

from Paddington and you will be met at Oakbridge Station. I enclose five pounds for expenses. Yours truly,  
Una Nancy Owen"

(**MARSTON** makes to the balcony.)

Mr. Marston?

**MARSTON.** Don't actually know the Owens. Got a wire from a pal of mine, Badger Berkeley. Told me to roll up here. Surprised me a bit because I had an idea the old horse had gone to Norway. I haven't got the wire.

**WARGRAVE.** Thank you. Doctor Armstrong?

**ARMSTRONG.** In the circumstances, I think I may admit that my visit here was professional. Mr. Owen wrote me that he was worried about his wife's health - her nerves, to be precise. He wanted a report without her being alarmed. He therefore suggested that my visit should be regarded as that of an ordinary guest.

**WARGRAVE.** You had no previous acquaintance with the family?

**ARMSTRONG.** No.

**WARGRAVE.** But you had no hesitation in obeying the summons?

**ARMSTRONG.** A colleague of mine was mentioned and a very handsome fee was suggested. I was due for a holiday, anyway.

(**EMILY** re-enters and hands a letter to **WARGRAVE**, who reads.)

**WARGRAVE.** "Dear Miss Brent: I do hope you remember me. We were together at Bell Haven Guest House in August some years ago and we seemed to have so much in common. I am starting a guest house of my own on an island off the coast of Devon. I think there is really an opening for a place where there is good plain English cooking, and a nice old-fashioned type of person. None of this nudity and gramophones half the night. I shall be very glad if you could see your way to spending your summer holiday on Soldier Island - as

ALL BUT  
MRS R &  
NARRACOTT

my guest, of course. I suggest August 8th, 12:40 from Paddington to Oakbridge. Yours sincerely, U.N." Hmm. Yes, the signature is slightly ambiguous.

(**LOMBARD** speaks quietly to **VERA**.)

**LOMBARD.** I like the nudity touch!

(**WARGRAVE** takes a letter from his pocket.)

**WARGRAVE.** Here is my own decoy letter. From an old friend of mine, Lady Constance Culmington. She writes in her usual vague, incoherent way, urges me to join her here and refers to her host and hostess in the vaguest of terms.

(**ARMSTRONG**, **MARSTON** and **MACKENZIE** look at the letter. **LOMBARD** stares at **BLORE**.)

**LOMBARD.** (*Excitedly.*) Look here, I've just thought of something -

**WARGRAVE.** In a minute.

**LOMBARD.** But I -

**WARGRAVE.** We will take one thing at a time, if you don't mind, Captain Lombard. General MacKenzie?

(**BLORE** sits. **MACKENZIE** pulls at his moustache.)

**MACKENZIE.** Got a letter - from this fellow Owen - thought I must have met him sometime at the Club - mentioned some old cronies of mine who were to be here - hoped I'd excuse informal invitation. Haven't kept the letter, I'm afraid.

**WARGRAVE.** And you, Captain Lombard?

**LOMBARD.** Same sort of thing. Invitation mentioning mutual friends. I haven't kept the letter either.

(*There is a pause. WARGRAVE turns his attention to BLORE; he looks at him for some time. When he speaks, his voice is silky and dangerous.*)

**WARGRAVE.** Just now we had a somewhat disturbing experience. An apparently disembodied voice spoke to us all by name, uttering certain definite accusations against us. We will deal with those accusations presently. At the moment I am interested in a minor point. Amongst the names received was that of William Henry Blore. But as far as we know, there is no one named Blore amongst us. The name of Davis was not mentioned. What have you to say about that, Mr. Davis?

**BLORE.** Cat's out of the bag, it seems. I suppose I'd better admit my name isn't Davis.

**WARGRAVE.** You are William Henry Blore?

**BLORE.** That's right.

**LOMBARD.** I will add something to that. Not only are you here under a false name, Mr. Blore, but in addition I've noticed this evening that you're a first-class liar. You claim to have come from Natal, South Africa. I know South Africa and Natal well, and I'm prepared to swear that you've never set foot there in your life.

*(They all turn to BLORE.)*

**BLORE.** You gentlemen have got me wrong. I'm an ex - C.I.D. man.

**LOMBARD.** Oh, a copper!

**BLORE.** I've got my credentials and I can prove it. I run a detective agency in Plymouth. I was put onto this job.

**WARGRAVE.** By whom?

**BLORE.** Why, Mr. Owen. Sent a very nice money order for expenses, and said I was to join the house party, posing as a guest. He also sent a list of all your names and said I was to keep an eye on you all.

**WARGRAVE.** Any reason given?

**BLORE.** Said Mrs. Owen had got some valuable jewels. *(Pause.)* Mrs. Owen, my foot! I don't believe there's any such person.

*(WARGRAVE looks down at the letters.)*

**WARGRAVE.** Your conclusions are, I think, justified. Ulick Norman Owen, Una Nancy Owen. Each time, that is to say. U.N. Owen. Or, by a slight stretch of fancy, Unknown.

**VERA.** But it's fantastic! Mad!

**WARGRAVE.** Oh, yes, I've no doubt in my own mind that we have been invited here by a madman - probably a dangerous homicidal lunatic.

*(There is an appalled silence.)*

**ROGERS.** Oh, my gawd!

**WARGRAVE.** Whoever it is who has enticed us here, that person has taken the trouble to find out a great deal about us. *(Pause.)* A very great deal. And out of his knowledge concerning us, he has made certain definite accusations.

*(Everybody speaks at once.)*

**BLORE.** It's all very well to make accusations.

**MACKENZIE.** A pack of damn lies! Slander!

**VERA.** It's iniquitous! Wicked!

**ROGERS.** A lie - a wicked lie - we never did, neither of us -

**MARSTON.** Don't know what the damned fool was getting at -

*(WARGRAVE raises a hand for silence.)*

**WARGRAVE.** I wish to say this. Our unknown friend accuses me of the murder of one Edward Seton. I remember Seton perfectly well. He came up before me for trial in June, 1930. He was charged with the murder of an elderly woman. He was very ably defended and made a good impression on the jury in the witness box. Nevertheless, on the evidence he was certainly guilty. I summed up accordingly and the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. In passing sentence of death, I fully concurred with this verdict. The appeal was lodged on the grounds of misdirection. The appeal was dismissed and the man was duly executed. *(Pause.)* I wish to say

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

**ARMSTRONG.** Did you know Seton at all? I mean, personally.

*(WARGRAVE looks at him; he hesitates a moment.)*

**WARGRAVE.** I knew nothing of Seton previous to the trial.

*(LOMBARD speaks in a low voice to VERA.)*

**LOMBARD.** The old boy's lying. I'll swear he's lying.

**MACKENZIE.** Fellow's a madman. Absolute madman. Got a bee in his bonnet. Got hold of the wrong end of the stick all round. Best really to leave this sort of thing unanswered. However, feel I ought to say - no truth - no truth whatever in what he said about - er - young Arthur Richmond. Richmond was one of my officers. I sent him on reconnaissance in 1917. He was killed. Also like to say - resent very much - slur on my wife. Been dead a long time. Best woman in the world. Absolutely - Caesar's wife.

**MARSTON.** I've just been thinking - John and Lucy Combes. Must have been a couple of kids I ran over near Cambridge. Beastly bad luck.

**WARGRAVE.** *(Acidly.)* For them or for you?

**MARSTON.** Well, I was thinking - for me - but, of course, you're right, sir. It was damned bad luck for them too. Of course, it was pure accident. They rushed out of some cottage or other. I had my license suspended for a year. Beastly nuisance.

**ARMSTRONG.** This speeding's all wrong - all wrong. Young men like you are a danger to the community.

*(MARSTON wanders to the window and picks up his glass, which is half-full.)*

**MARSTON.** Well, I couldn't help it. Just an accident.

**ROGERS.** Might I say a word, sir?

**LOMBARD.** Go ahead, Rogers.

**ROGERS.** There was a mention, sir, of me and Mrs. Rogers, and of Miss Jennifer Brady. There isn't a word of truth in it. We were with Miss Brady when she died. She was always in poor health, sir, always from the time we came to her. There was a storm, sir, the night she died. The telephone was out of order. We couldn't get the doctor to her. I went for him, sir, on foot. But he got there too late. We'd done everything possible for her, sir. Devoted to her, we were. Anyone will tell you the same. There was never a word said against us. Never a word.

**BLORE.** Came into a nice little something at her death, I suppose. Didn't you?

**ROGERS.** *(Stiffly.)* Miss Brady left us a legacy in recognition of our faithful service. And why not, I'd like to know?

**LOMBARD.** What about yourself, Mr. Blore?

**BLORE.** What about me?

**LOMBARD.** Your name was on the list.

**BLORE.** I know, I know. Landor, you mean? That was the London & Commercial Bank robbery.

*(WARGRAVE lights his pipe.)*

**WARGRAVE.** I remember the name, though it didn't come before me. Landor was convicted on your evidence. You were the police officer in charge of the case.

**BLORE.** I was, M'lud.

**WARGRAVE.** Landor got penal servitude for life and died in Dartmoor a year later. He was a delicate man.

**BLORE.** He was a crook. It was him put the night watchman out. The case was clear from the start.

**WARGRAVE.** *(Slowly.)* You were complimented, I think, on your able handling of the case.

**BLORE.** I got my promotion. *(Pause.)* I was only doing my duty.

**LOMBARD.** Convenient word - duty. What about you, Doctor?

**ARMSTRONG.** I'm at a loss to understand the matter. The name meant nothing to me – what was it? Close? Close? I really don't remember having a patient of that name – or its being connected with a death in any way. The thing's a complete mystery to me. Of course, it's a long time ago. *(Pause.)* It might possibly be one of my operation cases in hospital. They come too late, so many of these people. Then, when the patient dies, it's always the surgeon's fault.

**LOMBARD.** And then it's better to take up nerve cases and give up surgery. Some, of course, give up drink.

**ARMSTRONG.** I protest. You've no right to insinuate such things. I never touch alcohol.

**LOMBARD.** My dear fellow, I never suggested you did. Anyway, Mr. Unknown is the only one who knows all the facts.

*(WARGRAVE turns to VERA.)*

**WARGRAVE.** Miss Claythorne?

*(She starts. She has been sitting, staring in front of her. She speaks without feeling.)*

**VERA.** I was nursery governess to Peter Hamilton. We were in Cornwall for the summer. He was forbidden to swim out far. One day, when my attention was distracted, he started off – as soon as I saw what happened I swam after him. I couldn't get there in time –

**WARGRAVE.** Was there an inquest?

**VERA.** Yes, I was exonerated by the Coroner. His mother didn't blame me either.

**WARGRAVE.** Thank you, Miss Brent?

**EMILY.** I have nothing to say.

**WARGRAVE.** Nothing?

**EMILY.** Nothing.

**WARGRAVE.** You reserve your defence?

**EMILY.** *(Sharply.)* There is no question of defence. I have always acted according to the dictates of my conscience.

**LOMBARD.** What a law-abiding lot we seem to be! Myself excepted –

**WARGRAVE.** We are waiting for your story, Captain Lombard.

**LOMBARD.** I haven't got a story.

**WARGRAVE.** *(Sharply.)* What do you mean?

*(LOMBARD grins; apparently enjoying himself.)*

**LOMBARD.** I'm sorry to disappoint all of you. It's just that I plead guilty. It's perfectly true. I left those natives alone in the bush. Matter of self-preservation.

*(His words cause a sensation. VERA looks at him unbelievably.)*

**MACKENZIE.** *(Sternly.)* You abandoned your men?

**LOMBARD.** *(Coolly.)* Not quite the act of a proper gentleman, I'm afraid. But after all, self-preservation's a man's first duty. And natives don't mind dying, you know. They don't feel about it as Europeans do –

*(There is a pause. LOMBARD looks around at everyone with amusement. WARGRAVE clears throat disapprovingly.)*

**WARGRAVE.** Our inquiry rests there. Now, Rogers, who else is there on this island besides ourselves and you and your wife?

**ROGERS.** Nobody, sir. Nobody at all.

**WARGRAVE.** You're sure of that?

**ROGERS.** Quite sure, sir.

**WARGRAVE.** Thank you.

*(ROGERS turns to go.)*

Don't go, Rogers. I am not yet clear as to the purpose of our unknown host in getting us to assemble here. But in my opinion he's not sane in the accepted sense of the word. He may be dangerous. In my opinion, it would