythrop—told me the Morris hadn't come back.

'Next day, when the early editions came out, I didn't think at once it was Betsy, but I wanted to make sure. I nipped over to the flat. Turned the radio off, same as the sergeant here said. I saw Betsy hadn't been back—I looked over her things. She'd gone away in what she stood up in. I was pretty sure it wasn't a boy-friend, as she hadn't taken even a small suitcase. Not her style with a boy-friend.

'Thought I'd better go to the police of my own free will, in

case they asked me funny questions. On the way I thought: "It's a pity I saw Betsy those few minutes last night. It wouldn't do any harm to leave that bit out". That's where I made my big mistake.'

Samuel had lost his momentum. In the silence, his hands troubled him again. He looked from Turley to Swilbey, to Wallsend, even to young Rawlings. A blurry set o' wooden images! Lumping great men, all these Scotland Yard dicks were. Must be six foot apiece.

Detective Inspector Turley began to speak, without looking up from his blotting-pad. 'Your first tale is that you didn't leave the flat between six and eleven. We catch you with that theatre ticket, and you give us a second tale. We catch you through the radio complaints, and you give us a third tale. Where's this lying going to stop, Flanch?'

'I wanted to keep out of it. Those lies couldn't do you any harm. You'd have found out Betsy went out with the Morris without me telling you.'

Swilbey cut in.

'Flanch, we want Betsy.'

'I dunno where she is, and that's a fact!'

'Someone's taking care of her, and you said yourself it isn't a boy-friend. She's side-stepped two appeals on the radio. She has no clothes, you say, except what she stands up in. She bolts without even stopping to pack a suitcase. Can you sweat up any reason for that, Flanch?'

Flanch licked his lips but failed to achieve an answer.

'You're right, it doesn't look like a boy-friend,' pressed Swilbey. 'It looks like a girl bolting from the police.'

'I told the inspector I don't know much about her. She may have been up to something without me knowing.'

'And don't forget she bolts within an hour of her friend Barbara being murdered. And don't forget the friend was found in Betsy's car.'

'Here, draw it mild! You can't put it over that Betsy killed Mrs Kynsard.'

'I'm putting over that she knows the bloke who did, and that he's keeping her out of the way.'

'Meaning me, eh? Cor, that's a good one!' Flanch loosed a laugh.

'In your tale number three—don't let me get muddled over your tales, Flanch—I mean the one where you're standing beside the Morris talking soft to her. She's been robbing the till, you think, and has it in mind to bolt. Why didn't she talk soft back, and tap you for a spot o' cash for her travelling expenses?'

'I dunno why she didn't, but she didn't.'

'She didn't bother, eh? She just thought: "I've got to run from the police and hide myself. I haven't time to pack a suitcase—I've only time to deliver this beautiful picture to oblige a

friend".'

Flanch found himself glancing at the picture. If he had been told that the face of the Medusa was believed to have turned living men to stone he would have accepted the legend as a news item.

Turley glanced at Swilbey and took over.

'She had a boy-friend, Flanch, but she didn't bolt with him. We've found him. They spent the afternoon together in the flat. And they meant to dine together as soon as she had delivered that picture.'

'Well, she did the dirty on me, that's all, me paying for the flat!' He added viciously: 'That's if she *did* have a boy-friend!'

'The point is, she was enjoying herself with him and meant to rejoin him for dinner. If she was afraid of the police—before six forty—she had plenty of time to pack a suitcase.'

When Flanch made no attempt to answer, Turley spoke to Swilbey.

'You can take him along to your room and go through that West End tale. He must get corroboration. Otherwise, we won't wear it.' Turley added:

'One more question before you go, Flanch. Can you produce anybody to confirm your statement that Betsy had that scar?'

'Have a heart, Inspector. It was below the evening-dress line —you couldn't even see it when she was only wearing those

Titania whatsernames.'

'Did she ever go to a doctor for anything?'

'Not as far as I know.'

As soon as young Rawlings was alone with Turley he made a suggestion.

'That alleged scar of Betsy's. We know that Betsy was a bit of a hanger-on. Barbara paid for Betsy's hair-do's. Barbara may have sent Betsy to her own doctor or dentist or both.'

'Good enough! But mind you don't get under Swilbey's feet. Ask him if you can approach Mrs Tremman—she's more likely to know than Kynsard—then tackle the doctor or dentist or masseuse or anybody else who messes these women about.'

On the next day, as Turley was about to go out for lunch, Rawlings reported in some excitement.

'That scar follow-up, sir! No masseuse. Barbara's doctor had never attended Betsy, but Barbara's dentist had. I showed him what I showed the doctor—photo of the scar and the other documentary stuff. And he made a tooth problem of it, sir.'

'D'you mean the scar was a bite?'

'Look what he says about Betsy's teeth.'

Rawlings produced three dentist's charts—a card with a printed diagram of the upper and lower jaw, with dentist's markings in ink indicating individual variations of the patient's

teeth.

'I got him to mark the charts so that I shouldn't mug the point, sir. This one, *Barbara* (*D*), is the chart made from the cast taken from the corpse by another dentist. *Barbara* (*L*) is Barbara's teeth when her dentist treated her six weeks ago. *Betsy* is Betsy's teeth when she was treated a fortnight ago, the visits being charged to Barbara's account. Look what he's written on Betsy's card, sir!'

Turley studied the chart, with difficulty deciphered the dentist's handwriting.

'Medusa-multiplied-by-a-million!' he exploded. 'I must take this to the chief superintendent. And he'll run it up to the great white chief. I'll get 'em both before they go out to lunch. Wait here until I come back.'

Within a quarter of an hour Turley returned. To Rawlings he looked like a seasoned old boxer staging a come-back. He went to the house telephone.

'That you, Swilbey? . . . Out to lunch, is he? Well, you know where he is, don't you? Right! Go after him and tell him to pull Flanch in.'

He turned to Rawlings, beaming.

'You've done a job o' work, young feller-me-lad! You'd have shown more tact if you had let Swilbey put this up to me. Don't worry. If you've broken the rules, I'm going to keep you company.

'I don't suppose you've ever read Sherlock Holmes. Don't—until you're drawing your pension. Meaning we're going to do a spot of deduction—but it's not to be taken as a precedent, mind! What did they teach you at college! Get facts and don't guess. If you feel you must guess now and again, always begin by guessing that a perfect alibi is a fake.'

'Neither Flanch nor Kynsard has a perfect alibi, sir.'

'Quite right, but I wasn't thinking of the men,' said Turley. 'I was thinking of the cars. This case pivots on cars. Take that poor little Morris. There's a murder-car for you! Not a hope anywhere! Even its own meter rats on it and tells us how many miles it travelled on its murder-trip.

'Take Flanch's Ford. Alibi dead rotten. It might have been almost anywhere at any time.

'But take Kynsard's Chrysler. It's the one car in London that couldn't possibly have been mixed up in any murder. Betsy knows it's in the garage, with pictures inside it. She tells Penton and she tells Flanch, and she's right. It's in the garage when Mrs Tremman arrives for dinner. It stays there until it takes her home at midnight. And then, dammit, in case you might wonder what it was doing in the small hours, it can prove it was in a public garage—with old Medusa's snakes and a sunset or two in the back—suffering from an open exhaust manifold. Exhaust manifold my foot! Anybody can open it with a screwdriver in about forty seconds. See what I'm getting at, boy?'

'No, sir. If all that is true—'

'It is true. We've checked every minute of the Chrysler's time.'

'Then how can the car itself have been used in a murder?'

'The answer', said Turley, 'is a Medusa.' He laughed in a manner reminiscent of Flanch at his loudest.

'I don't know *how* the Chrysler was used,' he went on. 'We'll find out. After lunch, you're going to drive me from Kynsard's house to Mrs Tremman's bungalow. You'll want a stop-watch. And ask the superintendent if we can borrow a girl. She needn't have had any experience, but she must be a lightweight.'

11

Margaret Tremman told herself that it was her duty to prevent Arthur Kynsard from moping and to see that he was properly looked after during the period of readjustment.

She would have been shocked to the marrow if she had suspected herself of desiring the husband of her dead daughter. For beneath her vanity was a fundamental decency. She believed that she enjoyed his warm regard, tinged with romanticism once removed.

It was becoming her custom to turn up for dinner with her

own rations and sundry unrationed items, to the purchase of which she had devoted time and thought, supplementing Mrs Henson's inadequate effort to provide him with a decent evening meal.

Detective Inspector Turley was aware of this. He timed his moment carefully—so carefully that, with the aid of young Rawlings playing Boy Scout in the garden, he was knocking at the door as they were crossing from the dining-room to the drawing-room.

Through the open door of the drawing-room, Mrs Tremman heard Kynsard greet the inspector. She sighed, because it meant that her evening with Arthur would be broken up.

'I'd like to see Mrs Tremman as well, please.'

'Then come into the drawing-room. Have you had any luck with Betsy Trotwood?'

'We've found her,' answered Turley from the doorway.

'Good evening, Inspector.' Mrs Tremman was greeting him as a personal friend. 'I heard what you said. Is her name really Trotwood? It can't be!'

'We don't know, Mrs Tremman. She is dead. Murdered!' He paused, glanced at Kynsard and learnt nothing. 'This afternoon the commissioner ordered the arrest of Flanch, the man who was living with her.'

'How horrible! How perfectly awful!' exclaimed Mrs Tremman. 'It must be the same maniac.'

'It's horrible, but it's also very troublesome for us,' said Kynsard. 'I was counting on Betsy to clear up that irritating little riddle of the picture. Medusa's head, wasn't it?'

'That's what I've come to talk about,' said Turley. Mrs Tremman motioned him to a chair. He placed his bag rather clumsily between his feet. He opened in the tone of one making a speech.

'In a murder case, it generally happens that a number of innocent persons tell the police a number of lies. And suppress information that appears to be trivial but turns out to be important. Their object is to avoid being called as witnesses. Our difficulty comes in getting them to amend their statements without making them feel they have lost dignity.'

Margaret Tremman jumped in.

'If I have misled you, Inspector, I shan't feel it undignified to apologize.'

'I'm glad, Mrs Tremman. Please carry your mind back to seven o'clock last Thursday. Mr Kynsard told you he heard the garage doors. You told me you *thought* you *might* have heard them. I'll tell you now that we know they were opened about that time. Are you still uncertain whether you heard them?'

This was merely a shaker. The vital questions were to come. He had calculated that in Mrs Tremman lay the exposed flank of the formidable antagonist who knew so exactly what he could say, and what he could not say, with safety.

'As you put it like that, I suppose I must have heard the

doors.'

'Thank you, Mrs Tremman.' He turned towards the sociable, where Kynsard was sitting. 'Mr Kynsard, we know also that Betsy Trotwood delivered that picture—the Medusa—at about that time. Would you care to amend your statement that you did not see Betsy Trotwood? It's a matter of great importance to the man we have arrested.'

'I have nothing to add, Inspector, nor to withdraw.'

'Did you see the picture when you were in the garage?'

'I didn't notice it.'

'But you surely would have noticed it if—say—it had been propped against the wall, or against the side of the Chrysler? You were looking, you said, for an intruder, or traces of an intruder.'

'I suppose I would have noticed it. But I did not.'

Mrs Tremman could perceive only that the men were in some difficulty and felt she must rise to the occasion.

'I see what must have happened!' she cried. 'We heard the doors being *shut*, not opened. The girl was shutting them and slipping away, after putting the picture inside the Chrysler. So of course Arthur didn't see it!'

'Yes—er—yes!' said Turley thoughtfully. 'Do you agree, Mr Kynsard, that that is a feasible explanation?'

'I agree that it's a feasible explanation. Whether it happened so is another matter.'

'Your continued denial that you saw either Betsy or the picture convinces me that she did put it in the Chrysler,' said Turley. 'That saves Flanch.'

He waited for three seconds and then: 'It's my painful duty, Mr Kynsard, to arrest you. You will be charged with the murder of the woman known as Elizabeth Trotwood. The official warning is unnecessary in your case, but I am required to give it.'

Mrs Tremman hovered on the brink of laughter while Turley was reciting the warning. Her sense of proportion was slipping. It was impertinent to speak to Arthur like that! Arthur seemed to think so too. She waited for him to say something devastating.

'This is great, Inspector! I am charged with the murder of Elizabeth Trotwood. I submit to arrest under protest and have no statement to make.'

'Arthur! Is the inspector serious?'

'Yes, my dear! Uncomfortably serious.' He got up. 'I'm afraid you'll have to see yourself home.'

Mrs Tremman stared at the inspector. He stared back at her, rather rudely. She remembered with disgust that she had thought him clever and sympathetic.

'I am sorry, Mrs Tremman, but unless you can answer my

questions satisfactorily I must arrest you, too, as accessory. And the warning I gave Mr Kynsard applies also to you.'

'Arrest *me*! For murdering Betsy Trotwood?'

'For being accessory, Margaret,' cut in Kynsard. 'That means helping me to commit the murder, or to cover my traces.'

'But if you didn't murder Betsy Trotwood, how can there be any traces? Oh, do let's talk sensibly! What must I do, Arthur?'

'I don't think the inspector will allow me to advise you. No doubt he would like to. But he has his regulations to consider.'

'I can look after my regulations,' said Turley. 'If Mrs Tremman wants your advice on her position, I've no objection to your giving it.'

'By courtesy of the inspector, this is your position, Margaret. If you answer his questions to his satisfaction, he will probably not arrest you. If you fail to satisfy him, your defence will be the weaker.'

'But I haven't got a defence and I don't want one!' protested Mrs Tremman. 'And I do hate not answering questions—besides I want to ask one or two myself. Why does he think you killed Betsy Trotwood?'

'He won't tell you. The police have to tell me everything they know, as soon as they can get it typed, but regulations require them to play the oyster at this stage.'

'If Mr Kynsard would confine himself to giving legal advice

and leave police regulations to me, we could get on,' snapped Turley.

Turley was playing for high stakes. Kynsard would never make the mistake of supplying positive evidence against himself—if left to himself. The attack had been launched on the exposed flank. Kynsard, for all his cleverness, had fallen into the trap of consenting to advise Mrs Tremman. In his own house! There could be no allegation of police coercion.

'Mrs Tremman—a few seconds after Mr Kynsard went to the garage, did you *think* you heard a scream?'

'D'you mean a man's scream? Or a Betsy Trotwood's scream?'

'If Trotwood was a normal woman, I think she screamed, though possibly she fainted.'

'At sight of my son-in-law? It's getting sillier, Inspector. Do you expect me to believe that he rushed at her and killed her—a girl he had never seen before—like a maniac murderer?'

'Not like a maniac!' The woman's irrelevancy was forcing his hand. 'It's such an unlikely thing to happen, isn't it, Mrs Tremman? It's so unlikely that it can have only one possible explanation. He killed her—a woman he had never seen before—to save his own life.'

Turley glanced at Kynsard. He was leaning back against the mantelpiece in an attitude of boredom—too knowledgeable to wish to impress his innocence on the police.

Turley continued: 'We know that Betsy came here and delivered a particular picture. We know that she wished to put it with the other pictures in the Chrysler. In finding a place for this rather large picture, she disarranged the other pictures. At that point Mr Kynsard came in. She had seen what was underneath those pictures. It was her life or his. Do you understand now, Mrs Tremman?'

'No,' she answered bluntly. 'What was under the pictures?'

'The body of your daughter—whom he had killed between nine and ten that morning. He put the body in the Chrysler and covered it with the pictures. It remained there all day. It travelled behind you when he drove you home. Did you not know this, Mrs Tremman?'

'What a perfectly abominable thing to say to me!' Mrs Tremman knew she was losing her grip of a situation that defied the traditions of her lifetime. 'Arthur, can't you stop him?'

'We don't want to stop him. You must answer his question. Did you know that the body of poor Barbara—murdered, as he says, by me!—was in the Chrysler?' With skilful inflection he made the question sound childishly absurd. 'Give a plain answer—just "yes" or "no".'

'No. Of course not!'

Turley pointed a finger at Mrs Tremman.

'Then why did you falsely identify the body of Elizabeth Trotwood as that of your daughter?'

'*Don't answer*, Margaret!'

With that interruption, Turley knew that he had made his second gain. Through Mrs Tremman he would wring a definite admission from Kynsard.

'Inspector, if you will ask whether Mrs Tremman *believed* the body she examined to be that of her daughter, I will advise her to answer.'

'Of course I did! I should not have been so upset if it hadn't been poor Barbara!'

As he asked his next question, Turley had his eyes on Kynsard.

'Do you remember stating to me—and signing the statement—that there was a scar on your daughter's chest?'

'I do. So there was!'

'When your daughter was alive, did you ever *see* that scar on her body?'

Kynsard cut in quickly.

'Tell the inspector exactly what happened, Margaret—give him the full circumstances. Keep nothing back, or he will arrest you.'

As he spoke. Kynsard glanced at Turley, smiled, and gave the ghost of a bow, acknowledging that the other had scored. But if it was an acknowledgement, it was also a defiance. He

still believed he could win in the courts.

'I had not seen it. But I knew it was there, because Mr Kynsard told me just before I came to the police station. I must explain that—'

'He doesn't need any more, Margaret. I confirm that answer, Inspector. I think that disposes of the charge of being accessory to my alleged crime—or rather crimes.'

'Not quite. There's another question coming.'

'I feel as if I were in the middle of someone else's nightmare!' cried Mrs Tremman. 'I don't believe a word you're saying, Inspector. But—if Arthur killed Betsy, why should he want to pretend she was Barbara?'

'Look how successful that trick was, up to this evening! At this moment, another man is under arrest. Kynsard killed Barbara first. He had the colossal nerve to leave the body in his own garage for fifteen hours. That gave him a safe method of carrying the body away—as well as all those hours in which to work up her "disappearance". First, he could use you as cover when transporting the body. Secondly, by timing the movements of the Chrysler, he could create the illusion that it was impossible that he could have disposed of a body.

'He forgot that Betsy had a key to the garage. She discovered the murder—and he battered her to death with a mallet. He ran the Morris—parked in the lane—into the garage. Before he left for the police station in the morning, Mrs Henson unconsciously revealed his blunder over the house-dress, which enabled not only the police but you yourself to

see that your daughter was almost certainly killed in the morning at home.

'That must have shaken him, though it did not amount to the fatal mistake. At the police station, he saw his chance. His battering had created a sort of third face, common to both women. He was risking nothing. If his misidentification failed, he could plead an honest mistake. If it succeeded, the trail would inevitably be confused—as it was confused.

'He had the problem of getting rid of the corpse of Betsy, waiting in the garage until he returned from Rubington. It is dangerous to park a car with a corpse in it. A constable may remember the man who walked away from the car. There was, in fact, a constable on point duty at the end of this road, who kept Kynsard anchored until seven in the morning.

'Then he remembered that Gibbern was being hanged at eight. From about a quarter to eight onwards there would be a crowd round the prison, into which he could melt. To give it a maniacal twist—as Gibbern did—he removed the clothing. That was how he became aware of the existence of that scar. Then, of course—'

'Stop, please!' cried Mrs Tremman. The sense of proportion was coming back. 'I think I'm beginning to feel rather ill.'

'You need not feel ill on my account!' rasped Kynsard. 'The inspector alluded to his facts. The one and only fact he has is that you and I made a mistake in identifying Barbara. He begins by *guessing* that I murdered Barbara. He *constructs* the whole preposterous pantomime with the Chrysler. He *deduces*

that therefore I murdered Betsy Trotwood.'

Mrs Tremman seemed to pay no attention. Power of resistance had left her. She spoke to Turley.

'Inspector, if it was not poor Barbara—'

'It was Trotwood,' said Turley. 'The corpse had a clip of three false teeth. Your daughter had none. Trotwood had the teeth fitted by Mrs Kynsard's dentist.'

'If it was not poor Barbara, where is she?'

'The Chrysler makes that clear enough, Mrs Tremman. The alibi was too clever. He allowed himself only five to ten minutes in which to dispose of the corpse. From which it's a simple inference that he must have hidden the body between here and Rubington.'

'A brilliant mosaic!' exclaimed Kynsard. 'A logical sequence without a single flaw—and equally without a single fact!'

Turley bent down and opened his bag. From it he took a house-dress, a pair of shabby, gaping house-shoes, and a wooden mallet.

'In the only possible place on that road—the bombed-out cider factory,' he said. 'Can you identify those garments, Mrs Tremman? That's all we'll ask you to identify tonight.'

Some more Penguin crime novels
are described on the following pages

Home is the Prisoner

Jean Potts

'A tense, exciting, and beautifully written thriller'—Cyril Ray in the *Spectator*

When Jim Singley returns to Athena after a spell in prison for manslaughter, he stirs up old memories—and old hostilities.

At his trial he had only escaped the electric chair on the evidence of Cleo, the thirteen-year-old daughter of the murdered man. Few believed in his innocence, and, when the key witness herself retracts her evidence, who can trust him? Nobody is in a hurry to see him—least of all his son, his ex-wife, or former mistress. But in the general attempt to settle old scores the truth that has lain dormant for six years is gradually pieced together.

Love in Amsterdam

Nicolas Freeling

Nicolas Freeling's first novel, *Love in Amsterdam*, harps on half-conscious fears in its study of a writer suspected by the police—and at times by himself and by the reader—of having shot his former mistress.

'My whole idea,' states one of Freeling's characters, 'was to write about Europe in a European idiom. Something that has a European flavour and inflection.' If this was also Nicolas Freeling's intention, what a triumphant start he has made to his un-American activities! Here are characters that are subtle rather than tough; dialogue that echoes real life; settings (in the Low Countries) exactly inventoried; and, in Van der Valk, the Dutch inspector, a detective as human and unorthodox as Maigret himself.

His first three books grade this cosmopolitan writer almost in a class with Simenon and Dürrenmatt, in what begins to take shape as a distinctively European school of 'crime' that is far more than 'crime'.

'Markedly superior and original. . . More depth than many straight novels and a convincing surprise finish'—Maurice Richardson in the *Observer*.

Because of the Cats

Nicolas Freeling

Nicolas Freeling's second novel, *Because of the Cats*, is a strangely plausible case of a gang of Dutch teenagers deliberately and viciously corrupted to suit a twisted purpose.

'An effective and frightening novel'—*Times Literary Supplement*.

Gun Before Butter

Nicolas Freeling

In *Gun Before Butter*, Nicolas Freeling's third novel, two identities dissolve at the moment when a knife is jammed between the ribs of an unknown man in Amsterdam.

'Has established himself as the most interesting new crime writer for some years'—Maurice Richardson in the *Observer*

They shoot horses, don't they?

Horace McCoy

One policeman sat in the rear with me while the other one drove. We were travelling very fast and the siren was blowing. It was the same kind of a siren they had used at the marathon dance when they wanted to wake us up.

'Why did you kill her?' the policeman in the rear seat asked.

'She asked me to,' I said.

'You hear that, Ben?'

'Ain't he an obliging bastard?' Ben said, over his shoulder.

'Is that the only reason you got?' the policeman in the rear seat asked.

'They shoot horses, don't they?' I asked.

Horace McCoy's tough, bitten-off story of a marathon dance contest and its macabre sequel is a monument to California's craziest years. It is at once a study in abnormal psychology and a grim picture of the callous brutality of American showmanship at its worst.

The Gazebo

Patricia Wentworth

'This is her twenty-ninth case, proving once more that "You can't go wrong with Miss Maud Silver"'—*Observer*

'Nicholas Carey' were the last two words Mrs Graham uttered in the presence of her murderer. At first the evidence seemed conclusive—especially as the man in question admitted he was on the scene of the crime only a few minutes before. But there are other suspects. Why, for instance, had Sid Blount and Fred Worple been so keen to buy the Grahams' house? Why did Ella Harrison try to establish an alibi? It needs a Miss Silver to unravel it all, and

luckily she's there to see justice done.

'A first-rate story-teller'—*Daily Telegraph*

[The end of *The Kynsard Affair* by William Edward Vickers (as Roy Vickers)]