

MARGARET To do as you asked, Sergeant.

THOMKINS (*helpfully*) They were all elsewhere except for one, sir.
(*PRATT takes THOMKINS to one side.*)

PRATT Then why did you assemble them in here?

THOMKINS (*bewildered*) You asked me to, sir. In the lounge you said, sir.

PRATT Are you trying to make me look a fool, Thompson!

THOMKINS No, sir. That's the last thing you need.

PRATT (*poking THOMKINS with his finger*) You'll need to buck your ideas up if you want to make anything of yourself in the force. (*To the others.*) For the sake of brevity of brevity I'll conduct the questioning in here.
(*They all return to their original places, grumbling quietly.*)

BUNTING I wish he'd make his mind up.
(*As they settle, PRATT turns to them, his back to JOAN.*)

PRATT So . . . which one of you was in here when young Missus Bagshot was so cruelly cut down in her prime?

JOAN I fear it was me, Inspector.
(*PRATT jumps in surprise at the voice behind him, then spins around to face JOAN.*)

PRATT And you are?

JOAN Miss Maple.

PRATT I see. And your surname, Miss Mabel?

THOMKINS Maple is her surname, sir. She's somewhat of a celebrity in the village.

PRATT Right. Thank you, Thompson.

JOAN Thomkins, Inspector.

PRATT Quite. And the reason for your celibacy, Miss Mabel?

JOAN It's hardly that, Inspector. It's simply that I've been involved with this kind of thing many times.

PRATT Murder!

JOAN Most regrettably, yes, Inspector.

PRATT I see. Regrettable indeed. So . . . you were the only person alone in the room . . . (*Glancing at THOMKINS.*) . . . when the bullet passed through. Did you see anything?

JOAN I'm afraid not, Inspector. It was travelling rather too fast.

PRATT (*wisely*) Yes . . . as I suspected. (*He mimes the swift passage of a bullet with a sweep of his hand.*)

JOAN I remember her last words . . . she must have caught sight of the murderer. She said . . . "so you've found" . . . then the shot was fired. I ran to her, but upon examination she was dead.

PRATT I see. Did she say anything?

JOAN No, Inspector.

PRATT Thank you, Miss Marble.