

THE FIRING SQUAD

by

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SYNOPSIS

There's an over-used saying, which asserts that revenge is a dish best served cold; but to delay such an act of vengeance for forty-eight years would take a considerable degree of fortitude and perseverance.

Could a wronged person still wish to attain a reprisal so long in time past the perceived unjust act against them?

A man is found dead in his home. He has been shot twice, but four bullets have missed their target. There are a number of potential suspects, each holding a concealed motive for carrying out such an act of execution; and all of them being quite prepared to resort to this deadly assignment, if provoked.

But can the 'perfect murder' be accomplished and remain undetected...and, to what lengths would each assassin go, to ensure that their dreadful secret is *kept* intact.

The action takes place in a home for ex army personnel. 'Bixie' Sayers is an ex army nurse. Her late husband, John had been an army major. John's brother, Ian, had also been an army major during the First World War. Ian Sayers has few friends, having upset many

individuals along the way. He now lives nearby to his sister in law, Bixie.

The finding of a dead body starts a bewildering puzzle involving many possibilities and permutations of culprits and circumstances.

CAST

Beatrice 'Bixie' Sayers; Retired widow, living in a retirement home

For ex service personnel. Her late husband was a major in the first world war...as was his brother, Ian Sayers. Major Ian Sayers (Bixie's brother in law) had presided over a court marshal held during the Great War...in which unbeknown to him, the victim of his adjudged and pronounced death sentence, Walter Stephenson, had been Bixie's fiancé, Bixie will be in her late sixties/ early seventies. Phlegmatic sort...acid tongued , but with a ready wit and turn of phrase.

Kenneth 'Ken' Payne: Bixie's nephew. He will be in his late thirties/ early forties. He lives alone, and he visits his auntie Bixie periodically. Ken is an unemployed idle sort with a proclivity to spend his small income wastefully. He visits his uncle Ian's home on the day of his uncle's death. Ken has a child-like sense of humour.

Sylvia ‘Sylv’ Tanner: She is Ken’s sister...(possibly older sister...but little in it). She’s been married a couple of times but now lives alone. She is a little more industrious than Ken...with a much greater sense of conscience.

Mrs Emelia Mehmett: A Turkish housekeeper at the home of Major Ian Sayers. The major is found dead at his home during the absence of Mrs Mehmett who was away visiting relatives at this time. Her age is not determined...but possibly, she is in her early fifties.

Inspector Edge: Stoical character...with false perception of police infallibility. Possibly in his early forties.

Henry Hanson: One of the elderly residents at the Mandalay ex service personnel home. He shows obvious early stages of dementia...but he could be holding a deeply seated plan of vengeance.

Mildred: Another elderly person at the retirement home. She has clearly long ‘lost the plot’.

Enid: Ditto Mildred. The pair seem to be firm friends.

Hettie: The maid. She works at the home. She has a natural inclination to eavesdrop on private conversations within the home. Quite young... early twenties.

THE FIRING SQUAD

Act 1.....Sunday Morning 10 am

The action takes place within 'Mandalay' an ex army retirement home in Surrey. The year is 1963. Four of the old folks there are sitting, (vegetating) in various comfy chairs; there is a vacant expression on each of their faces. They are unmoved by the radio talk...and remain asleep.

There are four comfy chairs positioned to the rear of the stage...well spaced out. In the left one is Mildred. Second left is Enid. Third left is Bixie...and on the right is Henry. One easy chair (unoccupied) is positioned to the right hand side to the front of the stage.

Announcer You have just been listening to a talk by the Reverend Sydney Roberts on the 'sins of vengeance'. I hope you all found that as interesting as I did. (No one stirs) Our Sunday Service will follow in a moment.

(Religious music starts to fill the air...but the mood is brutally disturbed by the arrival of Ken....who has turned up at the home to visit his Aunt Bixie)

(Ken firstly flicks off the radio switch...then, banging a pot of geraniums that he is carrying

with a spoon that he has picked up from a nearby table, startling the residents, Ken announces his arrival at the home. The geraniums are a present for Ken's Auntie Bixie. Ken bellows out....)

Ken All right....Stand by your beds everyone.....
Auntie....your favourite nephew's here.

Bixie (rudely awakened and with finger to her lips)
Shhh. Be quiet.

(Bixie gets up from her chair...and moves to the chair at the front of the stage and sits there)

Ken (following her, and standing in front of the chair) What ho, auntie. How are you?

Aunt Bixie (irked) What do you want?

Ken I've come to see you, auntie.

Bixie No you haven't.

Ken (Looking around) But I don't know them lot.
I've driven thirty miles to get here....through the snow...just to see you, Auntie.

Bixie I accept I may be the physical objective for your trip to Mandalay House this afternoon...but I would appreciate it if you would kindly economize on decorum and convention...and crack straight on to your main motivation for today's attendance.

Ken (appealing) Main motivation?

Bixie Yes, spit it out, lad....Why are you here ?... But I strongly challenge you to construct a sentence...without using those awful euphemisms, 'favour' and 'lend'.

Ken (Blusters) G...good God, auntie....What do you think I am...Would I come here solely to ask you for a(struggles for the word)...all right then auntie....what words would you prefer.

Bixie In plain speaking, when you say 'favour',...I would recommend you to use the word that you really mean, 'money' in fact, hard cash....and for 'lend'...which implies a loaned commodity that is actually recoverable, I would appreciate usage of the correct term

that is implied, ... 'give'; as used for example in the sentence,

'give me the cash.' There we are, brief and to the point.

Ken Can't you accept that I came here just because...I like seeing you, auntie?

Bixie Frankly, no.

Ken And to bring you these lovely geraniums.

Bixie I loathe geraniums.

Ken Auntie Bixie... You've hurt me. Really hurt me.

Bixie Kenneth, you've visited me five times over the last two and a half years....and my bank manager will readily testify that after each of your calls, my account has been depleted by exactly the scale of your unanticipated financial problems....so rather than skirt round the boundaries of polite conversation.....just assail me with the details...as follows....One....How much....Two....When do you want it...and Three....the accompanying hard luck story, which so eagerly travels with the first two.

Ken (Imploringly) Auntie

Bixie Previous history would suggest, some slick super salesman has inveigled you into signing up for something that you don't need, and can do without...and is beyond your financial limits, anyway.....Correct?

Ken (Implores) It wasn't that, auntie.

Bixie No? Ah well, one down...two to go.....erm...could it be that a 'sure thing' is entered for a Cheltenham Gold Cup tomorrow...at the absolutely unmissable odds of ten to one...and that this 'golden' opportunity would grant you something akin to having the ability to print your own money.

Ken Auntie....you've got me wrong.

Bixie All right...it just has to be the old favourite...The bailiffs will be calling tomorrow...and they will be carting away, either;... the sofa, probably with you still lying on it, or possibly the cat or the T.V. set....or even the sub standard vehicle that has just propelled you to this destination...for this wholly unwanted entreaty.

(The discussion is disturbed by Hettie the maid who appears between the couple with an envelope upon a tray)

Hettie I'm sorry to disturb you, madam...but I have an urgent telegram for you.

(Hettie hands the envelope to Bixie)

(Bixie starts to open the envelope. She looks up at the awaiting Hettie before dismissing her....)

Bixie It's all right, Hettie. That will be all. (Hettie scurries off).

Hettie Very good, madam.

(Bixie continues to open the envelope and she then starts to read the message)

Bixie (Initially exclaims) Good God! It's from Uncle Ian's good neighbours. (She then continues to silently read it through to the end)

Ken Nothing wrong, Aunt Bixie?

Bixie It's about your Uncle Ian.

Ken Is he all right?

Bixie (Matter of factly) No... he's not..... He's dead.

Ken Oh no.....Poor old uncle....I didn't even know
that he was ill.
How...how was he taken?

Bixie Unfortunately, he went rather suddenly. More
suddenly than he
might have expected. In fact, he was perfectly
all right Friday
Evening...but yesterday morning, an interloper
entered the house and took a few pot shots at
him.

Ken Pot shots! Good gracious....He must have died
from the shock.

Bixie No, I believe it was from an accumulation of the
subsequent,
associated bullet woundsAt least two of
them, I believe.

Ken Uncle Ian, shot! I don't believe it.....and to
think he lived through

six months on the Somme.

Bixie Yes. But he was then favourably aided by the fact that his headquarters was based some three miles behind the front line. Unfortunately, he was unable to arrange for a similar protective deterrent yesterday.

Ken It must have been a burglary that went wrong... or something. Uncle wouldn't have had many enemies, surely.

Bixie Regrettably, you're well wide of the mark there....which unluckily for Major Ian Sayers was more than could be said for the unknown assailant's accuracy. Your uncle wasn't the most popular of individuals....though I suspect that most of his detractors would have simply settled for a good kicking.

Ken What happened to his live-in house keeper, that Turkish Lady. Is she all right?

Bixie You mean Mrs Mehmet...She was away for the week end. I imagine she'd left before the tragedy happened.

Ken So uncle must have been alone in that big house...how dreadful...I can't believe it.....

(At this point, one of the residents, Mildred starts to walk off to the kitchen...walking agonisingly slowly)

Bixie Mildred, if you want to put the Sunday Service on in the lounge, I'll come and watch it with you. (then under her breath) It'll take her about half an hour to get there.

Ken Oh auntie, there wouldn't be any chance of a cuppa, would there...I'm gasping.

Bixie I think Hettie was just making some...I'll go and check.

(Bixie leaves the room. Ken picks up Bixie's library book and commences to flick through the pages. Eventually Sylvia, Ken's sister puts her head round the door)

Sylvia (arriving through the main entrance...she waves her fingers at Ken) Cooeee!

Ken 'Allo sis. Coo, what brings you here today?...Oh, you haven't heard the news about uncle Ian?

Sylvia Yes, as soon as I heard the terrible news, I just dropped everything.....and came straight over.

Ken How did you know so soon...Auntie's only just heard.

Sylvia I must be psychic or something...I just felt the need to phone uncle this morning...and when I did, I got the shock of my life....a policeman told me that uncle was dead...and he said that they suspected foul play.

Ken Poor uncle.

Sylvia (over sentimentally) He was such a delightful, gentle, lovable man. Why do the good ones always go first.

Ken Well he was seventy-nine. Be fair. He had a pretty good innings.

Sylvia Is that how you see it. A man leads an illustrious life, an outstanding military career, coasts on into a well-deserved, comfortable retirement before being brutally dispatched by an unknown gunman...and your synopsis is, "He had a good innings"...I suppose, unluckily sent back early to the pavilion before reaching his maiden century after failing to evade a short pitched delivery.

Ken Well you can't say, "He was shot down in the prime of his life"
...or " It was a premature end to a promising career" . He'd seen it all; Been there and done it...big time....Lived the life in full Technicolor. All he seemed to be living for recently was his easy chair and his bottle of gin.....and his housekeeper on his lap.

Sylvia I'm not so sure about that...but you should at least have some respect for the dead.

Ken I'm no hypocrite. Uncle's dead...I'm sorry about that...but he had

every advantage in life and he was stinking rich.

Sylvia You're just jealous.

Ken Of course I'm jealous. I would love to be one of the idle rich.

Sylvia Instead of one of the idle poor.. which is what you are.

Ken You'd better tell auntie you're here, Sylv...if you fancy some tea...She's in the kitchen.

Sylvia Oh yes...I'm parched.

(Sylvia hurries off to the kitchen)

(Enid gets off her seat....walks slowly over to Ken. She looks down at him...looking intently from about two inches from his face)

Enid Are you my first husband.

Ken I don't think so. I'm certain I'd've remembered.

Enid Well you look like him. He'd be ninety three now.

Ken Really...Ninety three. Oh yes, it's all coming back...that little church on the green...the fun, the gayety....the romance. Where did it all go wrong, Enid.

(Enid walks about four paces away. She then turns back and scowls at Ken)

Enid Idiot!

(Enid walks off to the lounge. Bixie comes back from the kitchen at the same time. Sylvia also enters with the tea on a tray. Ken rises from his seat)

Ken Thank goodness...I don't know how you get on with all these geriatrics, auntie. It can't be good for you.

Bixie Maybe so...but at least the residents here don't mind when I chat away. And they don't have to pretend they're listening....and I can say anything to them in complete confidence.

Ken Yeah...there'll have forgotten it before you'd even finished the sentence.

(Hettie walks in accompanied by a detective)

Hettie Excuse me madam. There is a gentleman here to see you. It's Chief Inspector Hedge of Scotland Yard.

DCI Hedge Good morning.

Ken So it's Inspector Hedge ...is it?...not Hedges.

DCI Hedge Yes sir...Just a singular Hedge.

Ken (makes weak joke) Would that be Privet or Laurel?

Bixie My apologies, inspector. This is my nephew, Kenneth Payne.....and with that rather appropriate name, he is in absolutely no position to insult you over yours....and this is Sylvia Tanner, Kenneth's sister. Both are visiting me here today.

DCI Hedge Good morning, madam. I take it you are Mrs Beatrix Sayers...sister in law to Mr Ian Sayers of High Tops Avenue, in Oxted.

Bixie That's right, inspector. I assume you are here to discuss the

unfortunate demise of my late brother in law, Ian Sayers. We have already been advised, inspector. It is a most disturbing situation.

DCI Hedge It is indeed, madam. There are some aspects of this case that are most puzzling. Our boffins are presently going over the house with a fine tooth comb...but one or two details are already baffling us.

Bixie All I've heard so far is that my brother in law was shot...I take it that this could only be classified as either a murder or suicide.

DCI Hedge Or possible accidental death....though I understand that Major Sayers was well acquainted with the use of firearms...so this line seems to be unlikely.

Bixie Yes, he had a long military career and he'd had a thorough grounding in the use of all types of ballistics.

DCI Hedge Yes, so that would leave us with your two original

position of less than six feet situated directly opposite the...shall we say...victim.

Bixie That would of course only be the case, if the major remained in his final position throughout the firing spree. He well might have been moving round the room during this time...and this could have explained the wild trajectory of the bullets.

DCI Hedge That is of course quite correct, madam...except that under those rather traumatic circumstances, one might have anticipated a hurried attempted exit via the door or window...rather than what appears to have been the major's final unfancied option of pulling up a chair, and planting himself firmly at the table to present himself as a sitting target.

Bixie A thought has just occurred to me though...I hope you don't mind me making this suggestion,...but just supposing, by some means of trickery, a complete stranger managed to obtain entry into the house...supposing the major unwittingly let the man in...and then...possibly realising that the man was up to no good,

he could have tried to stop the intruder by pointing the pistol at him. A struggle between the two men then ensues. During which, with both men attempting to get the gun, the trigger is pulled...bang!...there goes the Haywain. Another shot is loosed off...bang!...straight into the welsh dresser. Then as the gun is forced backwards towards the major.. bang! goes the bottle of Gordon's...Then finally.. in a wild struggle.. bang! Another shot rips into the ceiling...before the gun is forced even further towards the major.. The fifth shot enters the major's left shoulder... whereby, he loses his grip on the gun. This is seized upon by the assailant... who picks up the gun ... aims it straight between the major's eyes...and fires the final bullet...Isn't that a possibility, inspector?

DCI Hedge A brilliant deduction, Madam. I wish we could have you in the force. Of course we have already considered that possibility, (said unconvincingly)...By the way, I had only mentioned that the major was shot in the head...You've just stated that the fatal shot was "straight between the eyes" Perhaps you could enlighten me as to how you came by this totally classified information.

Bixie Oh come now, inspector, “straight between the eyes” is a commonplace expression...usually uttered to describe a ‘coup de grace’ mortal blow....It’s what I would do if I’d had the gun in my hand...and wanted to finish the job.

DCI Hedge Well, we’ll be working on all these theories over the next few weeks or so. We’ll have to pinpoint every shot.

Bixie But these six shots? It really is extraordinary inspector...and I presume they all came from the same weapon.

DCI Hedge It looks very likely, maam. You see, the major had his own personalised bullets....so you could say, quite ironically that the fatal one he received, as the saying goes, literally did indeed have his name written on it....as of course did all the wayward ones....and the gun used, was his own service pistol.

Bixie Where did you find the gun, inspector?

DCI Hedge The gun was in the major’s left hand.

Bixie I think it was generally known, that the major was left handed.

DCI Hedge That well might be the case...except that...given that the final fatal shot to the head had to be the last shot...had this been suicide, please consider, at that stage, he would have been unable to even lift the gun with his left shoulder completely shattered by a previous shot.

Bixie Are you suggesting that someone shot poor Ian ...and then placed the gun in the major's hand to make it *look* like suicide?

DCI Hedge Yes that's definitely one possibility.

Sylvia Whoever would do such a thing, inspector?

DCI Hedge Well, let's put it this way....if it were a complete stranger to the major.... then there'd be little need for such subterfuge....so.....

Ken You're implying that the killer is likely to be someone known to
uncle....(DCI Hedge simply nods his head...Ken continues..)
Extraordinary.

DCI Hedge Excuse me if I have to make a few personal questions....but following a short enquiry with the major's solicitors, it would seem that you three are the nearest...and in fact, the only surviving relatives of the deceased...Is that correct?

Bixie That is absolutely correct inspector. I hope that doesn't mean that we are the *only* three suspects.

DCI Hedge Good heavens, no madam. I just needed to confirm my information.

Bixie We would be happy to help you in any way we can, inspector.

DCI Hedge Thank you, madam. My first enquiry relates to motivation. On the face of it, there appears to be no trace of a break-in ...and there also appears to be little evidence of any items of theft from the property.. ... so I have to ask myself, "Who would be likely to gain most from the major's death".

Bixie In financial terms, I would stand to gain most from the major's unfortunate demise. I presume that this fact will trampoline me to

the top of the list of suspects.

DCI Hedge Not particularly, madam. At this early stage, we tend to keep a completely open mind....although, of course, we do reserve the right to question all the closest members of the family...in order that we can...shall we say...eliminate anybody from such a list.

Bixie Strange, isn't it...For most of my life, I've been criticized for 'not having the killer instinct' How ironical it would be, if you now discover that belatedly, I have now, acquired one.

DCI Hedge I'm glad you can take this all in the right spirit. Obviously, my first quest is to determine your actions over the last 24 hours. Perhaps I could start with you, Mrs Sayers. Would that be all right.

Bixie Shoot....though that's not quite an appropriate verb under the sad circumstances.

DCI Hedge Possibly not...but, if you will...could you give me the details of your movements from yesterday...say from eight a.m. onwards.

Bixie As you can readily observe, inspector, in this retirement home, there is not exactly an abundance of activities in which one can engage ones-self. My day was not untypical from most of the other three hundred and sixty four in terms of movement...in fact, I was even less mobile than usual yesterday, as I had been suffering from a slight migraine attack...and therefore, I did not emerge from my room until long into the afternoon.

DCI Hedge So didn't anyone at all see you until the afternoon.

Bixie Not really. I had hung a 'do not disturb' notice' on my door...as I didn't feel like any breakfast or lunch...and I just craved complete peace and quiet.

DCI Hedge And I take it, you're feeling much better today.

Bixie Oh yes, these things are a curse...but they usually incapacitate me for only a day at a time.

DCI Hedge Let's get this straight, madam. You're saying that you have no witnesses to your movements yesterday...but that you at no time left these premises.

Bixie That's right. Somebody may have seen me...but if so, I certainly didn't see them. I was confined to my flatlet for most of the day...at least until evening. Oh hang on, though, Mr Hanson, here, saw me at least a couple of times in the morning. (then looking over to the decrepit looking Mr Hanson and raising her voice)...You saw me yesterday, didn't you Henry? I bumped into your two or three times during the day.

Henry (getting up and walking towards the door) Oh yes. I saw you all right...yesterday...quite a few times.

DCI Hedge (writing in his notebook). That's very helpful, sir. You saw Mrs

Sayers several times yesterday. Did you see if she went out at all?

Henry Oh no, she never goes out. None of us go out.

DCI Edge Thank you, sir. By the way, could I make a note of your first name?

Henry Yes, it's Henry, Henry Hanson.

DCI Hedge Jolly good. (patronisingly) Now I'll bet you've 'done your bit' in your time, eh sir?

Henry Done my bit? I'm still an active serviceman. I've just come back from Gallipoli...fighting with the Anzacs against 'Johnny Turk'.

DCI Hedge That's most interesting, sir. (Then looking wryly askance at Bixie) However it might set some question against your voracity as a witness in this case.

Henry (To Bixie) Is he on our side?

Bixie Yes, Henry....He's a policeman.

Henry A policeman...well where's his uniform, then?

Bixie He doesn't have one. He's in plain clothes.

Henry Plain clothes. No uniform...He should be put on a charge.

Bixie Yes Henry...We'll see to it. Now off you go.

(Henry leaves through the main entrance)

DCI Hedge Oh, I nearly forgot, maam...when did you last contact major Sayers.

Bixie I spoke with him on Friday evening at about seven thirty. His voice already sounded slurred. He's been a slave to alcohol for some time, I'm afraid.

DCI Hedge (turning to Ken) I'd better have a word with you, sir. Could you tell me your name?

Ken I'm Ken Payne. Auntie Bixie's nephew. I'm just down here for the day. I'll be travelling back to my home in Lingfield later on.

DCI Hedge Can you account for your movements yesterday?

Ken Erm...let me see...Saturday...what was I doing?....It was a sort of lazy day really.

Bixie That would be completely in character with his usual utterly inactive routine, inspector.

Ken (protesting) I was re-charging my batteries.

Bixie But doesn't the engine have to at least be running for that?

Ken All right inspector....I watched T.V. for a while. Phoned up the bookie's. Watched the horse racing....

DCI Hedge On T.V.?

Ken Yes...on T.V....at home...Opened a few bottles...quite a few....and then later on, I went to the pub.

DCI Hedge Not by motorised conveyance, I trust. At what time would that be, sir?

Ken Ooh...about eight o'clock I should reckon.

DCI Hedge So there's no one really who could substantiate all of this, eh.

Ken Er...afraid not, inspector...well not until I got to the pub...
...otherwise, I was indoors for most of the day.

DCI Hedge I'm afraid that doesn't help very much. As you say sir, a sort of lazy day.

Bixie I'm afraid so, inspector. My nephew found himself at a loose end
some fifteen years ago...and there he's remained ever since.

DCI Hedge Well, We'll leave it at that for the moment. Perhaps you can have another think about it...as it would be very helpful if you could come up with at least one witness for yesterday...particularly to cover the hours of seven thirty a.m. to say around three o'clock in the afternoon.

Ken O.K. inspector. I'll give it some thought.

DCI Hedge And you'd better let me know the name of your bookmakers... I'll turn to you then, miss....

Sylvia (correcting) It's Mrs...though I've been divorced now... for the last four years....Mrs Sylvia.....(waits while DCI Edge writes in his notebook)

DCI Hedge Yes?

Sylvia Tanner.

Ken (jokes) That's about all she's worth.

DCI Edge (scornfully) Thank you sir.

Sylvia It's all right, I can fully explain my movements yesterday. I got up early as I was especially keen to see the film matinee that was being shown at the Odeon Cinema in Oxted Village. They were re-showing two old films there...One was 'Carousel'. I love that film. I paid for one single ticket and watched both films right through. It was on a double bill with 'Brief Encounter'. I was in the cinema from eight thirty until about twelve thirty. I then went

to the café to have a spot of lunch before taking a trip to the zoo...and once there, I walked around for a couple of hours before returning home. I still have the tickets on me... if you wish to see them, inspector.... That's for the cinema, the café...and the zoo.

DCI Hedge Yes, I would like to see those receipts if you don't mind. (These are duly handed over by Sylvia)...Ah thank you very much Mrs Tanner...They appear to be in order. You won't mind if I just hang on to these for the time being.

Sylvia No, of course not inspector. (Hedge puts the receipts into his pocket).

DCI Hedge Thank you maam. Now there's just one thing I wish you to clarify before I depart. This concerns the late major's legacy. Perhaps I could put it to you all together...Might any of you have had suspicions...or even doubts about the major's intentions?...as we have stumbled upon a rather scrappy document, hand written... which indicates a surprising change of beneficiary.

Sylvia I thought that the three of us were the sole beneficiaries. Isn't that still the case, inspector?

DCI Hedge Well, possibly...as there does seem to be serious doubt about the authenticity of this document.

Bixie May I politely enquire whether this new document still shows us as being still entitled....to anything at all?

DCI Hedge Erm....well, frankly...it doesn't. (gasps and rejections of the statement from all three) But like I say, this will all have to be checked out, given the circumstances, before any disposal of land, property or capital is made over.

Bixie I can't believe the major has done this. I detect a whiff of foul play in the air.

DCI Hedge Yes...we're making exhaustive enquiries into this.

Sylvia That damned housekeeper.

DCI Hedge But what I'd really like to know is, whether in the last few days,

the major was in his usual, I assume normal, state of mind?

Bixie I speak with Major Ian on a regular weekly basis. Mostly, I admit, to discuss business and domestic matters rather than to exchange pleasantries. On the basis of these brief exchanges, I had no reason to place any doubts about his mental state...

DCI Hedge His faculties were unimpaired?

Bixie Undoubtedly...and I must say, I'd like to express great surprise over the new legacy details that have emerged...as I had been lead to believe that there had been a long standing arrangement to retain the original details intact.

DCI Hedge Not according to this document,

Bixie Without being privy to that obviously criminally bogus document that you are holding, inspector...perhaps I might pre-empt your further enquiries by throwing in the name of Mrs Emelia Mehmet,

an illiterate Turkish lady who happens to be my brother in law's housekeeper. I feel it's very likely that she will be able to 'help with your enquiries' over this matter.

DCI Hedge We are aware of this person.

Bixie She has long felt that her temporary stint of residential caring should be more than generously rewarded by some lasting financial compensation. Clearly, she has devised a poorly disguised item of fraud to further her prospects.

DCI Hedge Quite frankly, we've been trying to get hold of her since yesterday...but without any success. You wouldn't happen toknow where we might locate her.

Bixie I understand that Mrs Mehmet left the house on Friday Night. I can only imagine that she is visiting her only known relatives in Worthing, I believe. I'm sorry but I don't have the precise address.

DCI Hedge Well, we'll keep on trying...but, if in the meantime, you hear of

anything that could help us to locate her, I'd be obliged to hear from you.

Bixie Certainly, inspector.

DCI Hedge That will be all for now.. but, of course I will doubtless be wanting to speak to all of you again very shortly. Please liaise with me if any of you are likely to away for any time in the next few weeks.

Bixie We all live within a thirty mile radius...and we can all be contacted easily by phone. There should be no problems. Well, good day, inspector.

DCI Hedge Thank you everybody. I expect I'll be in touch again soon. Goodbye then.

Bixie (and Ken and Sylvia) Goodbye.

(DCI Hedge leaves through the main entrance)

Sylvia Oh I think this whole thing is horrible. To think we're caught up in such a shameful, sordid episode.

Bixie Like it or not, we've got to accept the fact that we are involved...
and bearing in mind the inspector's remarks, I think we should all consider ourselves to be suspects.

Sylvia Auntie, you're not serious. Look at us...how could anyone think we could be lawless..... gunslingers?

Bixie Not by our physical appearance, perhaps...but from my perspective, the interchange witnessed with Inspector Hedge might suggest that at least one of you has been lying about your movements, yesterday.

Sylvia That's most disloyal of you, auntie. Kenny and I told the truth...and we don't doubt that you did too.

Bixie Forgive me for being so blunt...but I am compelled to say that I believe that both you and Kenneth were being completely untruthful.

(both Ken and Sylvia protest indignantly)

Sylvia Come on then, let's have it...what vital clues have we senselessly let slip?....that our police inspector failed to identify.

Bixie Well, to begin with Sylvia dear, I think your story is just a little too pat. Your whole day was neatly covered by official documentation....wasn't it?...and all reflecting your stated whereabouts: Ticket for the cinema, ticket for the zoo, receipt for your meal...Who would expect to horde such litter and keep it amalgamated so neatly on their person. Sylvia, I must ask you directly, were you at the Odeon yesterday?

Sylvia Yes, of course, auntie. How could you doubt me? You could ask me anything about the films.

Bixie When you've seen those films over a dozen times? You know them word for word. You could play a part in either of them!

Sylvia It's all perfectly straightforward. I went to the Odeon. I saw the films...and then I went on to the Tip Top Cafe for my lunch. What more can I say?

Bixie Well you could colour in a bit of detail...For instance, were there many patrons there? You could give us a run-down of the audience...Young, middle aged...packed out with pensioners? What was your view from the one and nines?... Did you have the statutory fidgety woman beside you?...or was your view impeded by the over zealous actions of the courting couple in front? I'd dearly like to know.

Sylvia Well, there was nothing extraordinary about the show. There were a fair few there. I watched both films...and it was quite enjoyable...and that's about it.

Bixie It's odd that you completely failed to mention the evacuation of the cinema, caused by a small fire in the Projection Room.

Silvia Oh my God...was there?...Oh yes... of course...I completely forgot about that.

Bixie Oh dear, Sylvia...I'm afraid you fell at the first hurdle. You really Should have called my bluff....There was no fire at the Oxted Odeon

yesterday...yet you can somehow remember one...How strange.

Sylvia But why on earth would I lie about it.

Bixie Why on earth would you want to blast your
uncle to Kingdom come, I
wonder?

Sylvie Oh auntie. How could you think such a thing. I
loved Uncle Ian. I called on him regularly.