

- 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 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.
(*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.