

(There is a pause. ROMAINÉ does not speak although SIR WILFRID looks at her.)

That is so, is it not? He was with you at nine-thirty?

ROMAINÉ. That is what Leonard says? That he was home with me at nine-thirty?

SIR WILFRID. (Sharply.) Isn't it true?

(There is a long silence.)

ROMAINÉ. But of course.

(SIR WILFRID sighs with relief.)

SIR WILFRID. Possibly the police have already questioned you on that point?

ROMAINÉ. Oh yes, they came to see me yesterday evening.

SIR WILFRID. And you said...?

(ROMAINÉ speaks as though repeating something learnt by rote.)

ROMAINÉ. I said Leonard came in at nine twenty-five that night and did not go out again.

MAYHEW. (Uneasily.) You said...? Oh!

ROMAINÉ. That was right, was it not?

SIR WILFRID. What do you mean by that, Mrs. Vole?

ROMAINÉ. (Sweetly.) That is what Leonard wants me to say, is it not?

SIR WILFRID. It's the truth. You said so just now.

ROMAINÉ. I have to understand - to be sure. If I say yes, it is so, Leonard was with me in the flat at nine-thirty - will they acquit him?

(SIR WILFRID and MAYHEW are puzzled by ROMAINÉ's manner.)

Will they let him go?

MAYHEW. If you are both speaking the truth then they will - er - have to acquit him.

ROMAINÉ. But when I said - that - to the police, I do not think they believed me.

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(ROMAINE is not distressed; she seems faintly satisfied.)

SIR WILFRID. What makes you think they did not believe you?

ROMAINE. (*Maliciously.*) Perhaps I did not say it very well?

(SIR WILFRID and MAYHEW exchange glances.

ROMAINE's cool, impudent glance meets SIR WILFRID's. There is definite antagonism between them.)

SIR WILFRID. You know, Mrs. Vole, I don't quite understand your attitude in all this.

ROMAINE. So you don't understand? Well, perhaps it is difficult.

SIR WILFRID. Perhaps your husband's position is not quite clear to you?

ROMAINE. I have already said that I want to understand fully just how black the case against - my husband is. I say to the police, Leonard was at home with me at nine-thirty - and they do not believe me. But perhaps there is someone who saw him leave Miss French's house, or who saw him in the street on his way home?

(*She looks sharply and rather slyly from one to the other.*)

MAYHEW. Your husband cannot think of, or remember, anything helpful of that kind.

ROMAINE. So it will be only his word - and mine.

(*Intensely.*) And mine. Thank you, that is what I wanted to know.

(ROMAINE makes to exit.)

MAYHEW. But, Mrs. Vole, please don't go. There is a lot more to be discussed.

ROMAINE. Not by me.

SIR WILFRID. Why not, Mrs. Vole?

ROMAINE. I shall have to swear, shall I not, to speak the truth and all the truth and nothing but the truth?

(ROMAINE seems amused.)

SIR WILFRID. That is the oath you take.

(ROMAINE now openly mocking.)

ROMAINE. And suppose that then, when you ask me -

(*She imitates a man's voice.*)

"When did Leonard Vole come home that night?" I should say...

SIR WILFRID. Well?

ROMAINE. There are so many things I could say.

SIR WILFRID. Mrs. Vole, do you love your husband?

ROMAINE. Leonard says I do.

MAYHEW. Leonard Vole believes so.

ROMAINE. But Leonard is not very clever.

SIR WILFRID. You are aware, Mrs. Vole, that you cannot by law be called to give testimony damaging to your husband?

ROMAINE. How very convenient.

SIR WILFRID. And your husband can...

ROMAINE. (*Interrupting.*) He is not my husband.

SIR WILFRID. What?

ROMAINE. Leonard Vole is not my husband. He went through a form of marriage with me in Berlin. He got me out of the Russian zone and brought me to this country. I did not tell him, but I had a husband living at the time.

SIR WILFRID. He got you out of the Russian sector and safely to this country? You should be very grateful to him. (*Sharply.*) Are you?

ROMAINE. One can get tired of gratitude.

SIR WILFRID. Has Leonard Vole ever injured you in any way?

ROMAINE. (*Scornfully.*) Leonard? Injured me? He worships the ground I walk on.

SIR WILFRID. And you?

(*Again there is a duel of eyes between them, she laughs.*)

ROMAINE. You want to know too much.

MAYHEW. I think we must be quite clear about this. Your statements have been somewhat ambiguous. What exactly happened on the evening of October fourteenth?

(ROMAINE speaks in the same monotonous voice.)

ROMAINE. Leonard came in at twenty-five minutes past nine and did not go out again. I have given him an alibi, have I not?

SIR WILFRID. You have.

(He catches her eye and pauses.)

Mrs. Vole...

ROMAINE. Yes?

SIR WILFRID. You're a very remarkable woman, Mrs. Vole.

ROMAINE. And you are satisfied, I hope?

(ROMAINE exits.)

SIR WILFRID. I'm damned if I'm satisfied.

MAYHEW. Nor I.

SIR WILFRID. She's up to something, that woman - but what? I don't like it, John.

MAYHEW. She certainly hasn't had hysterics all over the place.

SIR WILFRID. Cool as a cucumber.

MAYHEW. What's going to happen if we put her into the witness box?

SIR WILFRID. God knows!

MAYHEW. The prosecution would break her down in no time, especially if it were Myers.

SIR WILFRID. If it's not the attorney general, it probably will be.

MAYHEW. Then what's your line of attack?

SIR WILFRID. The usual. Keep interrupting - as many objections as possible.