

Scene Two

(Two hours later. The furniture has been moved to make the room more suitable for police interrogations. A card table has been set up with some chairs. On the table is a small tray with a jug of water, glasses and a box of cigarettes. TREVES is seen looking around the room briefly before SUPERINTENDENT BATTLE enters from the house. He is a big man, aged about fifty.)

TREVES. Ah. Battle.

BATTLE. That's fixed up, sir.

TREVES. It was all right, was it, Battle?

BATTLE. Yes, sir. The Chief Constable got through to the Yard. As I happened to be on the spot they've agreed to let me handle the case.

TREVES. I'm very glad. It's going to make it easier having you instead of a stranger. Pity to have spoilt your holiday though.

BATTLE. Oh, I don't mind that, sir. I'll be able to give my nephew a hand. It'll be his first murder case, you see.

TREVES. Yes - yes, I've no doubt he will find your experience of great help.

BATTLE. It's a nasty business.

TREVES. Shocking, shocking.

BATTLE. I've seen the doctor. Two blows were struck. The first was sufficient to cause death. The murderer must have struck again to make sure - or in a blind rage.

TREVES. Horrible. I can't believe it could have been anyone in the house.

BATTLE. Afraid it was, sir. We've been into all that. No entry was forced. All the doors and windows were fastened this morning as usual. And then there's the drugging of Miss Aldin, that must have been an inside job.

TREVES. How is she?

BATTLE. Still sleeping it off. She was given a pretty heavy dose. It looks like careful planning on somebody's part. Lady Tressilian might have pulled that bell which rings in Miss Aldin's room, if she'd been alarmed. That had to be taken care of, so Miss Aldin was doped.

TREVES. *(Troubled.)* It still seems to me quite incredible.

BATTLE. We'll get to the bottom of it, sir, in the end. Death occurred, according to the doctor, between ten-thirty and midnight. Not earlier than ten-thirty, not later than midnight. That should be a help.

TREVES. Yes, yes. And the weapon used was a niblick?

BATTLE. Yes, sir. Thrown down by the bed, blood-stained and with white hairs sticking to it.

(TREVES turns away in repulsion.)

I shouldn't have deduced a niblick from the appearance of the wound, but apparently the sharp edge of the club didn't touch the head. The doctor says it was the rounded part of the club that hit her.

TREVES. The - er - murderer was incredibly stupid, don't you think, to leave the weapon behind?

BATTLE. Probably lost his head. It happens.

TREVES. Possibly - yes, possibly. I suppose there are no fingerprints?

BATTLE. Sergeant Pengelly is attending to that now, sir. I doubt if it's going to be as easy as that.

(INSPECTOR LEACH enters from the house. He is a man of about forty. He speaks with a slight Cornish accent and carries a niblick golf club.)

LEACH. See here, Uncle. Pengelly has brought up a beautiful set of dabs on this - clear as day.

BATTLE. *(Warningly.)* Be careful how you go handling that, my boy.

LEACH. It's all right, we've got photographs. Got specimens of the blood and hair, too.

(He shows the club to BATTLE.)

LEACH. What do you think of these dabs? Clear as clear, aren't they?

(BATTLE inspects the fingerprints.)

BATTLE. They're clear enough. What a fool!

(He shows the club to TREVES.)

LEACH. That's so, to be sure.

BATTLE. All we've got to do now, my lad, is ask everyone nicely and politely if we may take their fingerprints – no compulsion, of course. Everyone will say "yes" and one of two things will happen. Either none of the prints will agree, or else...

LEACH. It'll be in the bag, eh?

(BATTLE nods.)

TREVES. Doesn't it strike you as extremely odd, Battle, that the – er – murderer should have been so foolish as to leave such a damning piece of evidence behind – actually on the scene of the crime?

BATTLE. I've known 'em do things equally foolish, sir.

(He hands the club back to LEACH.)

Well, let's get on with it. Where's everybody?

LEACH. In the library, Pollock is going through all their rooms. Except Miss Aldin's, of course, she's still sleeping off the effects of that dope.

BATTLE. We'll have 'em in here one at a time.

(He turns to TREVES.)

Which Mrs. Strange was it who discovered the murder?

TREVES. Mrs. Audrey Strange.

BATTLE. Oh, yes. Difficult when there are two Mrs. Stranges. Mrs. Audrey Strange is the divorced wife, isn't she?

TREVES. Yes. I explained to you the – er – situation.

BATTLE. Yes, sir. Funny idea of Mr. Strange's. I should have thought that most men –

(KAY enters quickly from the house. Upset and slightly hysterical, she makes for the French windows. BATTLE blocks her path.)

KAY. I'm not going to stay cooped up in that damned library any longer. I want some air and I'm going out. You can do what the hell you like about it.

BATTLE. Just a minute, Mrs. Strange. There's no reason why you shouldn't go out if you wish, but it'll have to be later.

KAY. I want to go now.

BATTLE. I'm afraid that's impossible.

KAY. You've no right to keep me here. I haven't done anything.

BATTLE. *(Soothingly.)* No, no, of course you haven't. But you see, there'll be one or two questions we'll have to ask you.

KAY. What sort of questions? I can't help you. I don't know anything about it.

(BATTLE turns to LEACH.)

BATTLE. Get Benson, will you, Jim?

(LEACH nods and exits into the house.)

Now, you just sit down here, Mrs. Strange and relax.

(He indicates a chair at the card table. KAY sits reluctantly.)

KAY. I've told you I don't know anything. Why do I have to answer a lot of questions when I don't know anything?

BATTLE. *(Apologetically.)* We've got to interview everybody, you see, it's just part of the routine. Not very pleasant for you, or for us, but there you are.

KAY. *(Impatiently.)* Oh, well, all right.

(P.C BENSON enters, followed by LEACH. BENSON is a young man, fair and very quiet.)