

LESGATE - TON

~~TONY. Yes. I even wrote her two anonymous notes offering to sell it back.~~

~~LESGATE. Why?~~

~~TONY. I was hoping that would make her come and tell me all about him—but it didn't—so I kept the letter. (Tony takes out wallet, and lets Max's letter fall out of it onto sofa. Lesgate picks it up and examines envelope.)~~

LESGATE. Why are you telling me all this?

TONY. Because you're the only person I can trust. (Lesgate puts the letter back in wallet and Tony snaps wallet shut.) Anyway, that did it. It must have put the fear of God into them because the letters stopped—and we lived happily ever after. (Changes tone.) Funny to think that just a year ago I was sitting in that Knightsbridge pub—actually planning to murder her—and I might have done it if I hadn't seen something that changed my mind.

LESGATE. (With back half turned to Tony—tapping pipe on ash tray on table back of sofa.) Well. (Tap—tap—tap.) What did you see? (Tap—tap.)

TONY. (Quietly, after short pause.) I saw you. (Long pause.)

LESGATE. (Turning round slowly to Tony.) What was so odd about that?

TONY. The coincidence. You see only a week before I'd been to a reunion dinner and the fellows had been talking about you. How you'd been—court-martialed during the war—a year in prison! That was news. Mind you, at college we'd always said old Swann would end up in jail—that cash box, I suppose.

LESGATE. What about it?

TONY. (With a laugh.) My dear fellow, everybody knew you took that money. Poor old Alfred.

LESGATE. (Rising.) Well, thanks for the drink. Interesting hearing about your matrimonial affairs, I'm sure. (Moving to hall.) I take it you won't be wanting that car after all?

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

LESGATE. Yes, I think you'd better. (During his following speech, Tony gets up from the sofa. He has dropped his limp. He takes out his handkerchief, wipes fingerprints off the reunion photograph and returns it to L. wall. Then he carefully wipes ash tray on coffee table, part of table and the brandy bottle. He crosses behind sofa—takes ash tray and dumps ashes into fireplace—again wipes with handkerchief and takes ash tray back to table behind sofa.)

TONY. It was when I saw you in the pub that it happened. Suddenly everything became quite clear. Only a few months before, Margot and I had made our wills—quite short affairs leaving everything we had to each other in case of accidents. Hers worked out at just over ninety thousand pounds. Investments, mostly—all a little too easy to get at. And that was dangerous as they'd be bound to suspect me. I'd need an alibi—a very good one—and then I saw you. I'd often wondered what happened to people when they came out of prison—people like you, I mean. Can they get jobs? Do old friends rally round? Suppose they'd never had any friends. I was so curious to know that I followed you. I followed you home that night and—would you mind passing your glass? (*Lesgate, bewildered, hands Tony his glass.*) Thank you, thank you so much—and I've been following you ever since.

LESGATE. Why?

TONY. (*Wipes Lesgate's glass and puts it back on coffee table.*) I was hoping that, sooner or later, I might—catch you at something and be able to . . .

LESGATE. Blackmail me?

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

LESGATE. Rather dull work.

TONY. To begin with, yes. But you know how it is—you take up a hobby and the more you get to know of it the more fascinating it becomes. You became quite fascinating. In fact, there were times when I felt that you—almost belonged to me.

LESGATE. That must have been fascinating.

TONY. You always went dog-racing on Mondays and Thursdays. I even took it up myself—just to be near you. You'd changed your name to Adams.

LESGATE. Yes, I got bored with Swann. Any crime in that?

TONY. No, none at all. And you used to go to a little private club in Soho. It had an odd name . . . (*Remembering.*) The Kettle of Fish, that's it. The police closed it down recently, I believe—someone was caught taking drugs or something.

LESGATE. (*Casually.*) I never heard about that. I went there to eat. There's no crime in that either.

TONY. None whatever. In fact, there was nothing really illegal about you. I got quite discouraged, and then one day you disappeared from your lodgings, so I phoned your landlady. I said, "Mr.

Adams owed me five pounds." . . . Apparently that was nothing. Mr. Adams owed her six weeks' rent and her best lodger fifty-five pounds! And Mr. Adams had always been such a nice gentleman. That's what seemed to upset her most.

LESGATE. Yes, that's what always upsets them most. (*Lesgate strolls to coffee table and reaches for the brandy bottle.*)

TONY. (*Tony indicates gloves on arm of sofa.*) I say, old boy, if you want another drink, do you mind putting on these gloves? (*Lesgate glances at the gloves but does not pick them up.*) Thanks. Now, where were we? Oh, yes. I'd lost you and then I found you one day at the dog-racing and tailed you home to your new lodgings in Belsize Park. There Mr. Adams became Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson left Belsize Park last July owing fifteen weeks' rent and somewhat richer for his brief encounter with a . . . Miss Wallace. You used to go out with Miss Wallace on Wednesdays and Sundays. She certainly was in love with you, wasn't she? I suppose she thought you were growing that handsome mustache to please her. Poor Miss Wallace

LESGATE. This is all most interesting. Do go on.

TONY. July—August—September . . . Apartment one two seven Carlisle Court . . . Occupant . . . A Mrs. Van Dorn. Her late husband left her two hotels and a large apartment house—furnished. What a base to operate from, Captain Lesgate! The only trouble is, she does rather enjoy being courted, and she is so very expensive. Perhaps that's why you've been trying to sell her car for over a month.

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

TONY. I know. I called her up just before you arrived here. She only wanted eight hundred. (*Pause. Lesgate remains perfectly still.*)

LESGATE. (*Casually.*) Where's the nearest police station?

TONY. Opposite the church. Two minutes' walk.

LESGATE. Suppose I walk there now?

TONY. What would you tell them?

LESGATE. Everything.

TONY. Everything? All about Mr. Adams and Mr. Wilson?

LESGATE. I shall simply tell them you are trying to blackmail me into . . .

TONY. Into?

LESGATE. Murdering your wife. (*Pause.*)