

CARTER. (*into the telephone*) Sir Wilfrid Robart's Chambers ... Oh, it's you, Charles... No, Sir Wilfrid's in Court... Won't be back just yet... Yes, Shuttleworth Case... What - with Myers for the prosecution and Banter trying it? ... He's been giving judgment for close on two hours already... No, not an earthly this evening. We're full up. Can give you an appointment tomorrow... No, couldn't possibly. I'm expecting Mayhew, of Mayhew and Brinskill you know, any minute now... Well, so long. (*He replaces the receiver and sorts the documents on the desk.*)

GRETA. (*Enters. She is painting her nails.*) Shall I make the tea, Mr. Carter?

CARTER. (*looking at his watch*) It's hardly time yet, Greta.

GRETA. It is by my watch.

CARTER. Then your watch is wrong.

GRETA. (*crossing to center*) I put it right by the radio.

CARTER. Then the radio must be wrong.

GRETA. (*shocked*) Oh, not the radio, Mr. Carter. That couldn't be wrong.

CARTER. This watch was my father's. It never gains nor loses. They don't make watches like that nowadays. (*He shakes his head, then suddenly changes his manner and picks up one of the typewritten papers.*) Really, your typing. Always mistakes. (*He crosses to right of GRETA.*) You've left out a word.

GRETA. Oh, well - just one word. Anyone might do that.

CARTER. The word you have left out is the word *not*. The omission of it entirely alters the sense.

GRETA. Oh, does it? That's rather funny when you come to think of it. (*She giggles.*)

CARTER. It is not in the least funny. (*He tears the letter in half and hands the piece to her.*) Do it again. You may remember I told you last week about the celebrated case of Bryant and Horsfall. Case of a will and a trust

fund, and entirely owing to a piece of careless copying by a clerk...

GRETA. (*interrupting*) The wrong wife got the money, I remember.

CARTER. A woman divorced fifteen years previously. Absolutely contrary to the intention of the testator, as his lordship himself admitted. But the wording had to stand. They couldn't do anything about it. (*He crosses above the desk to right of it.*)

GRETA. I think that's rather funny, too. (*She giggles.*)

CARTER. Counsel's Chambers are no place to be funny in. The Law, Greta, is a serious business and should be treated accordingly.

GRETA. You wouldn't think so - to hear some of the jokes Judges make.

CARTER. That kind of joke is the prerogative of the Bench.

GRETA. And I'm always reading in the paper about "laughter in Court."

CARTER. If that's not caused by one of the Judge's remarks you'll find he'll soon threaten to have the Court cleared.

GRETA. (*crossing to the door*) Mean old thing. (*She turns and crosses to left of the desk.*) Do you know what I read the other day, Mr. Carter. (*sententiously*) "The Law's an Ass." I'm not being rude. It's a quotation.

CARTER. (*coldly*) A quotation of a facetious nature. Not meant to be taken seriously... (*He looks at his watch.*) You can make the tea - (*He pauses, waiting for the exact second.*) - now, Greta.

GRETA. (*gladly*) Oh, thank you, Mr. Carter. (*She crosses quickly to the door.*)

CARTER. Mr. Mayhew, of Mayhew and Brinskill, will be here shortly. A Mr. Leonard Vole is also expected. They may come together or separately.

GRETA. (*excitedly*) Leonard Vole? (*She crosses to the desk*) Why, that's the name - it was in the paper...

CARTER. (*repressively*) The tea, Greta.

GRETA. Asked to communicate with the police as he might be able to give them useful information.

CARTER. (*raising his voice*) Tea!

GRETA. (*crossing to the door and turning*) It was only last...

(CARTER glowers at GRETA.)

The tea, Mr. Carter.

(GRETA, abashed but unsatisfied, exits.)

CARTER. (*continues his arrangement of the papers, muttering to himself*) These girls. Sensational – inaccurate! Don't know what the Temple's coming to.

(*He examines a typewritten document, makes an angry sound, picks up a pen and makes a correction.*)

GRETA. (*Enters. Announcing:*) Mr. Mayhew.

(MR. MAYHEW and LEONARD VOLE enter. MAYHEW is a typical middle-aged solicitor, shrewd and rather dry and precise in manner. LEONARD is a likeable, friendly young man, about twenty-seven. He is looking faintly worried. MAYHEW carries a briefcase.)

MAYHEW. (*giving his hat to GRETA*) Sit down, Mr. Vole. (*he crosses and stands above the desk*) Good afternoon, Carter.

(*He puts his briefcase on the desk.*)

(GRETA takes LEONARD's hat and hangs both on the pegs above the door. She then exits, staring at LEONARD over her shoulder.)

CARTER. Good afternoon, Mr. Mayhew. Sir Wilfrid shouldn't be long, sir. Though you never can tell with Mr. Justice Banter. I'll go straight over to the Robing Room and tell him that you're here – (*He hesitates.*) with...

(*He crosses below the desk to right of LEONARD.*)

MAYHEW. With Mr. Leonard Vole. Thank you, Carter. I'm afraid our appointment was at rather short notice. But in this case time is – er – rather urgent.

(CARTER crosses to the door.)

How's the lumbago?

CARTER. (*turning*) I only feel it when the wind is in the East. Thank you for remembering, Mr. Mayhew.

(CARTER exits hurriedly.)

(MAYHEW sits left of the desk. LEONARD prowls uneasily.)

MAYHEW. Sit down, Mr. Vole.

LEONARD. Thanks – I'd rather walk about. I – this sort of thing makes you feel a bit jumpy. (*he crosses down left*)

MAYHEW. Yes, yes, very probably...

GRETA. (*Enters. She speaks to MAYHEW, but stares with fascinated interest at LEONARD.*) Would you care for a cup of tea, Mr. Mayhew? I've just made it.

LEONARD. (*appreciatively*) Thanks. I don't mind if –

MAYHEW. (*interrupting; decisively*) No, thank you.

(GRETA turns to exit.)

LEONARD. (*to GRETA*) Sorry. (*He smiles at her.*)

(GRETA smiles at LEONARD and exits. There is a pause.)

(*He crosses up right abruptly and with a rather likeable air of bewilderment.*)

What I mean is, I can't believe it's me this is happening to. I keep thinking – perhaps it's all a dream and I'll wake up presently.

MAYHEW. Yes, I suppose one might feel like that.

LEONARD. (*moving to right of the desk*) What I mean is – well, it seems so silly.

MAYHEW. (*sharply*) Silly, Mr. Vole?