

country I can't seem somehow to settle down properly. I don't know really just what I want to do – I like working on cars best and thinking out new gadgets for them. That's interesting, that is. And you see...

(SIR WILFRID ROBARTS, Q.C., enters. He is followed on by CARTER. SIR WILFRID is wearing his Q.C.'s jacket and bands and carries his wig and gown. CARTER carries SIR WILFRID's ordinary jacket and bow tie.)

SIR WILFRID. Hullo, John.

MAYHEW. *(rising)* Ah, Wilfrid.

SIR WILFRID. *(handing the wig and gown to CARTER)* Carter told you I was in Court? Banter really surpassed himself. *(He looks at LEONARD.)* And this is Mr. – er – Vole?

(He crosses to left of LEONARD.)

MAYHEW. This is Leonard Vole.

LEONARD. How do you do, sir?

(MAYHEW moves to the fireplace.)

SIR WILFRID. How do you do, Vole? Won't you sit down?

(LEONARD sits left of the desk.)

How's the family, John? *(He crosses to CARTER.)*

(CARTER assists SIR WILFRID to change his jacket and remove his bands.)

MAYHEW. Molly's got a touch of this twenty-four hour flu.

SIR WILFRID. Too bad!

MAYHEW. Yes, damnable. Did you win your case, Wilfrid?

SIR WILFRID. Yes, I'm glad to say.

MAYHEW. It always gives you satisfaction to beat Myers, doesn't it?

SIR WILFRID. It gives me satisfaction to beat anyone.

MAYHEW. But especially Myers.

SIR WILFRID. *(taking the bow tie from CARTER)* Especially Myers. *(He crosses to the mirror right.)* He's an irritating

— gentleman. (*He puts on his bow tie.*) He always seems to bring out the worst in me.

MAYHEW. That would appear to be mutual. You irritate him because you hardly ever let him finish a sentence.

(*CARTER exits, taking the wig, gown, jacket and bands with him.*)

SIR WILFRID. He irritates me because of that mannerism of his. (*He turns and stands right of the desk.*) It's this (*He clears his throat and adjusts an imaginary wig.*) that drives me to distraction, and he will call me Ro-barts — Ro-barts. But he's a very able advocate, if only he'd remember not to ask leading questions when he knows damn well he shouldn't. But let's get down to business.

MAYHEW. (*moving above the desk*) Yes. I brought Vole here, because I am anxious for you to hear his story exactly as he told it to me. (*He takes some typewritten papers from his briefcase.*) There is some urgency in the matter, it seems. (*He hands the papers to SIR WILFRID.*)

SIR WILFRID. Oh?

LEONARD. My wife thinks I'm going to be arrested. (*He looks embarrassed.*) She's much cleverer than I am so she may be right.

SIR WILFRID. Arrested for what?

LEONARD. (*still more embarrassed*) Well — for murder.

(*SIR WILFRID perches himself on the down right corner of the desk.*)

MAYHEW. (*crossing to center*) It's the case of Miss Emily French. You've probably seen the reports in the Press?

(*SIR WILFRID nods.*)

She was a maiden lady, living alone but for an elderly housekeeper, in a house at Hampstead. On the night of October the fourteenth her housekeeper returned at eleven o'clock to find that apparently the place had been broken into, and that her mistress had been cashed on the back of the head and killed. (*to LEONARD*) That is right?

LEONARD. That's right. It's quite an ordinary sort of thing to happen nowadays. And then, the other day, the papers said that the police were anxious to interview a Mr. Leonard Vole, who had visited Miss French earlier on the evening in question, as they thought he might be able to give them useful information. So of course I went along to the police station and they asked me a lot of questions.

SIR WILFRID. (*sharply*) Did they caution you?

LEONARD. (*vaguely*) I don't quite know. I mean they said would I like to make a statement and they'd write it down, and it might be used in Court. Is that cautioning me?

(**SIR WILFRID** exchanges a glance with **MAYHEW**, and speaks more to him than to **LEONARD**.)

SIR WILFRID. (*rising*) Oh well, can't be helped now.

(*He crosses above the desk to left.*)

LEONARD. Anyway, it sounded damned silly to me. I told them all I could and they were very polite and seemed quite satisfied and all that. When I got home and told Romaine about it – my wife that is – well, she got the wind up. She seemed to think that they – well – that they'd got hold of the idea that *I* might have done it.

(**SIR WILFRID** moves the chair from left of the fireplace to center for **MAYHEW**, who sits.)

LEONARD. So I thought perhaps I ought to get hold of a solicitor (*to MAYHEW*) so I came along to you. I thought you'd be able to tell me what I ought to do about it. (*He looks anxiously from one to the other.*)

SIR WILFRID. (*moving down left*) You knew Miss French well?

(**LEONARD** rises, but **SIR WILFRID** motions him to sit.)

LEONARD. Oh yes, she'd been frightfully kind to me. (*He resumes his seat*) Actually it was a bit of a bore sometimes – she positively fussed over me, but she meant it very

well, and when I saw in the paper that she'd been killed I was awfully upset, because, you see, I'd really got fond of her.

MAYHEW. Tell Sir Wilfrid, just as you told me, how it was you came to make Miss French's acquaintance.

LEONARD. (*turning obediently to SIR WILFRID*) Well, it was one day in Oxford Street. I saw an old lady crossing the road carrying a lot of parcels and in the middle of the street she dropped them, tried to get hold of them again and found a bus was almost on top of her.

(**SIR WILFRID** *crosses slowly below the others to right of desk.*)

Just managed to get to the curb safely. Well, I recovered her parcels from the street, wiped some of the mud off them as best I could, tied up one again that had burst open with string and generally soothed the old dear down. You know the sort of thing.

SIR WILFRID. And she was grateful?

LEONARD. Oh yes, she seemed very grateful. Thanked me a lot and all that. Anyone would think I'd saved her life instead of her parcels.

SIR WILFRID. There was actually no question of your having saved her life? (*He takes a packet of cigarettes from the desk drawer.*)

LEONARD. Oh, no. Nothing heroic. I never expected to see her again.

SIR WILFRID. Cigarette?

LEONARD. No, thanks, sir, never do. But by an extraordinary coincidence, two days later I happened to be sitting behind her in the theatre. She looked round and recognized me and we began to talk, and in the end she asked me to come and see her.

SIR WILFRID. And you went?

LEONARD. Yes. She'd urged me to name a day specially and it seemed rather churlish to refuse. So I said I'd go on the following Saturday.

SIR WILFRID. And you went to her house at... (*He looks at one of the papers.*)

MAYHEW. Hampstead.

LEONARD. Yes.

SIR WILFRID. What did you know about her when you first went to the house? (*he perches himself on the down right corner of the desk.*)

LEONARD. Well, nothing really but what she'd told me, that she lived alone and hadn't very many friends. Something of that kind.

SIR WILFRID. She lived with only a housekeeper?

LEONARD. That's right. She had eight cats, though. Eight of them. The house was beautifully furnished and all that, but it smelt a bit of cat.

SIR WILFRID. (*rising and moving above the desk*) Had you reason to believe she was well off?

LEONARD. Well, she talked as though she was.

SIR WILFRID. And you yourself? (*He crosses and stands up left of LEONARD.*)

LEONARD. (*cheerfully*) Oh, I'm practically stony broke and have been for a long time.

SIR WILFRID. Unfortunate.

LEONARD. Yes, it is rather. Oh, you mean people will say I was sucking up to her for her money?

SIR WILFRID. (*disarmed*) I shouldn't have put it quite like that, but in essence, yes, that is possibly what people might say.

LEONARD. It isn't really true, you know. As a matter of fact, I was sorry for her. I thought she was lonely. I was brought up by an old aunt, my Aunt Betsy, and I like old ladies.

SIR WILFRID. You say old ladies. Do you know what age Miss French was?

LEONARD. Well, I didn't know, but I read it in the paper after she murdered. She was fifty-six.

SIR WILFRID. Fifty-six. You consider that old, Mr. Vole, but I should doubt if Miss Emily French considered herself old.

LEONARD. But you can't call it a chicken, can you?

SIR WILFRID. (*crossing above the desk and sitting right of it*) Well, let us get on. You went to see Miss French fairly frequently?

LEONARD. Yes, I should say once, twice a week perhaps.

SIR WILFRID. Did you take your wife with you?

LEONARD. (*slightly embarrassed*) No, no, I didn't.

SIR WILFRID. Why didn't you?

LEONARD. Well – well, frankly, I don't think it would have gone down very well if I had.

SIR WILFRID. Do you mean with your wife or with Miss French?

LEONARD. Oh, with Miss French. (*He hesitates.*)

MAYHEW. Go on, go on.

LEONARD. You see, she got rather fond of me.

SIR WILFRID. You mean, she fell in love with you?

LEONARD. (*horrified*) Oh, good Lord no, nothing of that kind. Just sort of pampered me and spoiled me, that sort of thing.

SIR WILFRID. (*after a short pause*) You see, Mr. Vole, I have no doubt part of the police case against you, if there is a case against you which as yet we have no definite reason to suppose, will be why did you, young, good-looking, married, devote so much of your time to an elderly woman with whom you could hardly have very much in common?

LEONARD. (*gloomily*) Yes, I know they'll say I was after her for her money. And in a way perhaps that's true. But only in a way.

SIR WILFRID. (*slightly disarmed*) Well, at least you're frank, Mr. Vole. Can you explain a little more clearly?

LEONARD. (*rising and moving to the fireplace*) Well, she made no secret of the fact that she was rolling in money. As