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**факультет іноземних мов  
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# **THE SCHEMER**

**ЗАВДАННЯ ДО АУДІОКНИГИ**

**(книга для викладача)**

**для студентів I-II курсів**

**факультету іноземних мов**

**Вінниця – 2015**

Практичні завдання до аудіо-книги “The Schemer” для роботи зі студентами I-II курсів. Посібник для вчителя / укладач Л.М.Прадівлянна. – Вінниця: ВДПУ ім. М.Коцюбинського, 2015. – 46 с. – (англійською мовою).

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Друкується за рішенням кафедри англійської філології інституту іноземних мов Вінницького державного педагогічного університету ім. М.Коцюбинського (протокол № \_\_\_\_ від \_\_\_\_\_2015 р.)

Збірник містить практичні завдання для роботи студентів I-II курсів, що покликані розвивати навички аудіювання, вимови та інтонації, активізувати нові лексичні одиниці, вивчені при прослуховуванні оповідання “Інтриган”.

## ПОЯСНЮВАЛЬНА ЗАПИСКА

Мета даного посібника – формування у студентів I-II курсів навичок сприймання іноземної мови на слух, вимови та інтонації, розширення та активізування словникового запасу, відпрацювання навичок монологічного та діалогічного мовлення з використанням активної лексики.

Матеріалом для роботи є аудіо книга “Інтриган”. Загальний час прослуховування – 70 хвилин.

Посібник містить в собі такі типи завдань до кожної з п’яти глав аудіо книги:

вивчення нових лексичні одиниці, що зустрінуться в тексті, декілька абзаців з кожної глави для інтонування та читання з близькою до авторської вимовою (студентам пропонується записати текст на слух),

тестові завдання на перевірку розуміння прочитаного, завдання на закріплення лексики тексту(наступні види завдань: завдання на поясненні значення слів англійською мовою та відтворення ситуацій їх використання з оповідання, знайдення відповідників, переклад з української мови на англійську з використанням нових лексичних і фразеологічних одиниць),

переказ,

творче завдання – драматичне представлення подій та складання діалогів, які могли б мати місце в оповіданні.

В книжці для викладача додатково пропонуються відповіді на завдання, транскрипти уривків для інтонування та повний текст оповідання.

При укладенні книги були використані:  
посібник:

Интриган. Детектив на английском (+ аудиокнига CD)

Автор: Вики Джейкоб-Эбингаус. - Издательство: Методика.

Серия: Учебный детектив, 2011. – 64 с.

Словник

Macmillan Advanced Learners English Dictionary.

## CHAPTER 1: THE ENCHANTED NECKLACE

**1. Active Vocabulary. Before listening to the story learn the following words and expressions.**

to be amiss	"Fat cat"	to be out of earshot
run-of-the-mill	feisty	heart's desire
burglaries	purposeful	forensic
crunch	spooked	assets
harassed	level-headed	state of the art
glumly	canvas	scribble
obscure	preliminary	art appreciation
to nip out	ornate	ransacked
odd occasion	petrified	flotsam and jetsam

**2. Write down and practise reading the following extract. Imitate the intonation of the speaker.**

Inspector James Hudson did not need his 21 years of experience at Scotland Yard to see that something was amiss at the semidetached London house. The large window next to the front door had been smashed and pink curtains peeked out of the jagged hole like a rude tongue. Run-of-the-mill burglaries were not normally Hudson's department, but he had jumped at the chance to get out of the office. While the recent low crime rate in London (which he was to a large degree responsible for) was definitely a reason to celebrate, he had to admit he was a bit bored. He parked his beloved Bentley on the street and made his way up the drive. Shards of broken glass crunched under his shoes as he neared the front door. Kicking the excess glass off his soles on the edge of the doorstep, he adjusted his jacket then rapped

smartly on the door. The door was answered by a well-dressed and clearly harassed man in his early forties. He ran his hand repeatedly through his greying hair in an unconscious, nervous gesture.

"Inspector Hudson, Scotland Yard," the inspector introduced himself. "There was a burglary reported at this address. Are you the owner of the house?"

"Yes, I am Andrew Harper," the man sighed, his hand still carving even channels through his hair. He stepped back to allow the inspector through the door. "Please come in."

Hudson's first impression as he entered the living room was that the house had been pulled from its foundations and given a good shake. Paintings had been ripped from the walls, drawers had been opened and their contents scattered across the floor and books and ornaments had been swept from the shelves.

"Charlotte, my wife, and I came home and found the place like this," Andrew said glumly, making a sweeping gesture with his arm towards the lounge.

### **3. Comprehension check.**

#### *3.1. Put the following sentences in the correct order.*

- a. Mrs Harper acts very strangely when she meets Hudson and Elvira.
- b. Elvira finds some prescription tranquilisers.
- c. Elvira arrives at the Harpers' house.
- d. Hudson reveals that the thief did not come through the window.
- e. Hudson and Elvira look for clues in the lounge.
- f. Mr Harper tells Hudson and Elvira the necklace's history.
- g. Hudson gives Elvira a fright in the bathroom, Hudson arrives at the Harpers' house.

***The correct order: h, c, a, f, e, b, g, d***

3.2. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F).

- a. Hudson is 21 years old.
- b. Andrew Harper and his wife were at a restaurant when the burglary took place.
- c. The ruined painting is a portrait of the Harpers.
- d. Charlotte Harper's face resembles a horse.
- e. Andrew bought the stolen necklace for his wife.
- f. Andrew's mother is dead.
- g. The bathroom had been ransacked.

**Key: 1- F, 2-T, 3-T, 4-F, 5-F, 6-T, 7-F**

#### **4. Vocabulary Practice.**

4.1. Explain their meaning of the following words (Use English-English dictionaries). Recall the situations where they were used.

**run-of-the-mill** - ordinary and not interesting

**harassed** - upset and confused because you do not have enough time or energy to do all the things that you need to do

**nip out** - to go somewhere quickly and for only a short time

**"Fat cat"** - showing disapproval a very rich and powerful person, usually in business or politics

**feisty** - full of energy and lively determination

**petrified** - extremely frightened, especially so that you cannot move or decide what to do

**pompous** - someone who is pompous thinks they are very important and speaks or behaves in a very serious and formal way

**heart's desire** - the thing that someone really wants

**forensic** - relating to the use of scientific methods to solve crimes, to find out who committed them

**assets** - the knowledge, experience, and skills that employees have, that an organization can use for its benefit

**ransack** - go through a place stealing or damaging things

**flotsam and jetsam** - things that are lying around a place in an untidy way

4.2. Find the antonyms.

**Correct matching:**

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. well-dressed | g) scruffy   |
| 2. awkward      | c) graceful  |
| 3. sceptical    | d) believing |
| 4. valuable     | a) worthless |
| 5. remember     | b) forget    |
| 6. strange      | e) normal    |
| 7. risky        | f) safe      |

4.3. Fill in the gaps with the words from Active Vocabulary.

1. I have the luxury of being able to **nip out** and have lunch with my wife on the *odd* occasion.
2. He suspected Hudson had written "**Fat cat**" in the notebook.
3. The **forensic** team has already checked for prints and other evidence.
4. From what I remember from his file, he **inherited** a lot of money and *assets* from his mother.
5. The **feisty**, spontaneous young woman was the complete opposite of the serious, **level-headed** Inspector from Scotland Yard.
6. It is not only the art, all this **state of the art** electronic equipment would bring in a few pounds...
7. I was just asking Mr Harper here some **preliminary** questions.
8. On entering the room, they discovered that it too had been **ransacked**; clothes were strewn across the floor like colourful **flotsam and jetsam**.
9. She reminded Hudson of **a spooked** horse

4.4. Match the word and expressions with their definitions.

**Correct matching:**

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. run-of-the-mill | h) ordinary and not interesting            |
| 2. harassed        | f) upset and confused                      |
| 3. feisty          | j) full of energy and lively determination |
| 4. petrified       | c) extremely frightened                    |
| 5. pompous         | g) pretending to be very important         |
| 6. "Fat cat"       | i) very rich and powerful                  |

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 7. flotsam and jetsam | d) lying around a place in an untidy way     |
| 8. ransack            | b) go through a place stealing things        |
| 9. heart's desire     | e) the thing sb really wants                 |
| 10. nip out<br>time   | a) go somewhere quickly and for a short time |

4.5. Translate the sentences into English. Use Active Vocabulary word and expressions.

1. Щось було не так з цим лондонським будинком – Something was amiss at this London house.
2. Містер Харпер розповів про намисто, коли його дружина вийшла на кухню і не могла нічого чути – Mr. Harper spoke about the necklace when his wife went into the kitchen was out of earshot.
3. Жінка, яка здавалася пихатою на картині, зараз виглядала заціпенілою і стурбованою – The woman who appeared rompous in the picture now looked petrified and harassed.
4. Кольорові каракулі в поламаний рамці виявилися цінною картиною – A colourful scribble in a broken frame turned out to be a valuable picture.
5. Жінка нагадувала Хадсону налякану кобилу – The woman reminded Hudson of a spooked horse.
6. Коли прийшла Ельвіра, Хадсон як раз задавав деякі попередні питання – When Elvira came Hudson was asking some preliminary questions.
7. У Скотланд Ярді не вчать цінувати мистецтво – They don't teach art appreciation at Scotland Yard.

**5. Speaking Practice.**

- 1) Retell the story in details. Use words and word combinations from Exercise 1.
- 2) Develop the situations in the Chapter into the dialogues.
- 3) Dramatize the scene in Mr Andrew Harper's house.



## CHAPTER 2: NOSEY NEIGHBOURS

**1. Active Vocabulary. Before listening to the story learn the following words and expressions.**

<i>hideous</i>	<i>Backstroke</i>	<i>knickknacks</i>
<i>offensive</i>	<i>gasp</i>	<i>Charm and</i>
<i>loony</i>	<i>janitor</i>	<i>Seduction</i>
<i>unhinged</i>	<i>hornet</i>	<i>gold-digger</i>
<i>splutter</i>	<i>senile</i>	<i>rule sb out</i>
<i>placated</i>	<i>adjacent</i>	<i>malicious gossip</i>
<i>snort</i>	<i>poke out</i>	<i>mischief</i>
<i>bellow</i>	<i>hunch one's</i>	<i>mastermind</i>
<i>sulky expression</i>	<i>shoulders</i>	<i>saunter</i>

**2. Write down and practise reading the following extract. Imitate the intonation of the speaker.**

Hudson and Elvira left Andrew Harper scratching his head and still staring at the broken window and made their way back down the drive to the entrance of the next door property. As they walked up the adjacent drive, Hudson noticed the curtain in the front window twitch and a pointed face poking out quickly before disappearing again.

Elvira was delighted at Inspector Hudson's discovery, "The thief had a key!" she repeated excitedly. "That really narrows down the suspects a lot!" she declared as they reached the door and Hudson rang the bell. The door was opened by a middle-aged woman with a sharp, fox-like face and short, bleached hair.

"Good afternoon, Mrs Gladstone. I am Inspector Hudson, Scotland Yard, and this is Elvira Elliot from Redfearns Insurance Inc. We are investigating the robbery that took place next door. May we come in?"

"Well, I am quite busy", she said, "but if you think I can be of help, then by all means, come in."

She had quite a shrill voice, and Hudson found himself reflexively hunching his shoulders at the sound.

The house on the inside was the mirror image of the Harpers, but the decor couldn't have been more different. This one was stuffed with all sorts of cheap and tasteless knickknacks and smelt strongly of stale tobacco. The overall effect was about the same as the woman's voice. She offered Hudson and Elvira a seat on a couch with an offensive olive green and pink floral pattern on it. Hudson noticed Elvira smoothing her fashionable designer trousers vigorously as if she were afraid that they might become infected with the couch's hideous design.

"Terrible thing, this business", Mrs Gladstone said once she had sat herself down on the matching couch opposite them, "with Andrew's troubles, this is the last thing he needs." She put a cigarette between her lips and picked a lighter up off the table.

"You don't mind, do you?" she said as she lit it and inhaled deeply. Elvira gave a small cough, but the woman chose to ignore it. "What problems would those be, Mrs Gladstone?" Hudson asked, taking out his notebook.

**3. Comprehension check:** tick the right variant.

1. Shelley Gladstone has a

- a. deep voice.
- b. soft voice.
- c. high voice.

2. Elvira

- a. doesn't mind Shelley Gladstone's smoking.
- b. wishes Shelley Gladstone wouldn't smoke.

- c. gives Shelley Gladstone a cigarette.
- 3) Hudson learns that Charlotte Harper
  - a. only started having mental problems recently.
  - b. has always had mental problems.
  - c. had mental problems as a child.
- 4. Charlotte and Andrew met
  - a. at work.
  - b. on a business trip.
  - c. at a gold mine.
- 5. Grey's School for Girls closed early because
  - a. the janitor injured himself.
  - b. a hornet's nest was found in the roof,
  - c. the headmistress had to go to a book club.

**Key: 1-C, 2-B, 3-A, 4-A, 5-B**

#### **4. Vocabulary Practice.**

*4.1. Explain their meaning of the following words (Use English-English dictionaries). Recall the situations where they were used.*

**Hideous** - very ugly or frightening in appearance, very unpleasant

**Offensive** - unpleasant or insulting, disgusting, as to the senses

**Loony** - lunatic; insane, foolish or ridiculous

**Unhinged** - upset or mentally ill

**Placated** - not feeling angry or offended any more

**Sulky** - feeling angry and unhappy and not wanting to talk to anyone or to be with other people

**Senile** - confused, forgetting things, or behaving in a strange way, because of the old age

**Adjacent** - next to or near something else

**Knickknacks** - a small cheap object used as a decoration

**Seduction** - a situation in which someone persuades another person to have sex with them

**gold-digger** - a woman who only wants relationships with men who are rich

**malicious gossip** - someone who is unkind and showing a strong feeling of wanting to hurt someone and enjoys talking about other people

**mischief** - wayward but not malicious behaviour, usually of children, that causes trouble, irritation, etc, a person, esp a child, who is mischievous

**mastermind** - someone who plans a difficult or complicated operation, especially a crime

4.2. Find the odd word. Explain your choice.

1. inspector, **husband**, insurance investigator, artist
2. crazy, asylum, **tired**, loony
3. **talk**, scribble, write, draw
4. strange, odd, **common**, unusual
5. contact details, address, telephone number, **date**

4.3. Fill in the gaps with one of the words: **guilty**, **secretive**, **forgetful**, **floral**, **tasty**

1. Shelley Gladstone's couch has a **floral** pattern on it.
2. Shelley Gladstone thinks that Charlotte could have gone crazy because she felt **guilty**
3. Shelley Gladstone's mother is very old and **forgetful**
4. Elvira thinks that teenagers are usually **secretive**.
5. Miss Paddington has prepared a **tasty** meal.

4.4. Translate the following expressions into English. Use Active Vocabulary.

1. психічно невірноважена жінка – unhinged woman
2. дрібнички дурного смаку – tasteless knickknacks
3. кримінальний розум – criminal mastermind
4. сама міс спокуса – Miss Seduction herself
5. маленька шукачка шлюбу за розрахунком – little gold-digger
6. абсолютно схиблена сусідка – loony neighbor
7. диван потворного дизайну – couch of the hideous design
8. сутулити плечі – hunch one's shoulders
9. говорила якомсь заспокоєно, утихомирено – spoke somewhat placated
10. надутий вираз обличчя – sulky face
11. сусідній під'їзд – adjacent drive

12. швидко визирнула з вікна – poked out quickly from the window
13. злісна пліткарка – malicious gossip
14. прибиральник в школі – school janitor
15. старезна старенька – senile old woman
16. викреслити зі списку підозрюваних – rule out of suspect

4.5. Match the word and expressions with their definitions.

**Correct matching:**

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. hideous             | c) ugly/frightening in appearance, very unpleasant     |
| 2. knickknacks         | a) small cheap object used as a decoration             |
| 3. mastermind<br>crime | h) sb who plans a difficult operation, especially a    |
| 4. unhinged            | i) upset or mentally ill                               |
| 5. mischief            | f) wayward but not malicious behavior                  |
| 6. sulky               | d) feeling angry and not wanting to talk to anyone     |
| 7. senile              | a) confused, forgetting things, because of the old age |
| 8. gossip              | j) sb who enjoys talking about other people            |
| 9. gold-digger<br>men  | i) a woman who only wants relationships with rich      |
| 10. malicious<br>sb    | g) unkind/showing a strong feeling of wanting to hurt  |

**5. Speaking Practice.**

1. Retell the story in details. Use words and word combinations from Exercise 1.
2. Develop the situations in the Chapter into the dialogues.
3. Dramatize the scene in Mrs Gladstone's house.
4. Invent a scene in inspector Hudson's house: evening with Elvira.

## CHAPTER 3: GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD...

**1. Active Vocabulary. Before listening to the story learn the following words and expressions.**

<i>a sneaking suspicion</i>	<i>to smirk</i>	<i>let sb out of one's sight</i>
<i>to beam</i>	<i>to compose himself</i>	<i>flash flood</i>
<i>wee hours</i>	<i>to well up</i>	<i>engulf</i>
<i>to bet</i>	<i>patch</i>	<i>awkward</i>
<i>the case at hand</i>	<i>to peel</i>	<i>to confide</i>
<i>reproachful look</i>	<i>petrified</i>	<i>pensive</i>
<i>overzealous</i>	<i>schizophrenic</i>	<i>reanimate</i>
<i>resort to</i>	<i>to be beside oneself</i>	<i>subside</i>
<i>follow suit</i>	<i>plead</i>	<i>to pull through</i>
<i>incriminate</i>	<i>berated</i>	
<i>put the past behind</i>		

**2. Write down and practise reading the following extract. Imitate the intonation of the speaker.**

The next morning was a Saturday, and Hudson woke to the wonderful smell of frying bacon. He could hear Miss Paddington *bustling* around the kitchen and the *hiss* and *sizzle* as she turned the *rashers* over in the pan. She was humming to herself merrily - she must be in an extraordinarily good mood, Hudson thought to himself. Miss Paddington was not really the singing type.

"Good Morning, James!" she greeted him enthusiastically, using his first name as she sometimes did when she was *distracted* or excited. She laid a plate loaded with scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages, fried tomatoes, baked beans, plus his usual toast and marmalade in front of him. He had obviously done something to please her to deserve this

feast, and he had *a sneaking suspicion* that it had something to do with his dinner with Elvira the previous evening. When he had finally swallowed the last delicious mouthful he was as stuffed as a cushion.

"That was superb, Miss Paddington", he complimented her, "you really *outdid* yourself, but I must be getting going. I need to make a quick phone call and then I am meeting Elvira." Miss Paddington *beamed* a smile that put the sun to shame. Suspicion confirmed, Hudson thought. He had better put a stop to this before she started arranging his wedding. "Purely work-related, we are going to interview the Gladstone girl," he added quickly.

Miss Paddington just raised an eyebrow and continued washing the dishes, the smile never leaving her lips.

Hudson picked Elvira up from the coffee shop around the corner from her flat. The owner of the little coffee shop must have *thanked his lucky stars* the day Elvira wandered through his door. She pumped herself full of enough caffeine daily to keep a few night-watchmen awake during the wee hours. She held a takeaway cup of coffee in her hand, but Hudson would have bet his Bentley that it was not her first cup of the day. As usual, she was dressed in a designer outfit, straight out of the pages of a fashion magazine. She smiled and waved when she saw him, walking quickly over to the car and climbing into the *passenger seat*.

### **3. Comprehension check.**

#### **3.1. Answer the questions:**

1. What does Hudson usually have for breakfast?
2. Why didn't Hudson follow Elvira up the Gladstone's drive?
3. How did Charlotte try to commit suicide?

4. What did Charlotte tell her local doctor her symptoms were?
5. Why did Natalie tell Andrew she was sorry after he had received the phone call?

3.2. *Are these sentences true (T) or false (F).*

1. Miss Paddington, the housekeeper, always calls Inspector Hudson by his first name.
2. Miss Paddington is happy because she thinks Inspector Hudson and Elvira are going to become a couple.
3. Elvira dresses very fashionably.
4. The doctors at the hospital told Andrew to go home and get some of Charlotte's things.
5. Andrew suspected that Charlotte might try to take her own life.

**Key: 1-F, 2-T, 3-T, 4-F, 5-F**

#### **4. Vocabulary Practice.**

4.1. *Explain their meaning of the following words (Use English-English dictionaries). Recall the situations where they were used.*

**Mrs Busybody** - very interested in other people's private lives and activities

**blackmail** - to use threats to persuade a person to do what you want

**sabotage** - deliberate damage that is done to the property of an enemy

**unintelligible** - impossible to understand

**baffled** - perplexed, bewildered or puzzled

**put the past behind** - to forget about what has happened in the past and start your life again

**distraught** - extremely worried, upset, or confused

**fervent** - very enthusiastic and sincere, especially about something you believe in or support

**unburden oneself** - to tell someone about one's problems

**wretched** - very unhappy, or ill, in very bad condition

**schizophrenic** - a serious mental illness in which the way that you think and feel is not connected with what is really happening

**commotion** - noise and confused activity



**paramedics** - trained to give medical treatment to people at the place of an accident

4.2. Fill in the gaps with the words from Active Vocabulary.

1. He had worked on more than one case where an **overzealous** mother had gone too far to ensure her child's success, **resorting to blackmail**, sabotage and in one shocking case, even murder.
2. People often **incriminated** themselves when they thought the police knew more than they actually did.
3. She noticed the knowing **smirk** on Hudson's face.
4. He **peeled** his tear-stained face from the wet *patch* he had made on her shoulder and nodded bravely.
5. Charlotte was **petrified** that she was going crazy just like her older sister Frances
6. The **flash flood** of words over, and it was impossible to draw another word out of him
7. Suddenly **reanimated**, he jumped up faster than if a fire had been set under his seat and grabbed the receiver.
8. "I see," he said a few moments later, biting his lip hard to hold in the emotion that was **welling up** inside him like lava in a volcano.
9. Miss Paddington **beamed** a smile that put the sun to shame
10. She pumped herself full of enough caffeine daily to keep a few night-watchmen awake during the **wee hours**.

4.3. Translate the sentences into English. Use Active Vocabulary word and expressions.

1. After a moment, Andrew managed to **compose himself** – Незабаром Ендрю вдалося **заспокоїтися**.
2. Hudson could see that the man desperately needed to **unburden** himself – Хадсон бачив, що йому відчайдушно хотілося **відвести душу**.
3. Charlotte **confided** in me about everything – Шарлотта **довірливо розповіла** мені про все.
4. Tears **welled up** in Andrew's eyes – **Сльози виступили** на очах у Андрю.

5. Miss Paddington beamed a smile – Міс Паддінгтон посміхнулася променистою посмішкою.
6. Hudson would have bet his Bentley that it was not her first cup of the day. – Хадсон міг зробити ставку на свій Бентлі, що це була її не перша чашка кави.
7. I am never letting her out of my sight again. – Я більше ніколи не випущу її з поля зору.
8. After several minutes his sobs subsided – Через декілька хвилин його ридання стихли.

4.4. Match the word and expressions with their definitions.

**Correct matching:**

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. unintelligible       | g) impossible to understand                           |
| 2. baffled              | h) perplexed, bewildered or puzzled                   |
| 3. busybody             | e) interested in other people's private lives         |
| 4. wretched             | i) very unhappy, or ill, in very bad condition        |
| 5. distraught           | f) extremely worried, upset, or confused              |
| 6. paramedics           | c) give medical treatment at the place of an accident |
| 7. commotion            | d) noise and confused activity                        |
| 8. sabotage             | b) deliberate damage done to the property of enemy    |
| 9. blackmail            | a) use threats to persuade sb to do what you want     |
| 10. unburden oneself    | l) tell someone about one's problems                  |
| 11. put the past behind | j) to forget about what has happened in the past      |
| 12. fervent             | k) very enthusiastic and sincere                      |

### 5. Speaking Practice.

- 1) Retell the story in details. Use words and word combinations from Exercise 1.
- 2) Develop the situations in the Chapter into the dialogues.
- 3) Dramatize the scene in Mr Andrew Harper's house.

## CHAPTER 4: DIGGING DEEPER

**1. Active Vocabulary. Before listening to the story learn the following words and expressions.**

<i>prudently</i>	<i>outpatient</i>	<i>fidget</i>
<i>groggy</i>	<i>admit</i>	<i>squirm</i>
<i>bury the hatchet</i>	<i>delusional</i>	<i>furtively</i>
<i>character flaw</i>	<i>bad blood</i>	<i>hang around</i>
<i>nutcase</i>	<i>sentence</i>	<i>slip out</i>
<i>to top oneself</i>	<i>scruffy-looking man</i>	<i>to bunk</i>
<i>shabbily</i>	<i>stake-out</i>	<i>on circuit</i>
<i>wobble</i>	<i>did a runner</i>	<i>charge sb with</i>
<i>marvel</i>	<i>novelty</i>	<i>panic-stricken</i>
<i>police badge</i>	<i>wear off</i>	

**2. Write down and practise reading the following extract. Imitate the intonation of the speaker.**

Natalie, Elvira and Hudson *prudently* excused themselves before even taking a sip of their drinks. Andrew was naturally *eager* to rush to his wife's bedside. The doctor had told him that Charlotte had finally *come round*. She was still very *groggy* and disorientated, but they were optimistic that she would *recover*. Andrew promised to call Natalie with frequent updates on Charlotte's condition and then sped off in his shiny sports car. Natalie pulled off in the opposite direction, waving at Hudson and Elvira from her car window as they made their way up the neighbouring drive. "You know, when that awful Gladstone woman gave Andrew's ex-wife a *glowing character reference* I was sure she would be just as horrible, too, but she was actually really nice," Elvira commented. "I doubt if I would be a big enough person to *bury the hatchet* with my ex-husband's new wife." Did Elvira have an

ex-husband? Hudson wondered to himself. The thought had never occurred to him. He put out his finger and stabbed the doorbell a little bit harder than necessary. Shelley Gladstone answered the door with a cigarette *wedged* between her lips.

"Ah, you two again," she said with her nails-on-a-backboard voice. It was actually quite amazing that someone who smoked so much could have such a *high-pitched* voice, Elvira thought to herself. She pictured dogs running for cover with their tails between their legs whenever the woman opened her mouth and couldn't hold back a smile. The *bleached* blonde in the doorway must have thought the smile was aimed at her for she showed some yellowed teeth in return.

"Hello, Mrs Gladstone. We would like to talk to Laura again, if she is home," Hudson said.

### **3. Comprehension check.**

#### **3.1. Fill in the names:**

***Hudson, Elvira, Shelley Gladstone, Laura Gladstone, Frances, the receptionist at St Mary's***

1. The receptionist at St Mary's was playing a computer game.
2. Elvira saw the movie "Midnight Sky".
3. Frances tried to commit suicide in the past.
4. Shelley Gladstone was left by her partner for a work colleague.
5. Laura Gladstone tried to avoid speaking to Inspector Hudson.
6. Hudson has a good knowledge of schizophrenia due to their work.

#### **3.2. Choose the correct answer:**

1. Hudson and Elvira leave Andrew's house because
  - a) they have nothing more to ask.
  - b) they know Andrew wants to go and visit his wife.
  - c) they have an appointment to go to.

2. Shelley knows that Charlotte tried to commit suicide because
  - a) the paramedics told her.
  - b) she spoke to Charlotte.
  - c) she overheard the paramedics talking.
3. Frances is at St Mary's mental hospital because
  - a) she has to collect her medication.
  - b) she has a session with her psychiatrist.
  - c) she lives at the hospital.
4. When Hudson first sees Frances he thinks that she looks
  - a) as crazy as he had expected.
  - b) nothing like her sister.
  - c) more normal than he had expected.
5. Laura sneaks out of the house to
  - a) see her boyfriend.
  - b) avoid Hudson and Elvira.
  - c) avoid her mother.

**Key: 1-B, 2-C, 3-B, 4-C, 5-B**

#### **4. Vocabulary Practice.**

##### *4.1. Explain the meaning of the following words.*

**groggy** - feeling tired, weak, or confused, especially because you are ill or have not had enough sleep

**bury the hatchet** - to become friendly with someone again after a disagreement

**to top oneself** - top yourself (British very informal) to kill yourself deliberately

**nutcase** - an insulting word for someone who you think is crazy

**bad blood** - angry feelings that people still have towards each other because of something that happened in the past

**stakeout** - an act of waiting outside a building and watching it, especially secretly in order to catch a criminal or find out whether there is any illegal activity there

**do a runner** - (British informal) to leave quickly without paying for something or in order to avoid trouble

**bunk off something** - to not go to school or work when you do not have a good reason for staying away

**freak or freak out** - to become or make you become so angry, surprised, excited, or frightened that you cannot control yourself

4.2. Find the pair of synonyms.

**Correct matching:**

1. fighting - battling
2. speedily - quickly
3. deserving - worthy
4. depressing - disheartening
5. friendly - affable

4.3. Fill in the gaps with the words from Active Vocabulary.

1. I would be a big enough person to **bury the hatchet** with my ex-husband's new wife
2. I heard the **nutcase** next-door tried to **top herself**. Sounds to me like someone wanted some attention.
3. Hudson always **marvelled** at the effect a police **badge** had on some people
4. Charlotte hated me for it and there has been **bad blood** between us ever since
5. It was a favourite defence for criminals who were looking to avoid a jail **sentence**.
6. Two and a half hours later the **novelty** had definitely **worn off** for Elvira

4.4. Fill in the prepositions: ***around for on out to with***

1. The woman was convinced that the government had hired her colleagues to **spy on** her because she was planning to write a book **on** the perfect loaf of bread.
2. I suppose I can't really blame her **for** hating me, though.
3. Laura was not going to **hang around** to find out what they wanted. She quickly got the key for the kitchen door and **slipped out** the back way again.
4. I was **bunking with** my boyfriend, Greg. I didn't want Mum to know, she would **freak out**."
5. It was the only movie she could think of that was currently **on circuit**
6. Laura had just got inside when the doorbell rang. Her heart fell **to** her shoes.

#### 4.5. Match the word and expressions with their definitions.

##### **Correct matching:**

prudent	careful/using good judgment
groggy	feeling tired/weak, esp. because you are ill
shabby	old and in bad condition
scruffy	untidy or dirty
furtive	done quickly/secretly to avoid being noticed
panic-stricken	feeling so worried that you cannot think clearly
bad blood	angry feelings you have because of sth happened in past
outpatient	sb who receives treatment at a hospital, but does not stay there
nutcase	an insulting word for sb who you think is crazy
novelty	sth new and unusual
character flaw	a fault in sb's character
sentence	a punishment given by a judge
bury the hatchet	become friendly with sb again after a disagreement
fidget	making quick movements with body when bored, nervous
hang around	spend time in a place waiting or doing nothing
marvel	show or feel surprise or admiration
wobble	rock slightly from side to side, or to make sth do this
top yourself	kill yourself deliberately

#### 4.6. Translate the sentences into English. Use Active Vocabulary word and expressions.

Новизна традиційного поліцейського стеження швидко притупилася для Ельвіри. Вона нервово совалася на сидінні та мріяла про те, щоб вислизнути крадькома з машини та втекти. Однак, вона розсудливо вирішила почекати, тому що їй хотілося швидше винести звинувачення у крадіжці місіс Гледстоун, вади характеру якої вона насилу могла виносити.

The ***novelty*** of the traditional police ***stake-out*** soon ***wore off*** for Elvira. She ***fidgeted*** in her seat and dreamt to ***slip out*** of the car ***furtively*** and ***do a runner (bunk off)***. However she ***prudently*** decided to wait because she wished ***to charge*** Mrs. Gladstone with theft, whose ***character flaws*** she could barely stand.

#### 5. Speaking Practice.

- 1) Retell the story in details. Use words and word combinations from Exercise 1.

2) Develop the situations in the Chapter into the dialogues.

3) Dramatize the scene in Mrs Gladstone's house or in the cafe.

## CHAPTER 5: THE SCHEMER

**1. Active Vocabulary. Before listening to the story learn the following words and expressions.**

*usher*

*wink*

*flinch*

*snatch up*

*blob*

*viciously*

*wig*

*set up*

*anxiously*

*ruefully*

*contempt*

*sledgehammer*

*fumble*

*plead innocence*

*dawn*

*indignantly*

*impostor*

*overhear*

*bunk school*

*charge sb with sth*

*defeat*

*scheme*

*delusion*

*content oneself with*

*recover*

*far-fetched*

**2. Write down and practise reading the following extract. Imitate the intonation of the speaker.**

The rosey-cheeked nurse chatted merrily to the blonde woman as she led her down the hospital corridor.

"You know, I'm really not supposed to let anyone go in - visiting hours are over, but I'm not as strict as some of the other nurses. What did you say your name was, dear?" "Frances," came the short reply.

"Well, Frances", the woman prattled on, "I'm afraid your sister is still very weak and disorientated, but I am sure it will give her a bit of a lift to see her family. I think she needs all the support she can get, considering what she tried to do," she added gravely. She stopped at a door marked 204 and *ushered the visitor into the room*. "She's got the room all to herself so you will have a bit of privacy Now, don't stay too long, or you will get me into trouble," she said, giving the visitor a *wink* and closing the door behind her. Charlotte lay sleeping on the bed. She looked as white and fragile as a snowflake. Hearing the sound of the



door closing, she *stirred* and opened her eyes; and saw a familiar face *glaring* down at her. She *flinched* at the hate she saw burning in the blue eyes. "What.. .what do you want?" Charlotte asked uncertainly. "I want you to pay for everything you have done to me," came the hissed reply. "For everything I have endured because of you. You stole my life, and now it is time for me to take it back. This time there is no escape for you. Goodbye, Charlotte. I hope you suffer." She *snatched up* the pillow from the empty bed next to her and raised it over Charlotte's head. Charlotte saw the white *blob* coming towards her fast and raised her hand feebly to try and protect herself, but it was too late. The soft downy pillow was being pressed down *viciously* onto her face, cutting off her air supply. She tried to take a breath, but got a mouthful of starched linen instead. She fought in panic, but the pillow didn't *budge*.

**3. Comprehension check:** are these sentences true (T) or false (F).

1. She snatched up the blanket from the empty bed next to her and raised it over Charlotte's head.
2. Frances watched Charlotte struggle desperately and smiled grimly as she forced the pillow down with all her strength.
3. Charlotte had trusted Natalie and thought she was her friend.
4. Natalie got close to Charlotte so that she could drug her tea and manipulate her into thinking that she was going mad.
5. The necklace Natalie stole rightfully belonged to her.
6. When Elvira entered the room she was disappointed to have missed all the drama.
7. The necklace was recovered at Natalie's house and Hudson came over personally to deliver it back to Charlotte.
8. Charlotte didn't want to communicate with her sister and refused to drink tea with her.

**Key:** 1-F, 2-F, 3-T, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-F, 8-F

#### 4. Vocabulary Practice.

##### 4.1. Explain the meaning of the following words

**volunteer** -

someone who offers to do something without being forced,

**sledgehammer** -

a long heavy hammer that you swing with both hands,

**tranquillizers** -

a drug that makes people calmer when they are very worried or nervous,

**to plead innocence** - to make

an urgent, emotional statement or request for the fact that someone is not guilty of a crime,

**to sneak in** - to go somewhere secretly,

**pluck up the courage** - to force yourself to be brave enough to do something, although you are frightened or worried about it,

**have a deal** - an agreement or

an arrangement, especially in business,

**attempted murder** - (of a crime) that someone

has tried to commit without success

##### 4.2. Fill in the gaps with the words from Active Vocabulary.

1. She stopped at a door marked 204 and **ushered** the visitor into the room.
2. "But that necklace is rightfully mine!" she cried **indignantly**. "That **impostor** had no right to wear it at every occasion.
3. The soft downy pillow was being pressed down **viciously** onto her face, cutting off her air supply.
4. Natalie **fumbled** for words. How could they possibly know that?
5. "You weren't worried about being seen or **overheard**, but you hadn't counted on Laura **bunking** school that day."
6. Schizophrenics also believe beyond all doubt that the **delusions** they experience are real.
7. Her situation was slowly **dawning** on her. It wasn't only a life without Andrew that she had to worry about, but also a life in prison.
8. "If you hadn't worked out that evil woman's **scheme** so quickly, I would be dead now."
9. "Now, don't stay too long, or you will get me into trouble," she said,

giving the visitor a **wink** and closing the door behind her.

#### 4.3. Match the word and expressions with their definitions.

##### **Correct matching:**

usher	lead sb politely somewhere, e.g. into a room or towards a seat
wink	quickly close and open one eye as a sign to sb
flinch	make a sudden small movement when afraid, surprised, or in pain
fumble	say sth in a way that is not skilful or effective
overhear	hear what people say in a talk you are not involved in
far-fetched	difficult to believe because it is very unlikely
vicious	extremely violent, unkind or unpleasant
anxious	worried because you think sth bad might happen
rueful	showing that you are sorry about sth
indignant	angry because of an unfair situation or unfair behaviour
defeat	failure to win a competition or to succeed in doing sth
wig	artificial hair that you wear on your head
contempt	a feeling that sb or sth is unimportant and deserves no respect
sledgehammer	a long heavy hammer that you swing with both hands
dawn	the beginning of the day, when it begins to get light
impostor	sb who pretends to be sb else, in order to trick people

#### 4.4. Translate the sentences into English. Use Active Vocabulary word and expressions.

1. Ендрю з презирством звернувся до Наталі. Він був щасливий, що її план провалився. - Andrew spoke to Natalie with contempt. He was happy that her scheme failed.
2. Шарлота здригнулася, коли побачила свою сестру. Франсіс з хвилюванням підбирала слова. - Charlotte flinched when she saw her sister. Frances fumbled for words anxiously.
3. Наталі обурено дивилася на Шарлоту. Потім вона вихопила подушку з ліжка і притиснула злобно до обличчя Шарлоти. - Natalie looked at Charlotte indignantly. Then she snatched up the pillow from the bed and pressed it against Charlotte's face.

#### 5. Speaking Practice.

- 1) Retell the story in details. Use words/word combinations from Ex 1.

- 2) *Develop the situations in the Chapter into the dialogues.*
- 3) *Dramatize the scene in the hospital.*

## THE SCHEMER TEXT

### Chapter 1: The Enchanted Necklace

Inspector James Hudson did not need his 21 years of experience at Scotland Yard to see that something was *amiss* at the *semidetached* London house. The large window next to the front door had been smashed and pink curtains peeked out of the *jagged* hole like a rude tongue. *Run-of-the-mill* burglaries were not normally Hudson's department, but he had jumped at the chance to get out of the office. While the recent low crime rate in London (which he was to a large degree responsible for) was definitely a reason to celebrate, he had to admit he was a bit bored. He parked his beloved Bentley on the street and made his way up the drive. *Shards* of broken glass *crunched* under his shoes as he neared the front door. Kicking the excess glass off his soles on the edge of the doorstep, he adjusted his jacket then rapped smartly on the door. The door was answered by a well-dressed and clearly *harassed* man in his early forties. He ran his hand repeatedly through his greying hair in an *unconscious*, nervous gesture. "Inspector Hudson, Scotland Yard," the inspector introduced himself. "There was a *burglary* reported at this address. Are you the owner of the house?"

"Yes, I am Andrew Harper," the man *sighed*, his hand still carving even channels through his hair. He stepped back to allow the inspector through the door. "Please come in." Hudson's first impression as he entered the living room was that the house had been pulled from its *foundations* and given a good shake. Paintings had been ripped from the walls, drawers had been opened and their *contents* scattered across the floor and books and ornaments had been swept from the shelves. "Charlotte, my wife, and I

came home and found the place like this," Andrew said *glumly*, making a sweeping gesture with his arm towards the lounge.

Hudson took a pen and notebook out of his front pocket. He *flipped the* book open in a well-practised move. "Were you at work when the robbery took place?" Hudson asked, his pen *poised*.

"Charlotte and I went to a restaurant for lunch this afternoon. It must have happened while we were out as she was at home all morning," Andrew said.

Hudson made a note. Andrew *craned* his neck slightly, trying to see what the Inspector had written but Hudson just moved his shoulder slightly, *obscuring* the man's view. "I am a partner at the architecture firm just down the road, so I have the luxury of being able to *nip out* and have lunch with my wife on the *odd* occasion," he said defensively, as if he suspected Hudson had written "*Fat cat*" in the notebook and had underlined it twice.

"What exactly was taken?" Hudson continued. "It looks like they only took one of my wife's necklaces", Andrew replied, "but it was antique and quite valuable. It was insured for over £10,000. We have already notified our insurance agency..." he trailed off as the sound of approaching footsteps reached their ears.

"Oh", he exclaimed peering over Hudson's shoulder through the open door, "it looks like they have sent someone over already." When Hudson heard the quick, *purposeful* tap of high heels coming up the drive, he knew immediately who they belonged to. "Good morning, Elvira," he said, without turning around, as she *crunched* over the glass on the *threshold*.

"Oh, James", she laughed, *flicking* her *fiery* red hair, "I should have known you can never surprise Scotland Yard's finest." "You must be Andrew Harper." She turned towards the other man. "Elvira Elliot,

Redfearns Insurance Inc.," she said by way of an introduction as they shook hands.

"Pleased to meet you," Andrew said politely, looking a bit confused. "Do you two know each other?" he enquired. "Our paths have often crossed due to our work," Elvira said smoothly.

She and Hudson had first met on a case a few years previously. The *feisty*, spontaneous young woman was the complete opposite of the serious, *level-headed* Inspector from Scotland Yard, but they had proved to be a great team and since then they had solved many strange and high-profile cases together. "I was just asking Mr Harper here some *preliminary* questions," Hudson filled her in. "You were saying that it was just the jewelry that was taken?" Andrew nodded.

At that moment, a pretty blonde woman walked slowly and dreamily into the lounge. She appeared not to notice the two newcomers, or Andrew and sat down slowly and *awkwardly* on the floor in the centre of the lounge. In the midst of the chaos she looked like the lone survivor of a hurricane. She reached over to a large wooden picture frame which still held *scraps* of a ruined *canvas* and started trying to pull the ripped pieces back into place. After a moment, Andrew *cleared his throat* loudly. She looked lazily up at him, then spotted Hudson and Elvira *and froze*. Her sky-blue eyes were suddenly wild and scared. She reminded Hudson of a *spooked* horse, unsure of which way to run. "Are they here?" she whispered, directing the question at her husband.

"Yes, Charlotte love," he answered *soothingly*, in the exact same tone of voice one would use to calm a frightened horse. Hudson almost expected him to say "Whoa, girl". "This is Inspector Hudson and Elvira Elliot. They have come because of the robbery."

Hudson and Elvira exchanged a *puzzled glance*. What was wrong with this woman? Did she think they were ghosts? "Good afternoon, Mrs Harper," Hudson greeted her politely. Charlotte gave a slight nod in reply. By now she had managed to put most of the pieces of the *canvas* back into the frame. From what Hudson could make out, the painting was a portrait of the Harpers. Andrew stood *regally* behind his wife who was seated on a *plush* chair and dressed in a ball gown. She had an *ornate* gold necklace dripping with diamonds and sapphires around her neck. "Hi," Elvira said, trying a friendlier, non-threatening approach. "Is that you in the painting?" she asked, attempting to get a conversation going.

"Yes," the woman said simply, smoothing out the torn pieces of *canvas*.

The artist had used thick, rich oils and had probably attempted to paint a dignified *expression* on their faces, but the result was that Charlotte appeared rather *pompous* and Andrew looked as if he were desperately trying to ignore a bad smell. It was quite hard to believe that this *petrified*, disorientated woman was the same person in the painting.

"Is the necklace in the painting the one that was stolen?" Hudson asked her.

"They protected me, they are supposed to give you what you want," Charlotte answered cryptically.

Hudson was quite unsure what to reply to such a strange remark. It was Andrew who took control of the situation again. "Dear, why don't you go and make yourself a cup of that tea you like and I will speak to the investigators," said Andrew, picking his way through the mess and helping her to her feet. She *obediently* walked, as though drunk, to the kitchen. "Please excuse my wife", Andrew said, once the woman was *out of earshot*, "she has not been well recently and this invasion of

our home has been a terrible shock for her. She was so *fond of* that necklace and that painting had arrived only a few days ago", he added mournfully, "and now it is ruined. We will, of course, be *putting in a claim* for it," he said pointedly to Elvira. "Damage to property during a *burglary* is covered in *your policy*," she replied mildly.

"What was your wife referring to when she mentioned getting what she wanted?" Hudson asked, steering the topic back to the investigation.

Andrew looked a bit uncomfortable. "The necklace was passed down from my great-great-grandmother. It is said to bring the wearer their *'heart s desire.'* She was probably referring to that," he said.

Hudson raised his eyebrows sceptically. He most definitely did not believe in *charms*, magic or *curses*.

Andrew must have noted his *expression* for he gave an embarrassed laugh. "I know it sounds crazy", he said "but only three months after my grandmother had *inherited* it she became pregnant with my mother - after the doctors had told her that she would never be able to have the child she so desperately wanted. My mother had been a widow for 25 years, when it was passed on to her. She met my step-father only six weeks later. Although she never admitted it, I knew that her greatest desire was to find love again." Andrew paused, and swallowed.

"She passed away only a few months ago," he said, his voice *wavering* slightly, a faraway look in his eyes. "And the necklace naturally went to Charlotte. She was so *thrilled...*" he said softly, as if *reliving* the moment in his head. It was as if he had forgotten that Hudson and Elvira were there. "She was sure that its good magic would help her with her...um...problems," he finished abruptly, his voice returning to normal. "But it is late and we would really like to start cleaning up the mess. The;



*forensic* team has already checked for prints and other evidence. Is there anything else you need?"

"I am afraid I will need to check the rest of the house myself, too," Hudson said firmly. "*Clues* come from more than just *forensics*"

"Yes, of course. I will leave you to it," Andrew *sighed* wearily and headed off to the kitchen, *presumably* to check on his wife.

Alone in the lounge, Hudson and Elvira *surveyed* the scene. "There are some valuable things in here," Elvira commented, picking up a blue vase with a pretty gold design. "This is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Quing Dynasty vase. It's worth about £2,500."

"Andrew Harper's firm must be doing very well for him to be able to afford this house and all its furnishings," Hudson added, checking the area around the lounge window.

"From what I remember from his file, he *inherited* a lot of money and *assets* from his mother. She was a client of ours, too. And the burglars seem to have left most of it intact," Elvira said. "I wonder why the Harpers didn't mention that they had a child," he commented, picking up a broken frame that housed a colourful *scribble* in wax crayon.

Elvira suppressed a smile. "That is an original drawing by Joan Miro. It is worth about £10,000." Hudson's eyebrows shot up like a rocket. It would take him more than two months to earn that. Elvira laughed at Hudson's shocked face. "You never were much of an art enthusiast, were you? I *presume* they don't teach art *appreciation* at Scotland Yard. Strange that the thief didn't take it, though," she *mused*. "Maybe it wasn't their taste either."

"Mmm", Hudson agreed, glad for the subject change, "and it is not only the art, all this *state of the art* electronic equipment would bring in a few pounds, too," he continued, eyeing the TV, computer and expensive sound system.

"Perhaps he didn't want to carry anything big, or didn't know how valuable the art was," she suggested. "Or she. Or they," Hudson reminded her, sounding a bit unconvinced at her theory. "Maybe they were looking for something else as well, which they didn't find. Or it is possible that the thief was only after the necklace and trashed the place to try and throw us off," he thought aloud. "But why?" Elvira queried. "The necklace is only worth a few thousand and it is quite *distinctive* so it would probably be quite difficult to sell for its true worth on the black market."

"What if money was not the motive for the robbery?" Hudson theorized. "If the person or persons responsible truly believed in the power of the necklace, then it would be priceless to them."

He thought back to a case he had worked on a few years previously. A young and beautiful, *aspiring* actress had hired a *hit man* to kill a rival girl who was *auditioning* for the same part in a Broadway production. Her family and friends were completely taken aback that the quiet, talented girl would have done something so unspeakable. The irony was that the director had decided to cast her over her rival anyway before the murder had taken place.

"People will do almost anything if they want something badly enough," he said, seriously. "I think we are finished down here," he announced, and turned towards the staircase that led to the upstairs bedroom.

On entering the room, they discovered that it too had been *ransacked*; clothes were strewn across the floor like colourful *flotsam and jetsam*. A velvet-lined jewellery box lay empty on the bed, like a coffin. Hudson *surveyed* the scene carefully, absorbing every detail. Elvira glanced around the room too, but she had an eye for insurance valuation, not for *clues*,

so she moved on to the en suite bathroom. At least this room seemed to have been spared. Everything was clean and seemed to be in its correct place. She opened the mirrored cupboard above the basin. Inside were rows of labelled medicines. She recognized a few of them as heavy *prescription tranquilisers*. They were all made out to Mrs Charlotte Harper. As she closed the cupboard door to go and relate her findings to Hudson, she suddenly gave a squeak of fright as another face appeared in the mirror next to her own.

"James!" she cried breathlessly. "You almost gave me a heart attack! You shouldn't *sneak up* on people like that!" she *scolded*. "Find anything interesting in here?" he smiled, amused. After having to trail and observe suspects so often, moving silently had almost become second nature to him.

"Just a lot of *tranquilisers* that appear to belong to Mrs Harper. Frankly, I am considering taking a few now myself," she said, her hand still clutching her chest.

"Well, that could definitely explain her behaviour." Hudson said. "If she is drugged up on sedatives it is no wonder she is acting strangely and talking nonsense."

"I have to admit I find them both quite strange", Elvira said, "whether they are on drugs or not."

Hudson, who was inspecting the small bathroom window, had to agree. There was definitely more to this couple than met the eye.

"I think we have learnt everything we can from the crime scene," he said abruptly. "Shall we go back down?" When they entered the kitchen, they found Charlotte nervously sipping at a cup of green tea and Andrew talking softly to her. He stood up immediately when the two entered the room. "Did you find anything?" he asked.

"Do you keep a *spare key* outside?" Hudson enquired, avoiding the man's question. "Under a mat or flower pot perhaps?" "No, no," Andrew

replied. "Far too risky, our *spare key* is with our neighbour to the right, Shelley Gladstone. We usually keep it with dear Mrs Harris to our left", he added, "but she is on holiday with her daughter in Italy at the moment." "Does anyone else have a key, besides you and your wife?" "Well, not as far as I know", Andrew said, a note of irritation creeping into his voice, "but I really don't see the relevance of that. I think it is quite clear, due to the unusually cold *draught* blowing through my kitchen that the burglars did not use the front door." *He jerked his head* at the broken window to emphasize his point. "*On the contrary*", Inspector Hudson said calmly, "I suspect that is exactly how they did enter your home. Now, if you would be so kind as to follow me..."

Andrew looked like he was going to argue for a moment, then thought better of it and followed the inspector and Elvira out of the front door to the flowerbed in front of the broken window. "Do you not think it is strange that there is glass all over the doorstep and flowerbed?" Hudson asked, pointing to the *shattered* glass that lay among the flowers.

Andrew breathed heavily through his nose, "Not really, no," he *sighed* impatiently. "It happens when a window breaks." "Ah", Hudson continued, "but if a burglar had broken the window from the outside to get in, the glass would be all over the floor of your kitchen."

"This window must have been broken from the inside!" Elvira exclaimed.

Andrew's *yaw* fell open in surprise.

"Exactly," Hudson replied. "There is no other way they could have gained entrance. The thief had a key."

## **Chapter 2: Nosey Neighbours**

Hudson and Elvira left Andrew Harper scratching his head and still staring at the broken window and made their way back down the drive to the entrance of the next door property. As they walked up the *adjacent* drive, Hudson noticed the curtain in the front window *twitch* and a *pointed* face *poking out* quickly before disappearing again.

Elvira was delighted at Inspector Hudson's discovery, "The thief had a key!" she repeated excitedly. "That really narrows down the suspects a lot!" she declared as they reached the door and Hudson rang the bell. The door was opened by a middle-aged woman with a sharp, fox-like face and short, *bleached* hair.

"Good afternoon, Mrs Gladstone. I am Inspector Hudson, Scotland Yard, and this is Elvira Elliot from Redfearns Insurance Inc. We are investigating the robbery that took place next door. May we come in?"

"Well, I am quite busy", she said, "but if you think I can be of help, then by all means, come in."

She had quite a shrill voice, and Hudson found himself reflexively *hunching his shoulders* at the sound.

The house on the inside was the mirror image of the Harpers, but the decor couldn't have been more different. This one was stuffed with all sorts of cheap and tasteless *knickknacks* and smelt strongly of *stale* tobacco. The overall effect was about the same as the woman's voice. She offered Hudson and Elvira a seat on a couch with an *offensive* olive green and pink floral pattern on it. Hudson noticed Elvira smoothing her fashionable designer trousers vigorously as if she were afraid that they might become infected with the couch's *hideous* design.

"Terrible thing, this business", Mrs Gladstone said once she had sat herself down on the matching couch opposite them, "with Andrew's

troubles, this is the last thing he needs." She put a cigarette between her lips and picked a lighter up off the table.

"You don't mind, do you?" she said as she lit it and inhaled deeply. Elvira gave a small cough, but the woman chose to ignore it. "What problems would those be, Mrs Gladstone?" Hudson asked, taking out his notebook.

"Call me Shelley," the woman said as she blew a cloud of smoke into the air between them. "I really don't like to say anything...", she began, but Hudson could see from the *gleam* in her eye and the dramatic way she leaned forward and lowered her voice that she enjoyed it very much, "...but that new wife of his has gone totally *loony*. She walks around like a zombie all day having conversations with imaginary people and being an *embarrassment* to her husband." She *pursed her lips* and gave a little nod as if to emphasize that she was speaking the truth.

"So this has been quite a recent development?" Hudson asked. "Oh yes, she was Little Miss *Charm* and *Seduction* when she stole him away from poor Natalie. Maybe it's the guilt of breaking up a happy marriage that has made her come a bit *unhinged*" she said with her eyes narrowed. "She used to be Andrew's secretary - obviously saw an opportunity to get her claws into a wealthy man, never mind that he was married. Little *gold-digger*" she added *venomously*.

"Is Natalie Mr Harper's ex-wife?" Hudson asked, trying to stick to the facts.

"Yes, lovely girl," Shelley said, her *expression* changing instantly. "When she was still living next door she would baby-sit my Laura sometimes so that I could go to my flower-arranging course on a Monday evening."

"Were you at home at the time of the robbery? It occurred between 12:00 and 1:30 this afternoon," Hudson asked, directing the conversation back to the case at hand. "No, no. I always go and visit my mother in Wembley on Friday mornings," the woman said as she *flicked* the ash off *the butt of her cigarette* towards the ash tray, missing it completely.

"She's become quite *senile* in her old age and I go there once a week to check that she is remembering to eat," she said modestly, as if no daughter in history had ever been more devoted. "Pity", she added, "I'm sure I would make a good witness." "Can you give us her contact number and address?" Hudson asked, "I will need to *verify* your alibi."

"My alibi! Good gracious! Surely I am not a suspect?" Shelley *spluttered*, almost swallowing her cigarette in outrage. "The evidence shows that the forced entry was *staged* and the burglar used a key to get in. Mr Harper stated that they had left their *spare key* with you, so we do need *to rule you out* as a suspect," Hudson told her calmly.

"Well, all right then," she said somewhat *placated* as she wrote a number down on a piece of paper and handed it to the inspector. "They did leave the key with me for safekeeping, but I would never use it without permission!" she insisted.

Hudson heard Elvira give a soft *snort* next to him and knew that she was thinking the same thing that he was. Shelley Gladstone was exactly the type who would *snoop around* her neighbours' house when they weren't home given half the opportunity. Luckily the woman hadn't heard her.

"Is your daughter here, Mrs Gladstone?" Hudson asked, deciding to stick with the more formal address. "We will need to verify her whereabouts, too."

"She is upstairs studying. I'll get her to come down," the woman said, *stutting* out her cigarette.

"LAURA!" she *bellowed up* at the ceiling.

"WHAT?" came the reply, shouted from above.

"GET DOWN HERE! WE HAVE GUESTS!" she ordered. They heard the scrape of a chair and then footsteps stamping over their heads, and down the stairs. A girl of about 17 came into view. She had light brown hair and the same *pointed* face as her mother, which wore a *sulky expression*.

"These people are from the police," her mother said. "They want to ask you some questions."

The young girl stopped in mid-step and *paled* visibly, then *recovered her composure* and came into the lounge and took a seat next to her mother.

"Hi," she said *awkwardly*. At least she hadn't *inherited* her mother's voice, Hudson noted.

"Hello, Laura", Hudson greeted her, "we wanted to find out if you knew anything about the robbery next door. Where you at home when it happened?" "No, I was at school all day," she said.

"Laura goes to Grey's School for Girls," Shelley said proudly. "She is in line for a sports *scholarship* to go to Cambridge if she keeps her grades up."

"Congratulations," Elvira said. "What sport?" "Swimming," answered the girl. "*Backstroke*."

"Laura could be at the next Olympics if she has the right coach," Shelley added, positively swelling with motherly pride as she lit another cigarette and blew a stream of smoke into her daughter's face.

Laura turned her head slightly to avoid the thick grey cloud, rolled her eyes and looked embarrassed.

"Have either of you noticed anything unusual today or in the last couple of weeks?" Hudson enquired. "Well, there was someone parked in an old white station wagon across the road a few days ago. They could



have been *staking* the place out. I didn't get a good look at who was inside, though."

Hudson made a note in his book. "And you, Laura?" he asked.

Laura shook her head, "Can I go now? I have a test I have to study for."

"Laura!" her mother *scolded*. "You can go when the inspector is finished."

"It's all right. That's all I need for now, but I might need to come back for a follow-up interview at a later stage, so please inform my office if you are planning to leave town or if you remember anything that might be relevant to the case. Thank you for your time," he said, putting a card with his contact details on the coffee table and standing up. Laura disappeared upstairs in a matter of seconds without saying goodbye.

Shelley let them out. "Goodbye, Inspector, Ms Elliot", she said, "and good luck catching the thief."

"Goodbye," they said.

"Oh thank God we are out of that house!" *gasped* Elvira, breathing in the fresh air deeply as soon as they were *out of earshot*: "What an awful woman! And the way she spoke about Mrs Harper - you would think the poor woman was Satan himself. She is just a *malicious gossip*. I wish she didn't have an alibi, she deserves to be locked up."

"Sometimes *leaking* information or casting suspicion on other people is a very good way to divert attention away from yourself," Hudson reminded her. "And her alibi is not very solid. She said her mother is old and senile, which means that it is likely that she will not remember if Shelley was there or not. And if she wasn't, it is possible that she will lie to protect her daughter." The fact that Shelley could still be a suspect cheered Elvira up a good deal.

"Laura acted very suspiciously, too," Hudson added. "She hardly said three words and did you see how nervous she was when she heard the

police were there to question her?" "Teenagers are always secretive and up to *mischief*. I don't think it makes her a criminal *mastermind*, though," Elvira said. "I know I would have had exactly, the same reaction at her age worrying if they had caught me *bunking* Biology or besmearing the creepy Science teacher's car," she laughed. "Surely you did stuff like that when you were a teenager, too?"

"Umm...," Hudson *faltered*. Luckily, just then, his mobile phone rang and he was saved from giving a response. Taking it out of his pocket, he saw that it was Miss Paddington, his loyal housekeeper. She was no doubt calling to find out what time he would be home for dinner. He excused himself and answered the call.

"Hello, Inspector Hudson", Miss Paddington's *cheery* voice greeted him warmly, "I called your office, but they told me you were out on a case. I have my monthly book club this evening so I will be going out shortly. I just wanted to find out if you will be working late and ordering in or if I should prepare you something."

"Yes, thank you, Miss Paddington. I will be home in about an hour. I am just finishing up here with Elvira and. "Oh! You are working with Elvira again, how lovely!" Miss Paddington interrupted, sounding as if this was the best news she had received all week. "Then you must invite her for dinner, too. I was going to make a nice curry; there will be more than enough for two."

Hudson *groaned* inwardly. Miss Paddington had been trying to *bring him* and Elvira *together* for ages now. "I'm sure she has her own plans for this evening," Hudson retorted, but Miss Paddington would not take no for an answer. "Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "The poor girl doesn't want to have to go home and cook after a long day at work. You just ask her and see if she says no."

Hudson turned to Elvira, "Miss Paddington is making a curry, would you like to come for dinner?" "How nice. Thank you," she agreed immediately. "Well, that is settled then," Miss Paddington said satisfied, having heard Elvira's response. "If I am not there when you get home, have a good evening. Goodbye!" "Goodbye," said Hudson, knowing he had been out maneuvered.

Elvira followed Hudson to his flat in her fancy red sports car. He could see by the way she was *edging up* behind him that she was dying to put her foot down flat and *zoom* past him, but Hudson stuck *rigidly* to the speed limit, refusing to *strain* his faithful old Bentley.

Miss Paddington greeted them at the door.

"Don't mind me. I am just getting my things together and then I'm on my way," she said. "You two go through to the kitchen and start. You must be *starving*"

When they entered the kitchen, however, Hudson's cheeks started to feel uncomfortably hot. The room was lit by romantic candlelight, there was a bottle of white wine in an ice bucket and in the centre of the kitchen table Miss Paddington had put a glass vase with a single long-stemmed rose in it.

"You really didn't need to go to so much trouble, Miss Paddington," Hudson said, embarrassed. "Oh, it was no trouble at all," she said casually. "What a transformation! It looks lovely," Elvira said. "Thank you, dear!" Miss Paddington beamed, patting the other woman warmly on the arm. "Enjoy the meal!" she called from the doorway as she let herself out.

Hudson pulled the kitchen chair out for Elvira and they sat down to a delicious chicken curry and rice with bread and butter pudding to follow. Hudson enjoyed the evening so much that when he heard the sound of a key scraping in the lock on Miss Paddington's return he could hardly

believe that a few hours had gone by. Miss Paddington had never looked so pleased with herself when she saw the two of them at the table still enjoying each other's company. Hudson *groaned* when he saw that she had once again returned with a *stack* of mystery novels.

"Crimes never get solved the way they do in those books. In those books, the detective always happens upon something by complete chance which solves the whole case. It is a lot more work in real life," he said for the hundredth time.

"I know, Inspector. But they are such fun!" she said *good-naturedly*. "How is the new case going, by the way?" she asked. "It must have been a robbery of some kind if you are involved, Elvira."

"Yes, an antique necklace was stolen. It appears that a key was used to gain entrance, so we only have four suspects," Elvira explained. "The owners of the house, who claim to have been out to lunch, the neighbour who claims to have been visiting her mother and her daughter who was at that grammar school of hers." "Grey's School for Girls," Hudson said.

Miss Paddington's eyes widened. "Did the robbery happen today?" she asked.

"Yes, why do you ask?" Hudson said, his brows *furrowed*. "Because the headmistress of that school is in my book club," she said triumphantly. "The school closed at 9:30 today and all the pupils and staff were sent home because the *janitor* found a huge *hornet's* nest in the roof of one of the classrooms." "That means that Laura couldn't have been at school!" Elvira said turning to Hudson excitedly.

Hudson stared at Miss Paddington in astonishment. She merely smiled *smugly*, tapped her fingers on the cover of one of her mystery books and *saunte red* out of the kitchen. '

### Chapter 3: Goodbye Cruel World...

The next morning was a Saturday, and Hudson woke to the wonderful smell of frying bacon. He could hear Miss Paddington *bustling* around the kitchen and the *hiss* and *sizzle* as she turned the *rashers* over in the pan. She was humming to herself merrily -she must be in an extraordinarily good mood, Hudson thought to himself. Miss Paddington was not really the singing type.

"Good Morning, James!" she greeted him enthusiastically, using his first name as she sometimes did when she was *distracted* or excited. She laid a plate loaded with scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages, fried tomatoes, baked beans, plus his usual toast and marmalade in front of him. He had obviously done something to please her to deserve this feast, and he had *a sneaking suspicion* that it had something to do with his dinner with Elvira the previous evening. When he had finally swallowed the last delicious mouthful he was as stuffed as a cushion.

"That was superb, Miss Paddington", he complimented her, "you really *outdid* yourself, but I must be getting going. I need to make a quick phone call and then I am meeting Elvira." Miss Paddington *beamed* a smile that put the sun to shame. Suspicion confirmed, Hudson thought. He had better put a stop to this before she started arranging his wedding. "Purely work-related, we are going to interview the Gladstone girl," he added quickly.

Miss Paddington just raised an eyebrow and continued washing the dishes, the smile never leaving her lips.

Hudson picked Elvira up from the coffee shop around the corner from her flat. The owner of the little coffee shop must have *thanked his lucky stars* the day Elvira wandered through his door. She pumped herself full of

enough caffeine daily to keep a few night-watchmen awake during the wee hours. She held a takeaway cup of coffee in her hand, but Hudson would have bet his Bentley that it was not her first cup of the day. As usual, she was dressed in a designer outfit, straight out of the pages of a fashion magazine. She smiled and waved when she saw him, walking quickly over to the car and climbing into the *passenger seat*. Hudson was relieved to see that Elvira hadn't taken the previous night's dinner as seriously as Miss Paddington had, but all the same, he thought it was best to keep the topic of conversation to the case at hand.

"I called Shelley Gladstone's mother this morning", he told her, "it is as I suspected. The old woman wouldn't have remembered if she had been visited by the Queen yesterday."

"Oh good!" exclaimed Elvira. Hudson gave her a *reproachful look*, "Well, good that Mrs *Busybody* is still a suspect, not that her mother is senile," she mumbled.

"The daughter has a strong motive", Hudson reminded her, "if she believes the necklace will help her achieve her Olympic dream." "Mothers can be just as ambitious for their children," Elvira countered. "Sometimes even more so than the kids themselves." Elvira did have a point, he thought to himself as he parked the car on the street outside the Gladstone house. He had worked on more than one case where an *overzealous* mother had gone too far to ensure her child's success, *resorting to blackmail*, and in one shocking case, even murder.

Elvira started walking up the drive, but as Hudson locked the car, his *keen* detective's eye spotted something. Elvira, noticing that Hudson was no longer behind her, came back to where he was standing.

"What is it?" she asked curiously.

Hudson pointed to where the curtains *billowed* in and out of the

Harpers' broken window. As they were blown into the room by the wind, you had a clear view into the kitchen from the street. Charlotte Harper was standing in the kitchen with her arms around her husband and was stroking his hair. It took a moment or two for Elvira to register that Mrs Harper had brown hair instead of blonde and was a good deal shorter than the last time she had seen her. It wasn't Charlotte Harper after all.

"Who is that woman he's with?" Elvira asked, her eyes open wide.

"I think we should go and find out," Hudson replied, starting up the Harpers' driveway.

For the second time in 24 hours, Hudson rapped smartly on the Harpers' door. At the sound of the knock there was a movement from the kitchen, the exchange of low, *unintelligible* voices and footsteps. Suddenly, the door opened and the brunette woman greeted them. She had a pleasant face, not beautiful and striking like Charlotte's, but with a certain *charm*.

"Can I help you?" she asked, her blue eyes questioning.

"Inspector Hudson," he introduced himself.

"Elvira Elliot," Elvira *followed suit*.

"We are here to speak to Mr Andrew Harper. May I ask who you might be?" Hudson enquired.

"I am Natalie Harper, Andrew's ex-wife," she said offering her hand to the inspector and insurance investigator. "I think you had better come in," she *sighed*.

She led the pair to the lounge, which, having been tidied up, looked so different to the previous day that one could be forgiven for thinking it was a different house. Andrew was sitting on a modern, L-shaped sofa, his head in his hands. He looked up at the two visitors with *red-rimmed eyes*, completely defeated.

"I suppose you heard, then," Andrew said, his voice coming out thick with misery.

Elvira and Hudson looked at each other, *baffled*. Elvira looked as if she were about to speak, but Hudson motioned her to keep quiet. People often *incriminated* themselves when they thought the police knew more than they actually did. "I didn't know...I should have known", he said brokenly, "I thought that we were handling it...I never thought that Charlotte would *resort to...*" he paused, *choking* on the word, "...suicide."

This was definitely not what they were expecting to hear. Elvira breathed in sharply with shock.

"Your wife is dead?" she *blurted out*.

Andrew looked up, surprised, wiping his nose on his sleeve, "No, she is in a coma at the hospital.. I thought you knew. The woman, seeing that Andrew was too *distraught* to explain, took over, "She took an overdose of *tranquilizers*," she explained. "Andrew found her in the bathroom *unconscious* last night and called the *paramedics*." Then she noticed Elvira's questioning *expression* and added, "I know that it may seem strange that I am here at a time like this, but Andrew, Charlotte and I have managed to put the past behind us and we have actually all become good friends. Andrew called me with the terrible news when he got home from the hospital this morning," Natalie continued. "He said he didn't want to be alone - so, of course, I came over straight away."

Andrew confirmed her *statement* with a nod and another sniff. "The doctors sent me home to get some rest," he sniffed, his hand still *straying* routinely to his hair, which was so unkempt now it resembled a *patch* of overgrown lawn. "They said there was nothing I could do there and promised to call the minute there was any change."



"Why don't I make us all a cup of tea to *soothe* our nerves," Natalie suggested, motioning to the guests to take a seat. "We were just in the kitchen boiling the kettle when you rang the bell. From what I could see there was quite a large selection in the kitchen. What can I get you? English Breakfast? Mint...?" "Earl Grey, if there is any," said Hudson, choosing his favourite. Elvira was about to say "coffee" when she noticed the knowing smirk on Hudson's face and changed her mind. "Green tea, please," she said sweetly, enjoying seeing Hudson's *jaw* drop out of the corner of her eye. She had heard there was caffeine in green tea too. She *fervently* hoped it was true. Two seconds later, though, she cursed her choice as tears *welled up* in Andrew's eyes.

"That was Charlotte's favourite too," he said mournfully. "My poor Charlotte! I have failed her, this is my fault!" Natalie put her arm around him and rubbed his back *soothingly*. Hudson had to admit that the embrace wasn't very suspicious given the circumstances.

"Come, now", she *cooed*, "it wasn't your fault. We all knew Charlotte had problems. There wasn't anything more you could have done. I will make you a nice cup of Chamomile, it will make you feel better."

After a moment, Andrew managed to *compose himself*. He peeled his tear-stained face from the wet *patch* he had made on her shoulder and nodded bravely. She smiled encouragingly at him and got up to make the hot drinks.

Elvira and Hudson sat *awkwardly* on the couch together, unsure what to say to the grieving man in the uncomfortable silence that followed.

"She seemed like a very nice woman," Elvira said. It wasn't entirely true; the only impression Charlotte had made on her was of being scared and a bit crazy.

"I should have made her get help," Andrew said, his head in his hands.

"Did she have a history of depression?" Hudson asked gently. Andrew shook his head "A few months ago, Charlotte started seeing people and things that weren't there. They *terrified* her." "So that is why she reacted so strangely to us yesterday! She thought we were a hallucination," Elvira exclaimed. Andrew nodded, "Charlotte was *petrified* that she was going crazy just like her older sister Frances," he continued. Hudson could see that the man desperately needed to *unburden* himself. Now that the flood had started, it was impossible to stop until it had run its course. "Frances was diagnosed a schizophrenic when Charlotte was only 14. She has been a patient at St Mary's Mental Hospital for the last 15 years. Charlotte was *terrified* that they would lock her up there with her sister, so she refused to see a doctor. She was afraid of her visions, but she was more afraid of being locked up. I begged her to go and get help and she finally agreed to go to our local doctor. She only told him that she was stressed and having panic attacks, though, so he just *prescribed tranquilisers*," he said *wretchedly*. "Yesterday, when we discovered that the necklace had been stolen, she was beside herself. She believed that the necklace from my mother had a powerful magic energy that protected her from her visions. After you left last night, she said she wasn't feeling well and was going to take a bath. I started cleaning up down here and only went to check on her an hour later. I found her lying *unconscious* in the tub with the bottle of pills on the floor next to her. It never even occurred to me that she would try to take her own life", he said, his eyes wide, *pleading* with them to believe him. "But I should still never have left her alone for so long in the state she was in", he *berated* himself. "If she makes it through, I am never letting her out of my sight again." Then he buried his face in his hands again, the *flash flood* of words over, and it was impossible to draw another word out of him. Elvira

inspected her nails and Hudson stared pointedly at nothing as the *awkward* silence *engulfed* them again.

Suddenly, from the kitchen they heard Natalie cry out followed by a large crash. Both Elvira and Hudson jumped up immediately to see what was wrong. Andrew didn't seem to notice the *commotion* and stayed, lost in his grief with his head in his hands. In the kitchen, they found Natalie sitting miserably on the kitchen floor, surrounded by what looked like clumps of freshly *mowed* lawn.

"Damn it!" she said tearfully. "I had just got it off the shelf for Ms Elliot when I started thinking about Charlotte. She used to drink this all the time, and I just had the most awful thought that she might never drink it again. My hands started shaking and the tin just *slipped* through my fingers. Now look what I've done! I'm afraid that I will have to offer you something else to drink, Ms Elliot."

"Accidents happen," said Hudson, bending down and picking up the tin for her.

"Oh, don't worry about it," Elvira said sympathetically. She was secretly overjoyed, now that she had smelt the weedy green tea, that she had an excuse to rather drink a steaming cup of her favourite *brew*.

"I'll just take coffee, thanks."

Natalie fetched a dustpan and brush and began to sweep up the tea leaves and empty them into the bin.

"Everyone always thought it was so *odd* that Charlotte and I became friends...," she *mused*, sadly.

"Oh, not at all," said Elvira, *conveniently* forgetting her previous reaction to the woman's presence in the house.

".. .but it didn't take us long to find out that we actually had a lot of things in common. We did, after all, have the same taste in men," she added,

giving a weak smile. "I would come over at least once a week for tea and a chat. Charlotte *confided* in me about everything. About how her hallucinations were taking control of her life and how she didn't want Andrew to suffer the heartache of having a *madwoman* for a wife. She was so depressed and afraid. She told me more than once that she had thought about ending it all, but I didn't take her seriously enough. I thought I had talked her out of it. I told her she had so much to live for, that things would get better. I was a fool," she said *bluntly*. "It's not Andrew's fault that she is lying in a coma and might die. It's mine." "I really don't think you or Mr Harper should blame yourselves,"

Elvira said gently.

Hudson looked *pensive*.

"Did she ever mention her sister, Frances, to you?" he asked. "She only told me that they hated each other and that her sister was a dangerous psychopath -I believe she is in a *mental institution*. She didn't like to talk about her much," Natalie replied as she picked up the tea tray. "Should we continue this in the lounge?" They found Andrew in the exact same *wretched* position that he had been in when they had left the room. Natalie put the tray down on the coffee table and placed a mug of fragrant chamomile in front of him.

"Here you go," she said, kindly.

Andrew just glanced *distractedly* at it, his mind far away. Just at that moment the phone rang. Suddenly *reanimated*, he jumped up faster than if a fire had been set under his seat and grabbed the receiver.

"Hello?" he said breathlessly into the mouthpiece. "Yes, I am Andrew Harper, Charlotte Harper's husband. Have you got any news?"

"I see," he said a few moments later, biting his lip hard to hold in the emotion that was *welling up* inside him like lava in a volcano.

"Thank you for letting me know. Goodbye."

Three pairs of concerned eyes watched the man as he hung up the phone. Suddenly his face crumpled and rivers of tears started to roll down his cheeks.

Natalie got up and put her arm around his shoulders, "I am so sorry," she said.

It was a moment or two before the sobs *subsided* and he could use the air in his lungs for speech again.

"You don't understand," he said pushing her arm gently off his shoulder. "It's okay. They said she is going *to pull through*."

#### **Chapter 4: Digging Deeper**

Natalie, Elvira and Hudson *prudently* excused themselves before even taking a sip of their drinks. Andrew was naturally *eager* to rush to his wife's bedside. The doctor had told him that Charlotte had finally *come round*. She was still very *groggy* and disorientated, but they were optimistic that she would *recover*. Andrew promised to call Natalie with frequent updates on Charlotte's condition and then sped off in his shiny sports car. Natalie pulled off in the opposite direction, waving at Hudson and Elvira from her car window as they made their way up the neighbouring drive. "You know, when that awful Gladstone woman gave Andrew's ex-wife a *glowing character reference* I was sure she would be just as horrible, too, but she was actually really nice," Elvira commented. "I doubt if I would be a big enough person to *bury the hatchet* with my ex-husband's new wife." Did Elvira have an ex-husband? Hudson wondered to himself. The thought had never occurred to him. He put out his finger and stabbed the doorbell a

little bit harder than necessary. Shelley Gladstone answered the door with a cigarette *wedged* between her lips.

"Ah, you two again," she said with her nails-on-a-backboard voice. It was actually quite amazing that someone who smoked so much could have such a *high-pitched* voice, Elvira thought to herself. She pictured dogs running for cover with their tails between their legs whenever the woman opened her mouth and couldn't hold back a smile. The *bleached* blonde in the doorway must have thought the smile was aimed at her for she showed some yellowed teeth in return.

"Hello, Mrs Gladstone. We would like to talk to Laura again, if she is home," Hudson said.

"I'm afraid you just missed her. She *slipped* out the back a little while ago. Said she was going to get some fresh air," she said with *distaste* as if the desire to breathe smoke-free air was some type of *character flaw*.

"Did she say when she would be back?" Hudson asked. The woman shook her head. "You can come in if you like and wait for her."

"Umm.. it's quite alright, thanks," Hudson said quickly, as Elvira made it clear that it was *out of the question* by *poking* him sharply in the back. "We will come back a bit later." "Fine by me," Shelley *shrugged*, offended. "Why do you want to speak to her anyway? Is she in trouble?" she asked suspiciously. "Just some more routine questions about the robbery," Hudson said.

"So", Shelley said conversationally, "I heard the *nutcase* next-door tried to *top herself*. Sounds to me like someone wanted some attention," she added *callously*. "Have you considered that maybe the robbery was just an attention-seeking stunt, too?" Elvira puffed up like a blowfish in *indignation*, but Hudson warned her with a gesture of his hand to leave it

alone and merely said, "Scotland Yard always considers all possible angles when working on a case. How did you know about the suicide attempt?" "I heard the ambulance. I went outside to see what was going on and heard *the paramedics* asking Andrew how many pills she had taken." *Snooping around* the ambulance, more like, Elvira thought, battling to keep her temper in check.

"Well, we had better get going then, and leave you to your business," Elvira said, burning to add "and everyone else's". "Goodbye, Mrs Gladstone," Hudson said politely. The woman watched them walk down the drive and get into the car before she closed the door. As soon as they got into the car, Elvira exploded.

"What an awful creature! How can she be so cold-hearted?" Elvira said angrily.

"I think it has something to do with the fact that her husband left her for a woman that he worked with," Hudson said, putting the Bentley into gear. "Her mother said something about it when I spoke to her this morning. The poor woman got confused and thought I must be Shelley's new boyfriend. She gave me a good *lecture* on how *shabbily* her daughter's ex-husband had treated her and how I wasn't to do the same before I was able to make her understand that I was from Scotland Yard. That is probably why she identifies with Natalie so much and hates Charlotte. Personally, I am more intrigued by Laura's sudden and *convenient* disappearance." Elvira, however, was not to be *distracted or placated*. She continued to vent angrily about *nosey* neighbours and bitter, nasty old women until Hudson brought the car to a stop in front of a rather depressing brick building.

"Where are we?" she asked curiously, noticing that the car had stopped.

"St Mary's Psychiatric Unit," Hudson answered, "I thought we should pay Charlotte's sister Frances a visit."

They entered the building and walked up to the reception desk where a large woman sat playing solitaire on her computer. "Can I help you?" she said looking up with an *expression* that clearly showed she thought her computer game was much more worthy of her attention than the couple in front of her. "Inspector Hudson, Scotland Yard," Hudson said *sternly*, showing her his *badge*. "I need to speak to a patient here regarding a case that I am working on."

The woman immediately sat up a bit straighter and hurriedly closed the solitaire window on her PC.

"Which patient might that be?" she asked in her most helpful voice, her double chin *wobbling* as she rearranged her desk and tried to look as busy as possible.

Hudson always *marvelled* at the effect a police *badge* had on some people. It was as if they imagined he had the power to see that they had taken an extra 10 minutes on their lunch break or put the empty carton of milk back in the fridge. They felt instantly guilty and looked it.

"I only have a first name. Frances. She has been a patient here for 15 years."

"Oh, you must be talking about Frances Greene. I am not sure if she is here at the moment. Dr Hamilton thought she had made great progress so she is being treated as an *outpatient*. She only comes here for her *sessions* a few times a week and to get her meds."

"How long has she been living by herself?" Hudson asked.



"About a month now," the *fleshy* woman said. "Let me see if she is here."

She dialled an extension on her phone. "Hello, Ward Three. I have some people here to see Miss Greene."

A few seconds passed. "She's in Dr Hamilton's waiting room?" *Relief* flooded into her voice. "I will send them right up," she said and hung up the phone.

"Up the stairs, first door on the right," she directed them, *sagging* in her chair like a *punctured* balloon with *relief* as soon as they were out of sight.

Hudson and Elvira followed her directions and found a pretty woman with the same blonde hair and blue eyes as her sister reading a magazine in the psychiatrist's waiting room. She looked surprisingly normal. The way she had been described by Andrew and Natalie, Hudson had almost been expecting her to be holding a human skull and muttering *curse*s. "Are you Miss Frances Greene?" Hudson asked. "Yes," she replied, looking up questioningly at the two strangers who stood before her. Hudson introduced himself and Elvira. "We would like to talk to you about your sister." "I have my *session* with the doctor in a few minutes", she said, "but I think that there will probably be enough time to tell you everything I know about Charlotte - we haven't spoken since I was first *admitted* 15 years ago."

Hudson explained about the robbery and Charlotte's suicide attempt.

"So the perfect sister doesn't have the perfect life after all," Frances said, a trace of bitterness in her voice. She *sighed* and looked out of the window. "Excuse me if I seem cold, but Charlotte and I have never been close. Of course I am sorry that she felt so desperate that she thought there was no way out. I have been there myself," she said rubbing the scars on the inside

of her wrist. I suppose I can't really blame her for hating me, though. My disease made me do some things before I was properly diagnosed and *medicated that she has never forgiven me for.*" "Could you be a bit more specific?" Hudson asked. "I believed that Charlotte was trying to kill me and that her pet dog was her *spy* who reported all my movements to her, so I poisoned her dog," she said *bluntly*, then gave an embarrassed smile. "I know it sounds completely crazy, but I truly believed it at the time. Schizophrenia often makes you paranoid and *delusional*. There is a woman who was convinced that the government had tapped her phones and had hired her colleagues to *spy on* her because she was planning to write a book on the perfect loaf of bread. All the same, Charlotte hated me for it and there has been *bad blood* between us ever since."

Hudson nodded. He had quite a good knowledge of the disease as it was a favourite defence for criminals who were looking to avoid a jail sentence.

Just then a rather *scruffy-looking* man with a thick beard and a nervous tic came out of the doctor's room. "The doctor says you can go in now," he said directing his *statement* at a spot on the floor.

"Thanks, Harry," Frances said as the *man shuffled out*. "I am afraid I have to go," she said to Hudson.

"I will need your address and phone number so I can contact you at a later stage if need be," Hudson said.

"Of course," said the woman and dug a pen and piece of note paper out of her bag and quickly wrote down her address. She was just going through the door when Hudson called after her, "Oh, Miss Greene...may I ask what car you drive?" "I haven't bought one since I started living on my own again. I normally take a taxi or walk," she said over her shoulder and disappeared into the room beyond.

Hudson and Elvira were long gone by the time Frances emerged from her *session* half an hour later, so they didn't see her go around to the back parking space and climb into a rented white station wagon.

Hudson parked the Bentley a little way down the road from the Gladstones' house, undid his seatbelt and shifted into a more comfortable position.

"A good old fashioned *stake-out!*" Elvira was delighted. "But how do we know Laura isn't already back home?" she asked. "Call it instinct," Hudson said. "She obviously *did a runner* when she saw we were back. My guess is that she will stay away for quite a while before she thinks it is safe to come home in case we were waiting for her inside."

Two and a half hours later the *novelty* had definitely worn off for *Elvira*. She *fidged* and *squirmed* in her seat like a bored child on a long road trip. Hudson watched her out of the corner of his eye in amusement. She had probably never sat still in one place for so long in her life.

"How much longer can the *wretched* girl stay out? It's getting dark already," she complained.

Just then, Hudson saw a figure walking quickly up the road. It looked like a young girl and she was checking behind *her furtively*. "I think that is her," said Hudson. "Thank God!" Elvira said, reaching for the door handle.

"Let's wait until she goes inside," Hudson instructed.

Laura had just got inside when the doorbell rang. Her heart fell to her shoes. The damn police again! She heard her mother go to answer the door and say, "You again, I suppose you want to speak to Laura. She's just come back in." There was a pause and then the woman shrieked "LAAUUUURAAA!"

Laura was not going to *hang around* to find out what they wanted. She quickly got the key for the kitchen door and *slipped* out the back way again.

She was just checking behind her that nobody had followed her when she turned the corner at the side of the house and walked straight into Hudson.

"Going somewhere?" he asked.

Laura looked desperately around for an escape route, but there was none. Her shoulders slumped in defeat.

"You have three choices," Hudson told her *sternly*. "You can come down to the station and answer some questions, we can go back inside and do it in front of your mother, or we can go to the coffee shop down the road and you can answer them in private."

"The coffee shop," Laura mumbled miserably. They met Elvira back at the Bentley; she had excused herself and returned to the car as Hudson had instructed when Shelley was unable to find Laura.

They walked in silence to Carmen's Coffee House and only after a friendly waitress had taken their orders for a jumbo coffee, a cup of Earl Grey tea and a chocolate milkshake did Hudson turn to speak to the girl.

"Laura, we know that you weren't at school when the robbery took place," he said. "Your school closed early yesterday." "Okay, all right!" Laura *huffed*, realising she was caught out. "I was *bunking* with my boyfriend, Greg. I didn't want Mum to know, she would *freak out*." "And where did you go?" Hudson asked.

"You know, here and there. We did some shopping, went to the park."

"I am going to need your boyfriend's full name and address; I will have to confirm your alibi with him."

Laura bit her lip. She hadn't been with Greg yesterday, and although Greg was very good-looking and a great kisser, he was a bit of a *coward*. She didn't think he would lie for her and if he did, he would probably say something stupid and contradict her anyway. "Okay, I wasn't with Greg. I

went to a movie by myself," she said tetchily. "I just didn't want you to think I was a loser or something."

"What did you see?" Hudson asked coolly. Laura thought desperately, she wasn't a particularly clever girl and she wished she had given her alibi a bit more thought. She had *presumed* the police would believe her story about being at school and thought if she stayed out of their way, they wouldn't ask her any more questions, but now this inspector was *poking* holes in everything she said.

"Midnight Sky," she said, as it was the only movie she could think of that was currently *on circuit*. "What did you think of it?" Elvira asked. The girl *shrugged*, "It was all right."

"Didn't you think the part where they flew the aeroplane into the Taj Mahal was a bit unbelievable?" Elvira smiled at the girl. "Yeah, I suppose," Laura said uncertainly. Elvira *sighed* impatiently. "Laura, that never happened in that movie. I made it up."

Laura put her head in her hands. Thoughts and excuses raced through her head, but none of them sounded the least bit plausible. "Listen, Laura", Hudson said firmly, "you had better start telling the truth before we decide to *charge you with* theft." Laura looked up *panic-stricken*. Her lip started to *tremble*. "I can't say anything! She knows things about me, she will ruin my life!"

Elvira's *brows knitted together* in confusion, but Hudson said, "I already know who the thief is, Laura, but I need to know what you saw. I won't let anything happen to you, I promise." Elvira turned to Hudson in surprise. Typical! She thought. It was just like him to have solved the case without saying a word about it.

Laura nodded her head slowly with scared, tear-filled eyes. "I knew Mum would be out the whole morning, so I decided to take the day off, just

sleep in and relax, watch a bit of telly. I heard glass breaking next door, so I checked out my window to see if everything was okay and then I saw HER. She saw me too and said that if I ever told anyone she had been there, she would ruin my life. She could do it!" Laura *wailed*. "She could get me *expelled*, ruin my chances of a *scholarship* and end all my chances of a swimming career. She wouldn't even think twice about it! She's totally crazy!"

Elvira could stand it no longer. "Who?!" she cried impatiently, "who?!"

## **Chapter 5: The Schemer**

The rosey-cheeked nurse chatted merrily to the blonde woman as she led her down the hospital corridor.

"You know, I'm really not supposed to let anyone go in - visiting hours are over, but I'm not as strict as some of the other nurses. What did you say your name was, dear?" "Frances," came the short reply.

"Well, Frances", the woman prattled on, "I'm afraid your sister is still very weak and disorientated, but I am sure it will give her a bit of a lift to see her family. I think she needs all the support she can get, considering what she tried to do," she added gravely. She stopped at a door marked 204 and *ushered the visitor into the room*. "She's got the room all to herself so you will have a bit of privacy Now, don't stay too long, or you will get me into trouble," she said, giving the visitor a *wink* and closing the door behind her. Charlotte lay sleeping on the bed. She looked as white and fragile as a snowflake. Hearing the sound of the door closing, she *stirred* and opened her eyes; and saw a familiar face *glaring* down at her. She *flinched* at the

hate she saw burning in the blue eyes. "What.. .what do you want?" Charlotte asked uncertainly. "I want you to pay for everything you have done to me," came the hissed reply. "For everything I have endured because of you. You stole my life, and now it is time for me to take it back. This time there is no escape for you. Goodbye, Charlotte. I hope you suffer." She *snatched up* the pillow from the empty bed next to her and raised it over Charlotte's head. Charlotte saw the white *blob* coming towards her fast and raised her hand feebly to try and protect herself, but it was too late. The soft downy pillow was being pressed down *viciously* onto her face, cutting off her air supply. She tried to take a breath, but got a mouthful of starched linen instead. She fought in panic, but the pillow didn't *budge*. Charlotte was suddenly gripped with the terrible realisation that she was going to die. The crazed woman watched Charlotte struggle desperately and smiled grimly as she forced the pillow down with all her strength<sup>^</sup>. She had waited so long for this. Soon Charlotte would finally be gone for good. All of a sudden, she felt her arms being pulled firmly behind her back. She lost her grip on the pillow and turned around in astonishment. Standing behind her was Inspector Hudson. "Natalie Harper, you are under arrest," he said as he snapped cold, metal handcuffs around her wrists.

The blonde *wig* shifted out of place and sat at a crooked angle on her head as she reflexively tried to *jerk* away. Her mouth opened and closed like a goldfish, but she was too shocked to form a single word. It was only when Andrew rushed out of the en suite bathroom that Natalie realized where the inspector had been hiding. She had been *set up*.

Charlotte had knocked the pillow off her face and was taking in deep breaths of air by the time her husband reached her bedside. "Are you okay, darling?" he asked *anxiously*, gently stroking her cheek.

"Yes, fine, it was only a few seconds. But I have to admit that for a moment I really did believe that I was going to die, though. It's a scary feeling," she smiled *ruefully*.

"You were so brave to *volunteer* for this," he said kissing her. Only I lied did he turn to look at his ex-wife. His face showed only *contempt*. Natalie felt like she had been hit in the chest with a *sledgehammer*. Her plans were in ruins, the man she loved was looking at her like she was a monster. She had to make him understand... Andrew...please...it's not what it looks like...let me explain!" she implored.

He looked away in disgust as she started pulling herself to her feet and tried to make her way over to him. Hudson held her back firmly. "Andrew!" she cried desperately, struggling against the Inspector, "I did it for you! She is crazy! You deserve better. We could be happy together again!"

"She is not crazy," Andrew said with his eyes narrowed. "You are the one who is crazy. You have been drugging her with LSD." Natalie *fumbled* for words. How could they possibly know that? Charlotte was staring at her icily now, too, "I trusted you. I thought you were my friend, I told you everything about me...about my sister...but you just wanted to get close to me so that you could drug my tea and manipulate me into thinking I was going mad. You make me sick," she said.

Natalie felt like her world had just collapsed around her. She tried one last desperate effort.

"But Andrew, I love you! She doesn't want to be with you like I do. She tried to commit suicide. I would never leave you!" she cried. "I didn't try to commit suicide," Charlotte said angrily. "I took too many *tranquilizers* by *mistake* after you broke into our house and stole my necklace."

"No!" Natalie tried to *plead* innocence.



"Ah, but you did," Inspector Hudson spoke from behind her. "When I picked up the tin of tea that you dropped on the floor I took a small sample and had it tested. It showed extremely high levels of LSD. You knew that Charlotte drank this tea daily and you used your false friendship with her to *spike* her supply. You only pretended to drop it so that you could destroy the evidence and prevent Miss Elliot from drinking some." Natalie looked around wildly at Inspector Hudson, "You can't prove that!" Her situation was slowly *dawning* on her. It wasn't only a life without Andrew that she had to worry about, but also a life in prison.

"There are policemen searching your house for the stolen necklace as we speak," Hudson said calmly. "I am sure they will also find the drugs you have been using on Charlotte Harper and the key you used to get into their house. You used to live in that house when you and Andrew were husband and wife - it would have been easy to make a copy of the key before giving it back when you moved out. You couldn't steal the necklace while you were visiting Charlotte for fear of being caught so you had to *stage* a break-in."

"But that necklace is rightfully mine!" she cried *indignantly*. "That *impostor* had no right to wear it at every occasion. It would have gone to me if she hadn't stolen my husband from me. And the nerve of getting that awful painting done, as if she was the rightful Mrs Harper!"

"So you ripped it off the wall and destroyed it," Hudson filled in. "Only you had to then trash the rest of the house so it wouldn't look suspicious."

Natalie closed her eyes, her thoughts *tripping* over one another. 'You knew that Mrs Gladstone visited her mother on a Friday and that the other neighbour was on holiday, so you weren't worried about being seen or *overheard*, but you hadn't counted on Laura *bunking* school that day.'

"That little cow," Natalie spat. "I will ruin her!"

"With what, may I ask?" Hudson asked. "With her diary? The one that you stole from her while you were babysitting? I am afraid 11 will be confiscated and returned to her. You will have no proof except your word, which considering the current circumstances, will not be worth much."

Natalie was silent for a while. "How did you know that I would come?" she finally asked, her voice flat and tired. "I knew you were getting increasingly desperate. Your plan wasn't working - your ex-husband didn't abandon his new wife when it appeared as if she was going mad, and you knew that when she was discharged from hospital he was going to be watching her so closely that you probably wouldn't get another chance. I was quite sure you would take it." Natalie hung her head in defeat. It was over. Hudson turned to the door, "Constable Robson," he called out loudly.

The rosey-cheeked nurse who had brought Natalie in a little while earlier entered the room.

"Please take this woman down to the station and *charge her with attempted murder and robbery for starters,*" he said. The woman nodded her head *tersely*, took Natalie's arm and led her out of the door. Natalie's head hung, *defeated*. Andrew came over to the inspector and shook his hand. His voice caught in his throat, "I just don't know how we can thank you, Inspector."

"No need", Hudson said, "I was just doing my job." "But you saved my life!" Charlotte joined in. "If you hadn't worked out that evil woman's *scheme* so quickly, I would be dead now. How did you know she was drugging me, anyway?" she asked curiously. - "There were a few things that raised my suspicions," Hudson explained. "Hallucinations are not a common symptom of schizophrenia, especially in the early stages, sufferers are more likely to hear voices. Schizophrenics also believe beyond all doubt that the *delusions* they experience are real, whereas when you saw Miss Elliot and myself, you

asked your husband if we were really there, which showed that you were aware that your hallucinations weren't real." At that moment Elvira entered the room.

"I see it is all over already," she said, sounding disappointed to have missed all the drama. She had been crushed that she wasn't allowed to burst out of the bathroom and catch the would-be murderess in the act, too. But Hudson had been firm. The bathroom really was too small for three people to have fit in comfortably. She had had to *content herself with* joining the team searching Natalie's house.

All the same, Hudson had almost given in - Elvira was a very difficult woman to say no to.

The necklace was *recovered* at Natalie's house. I came over personally to deliver it back to its rightful owner," she said. Charlotte was delighted. "It was probably just the drugs, but I was convinced that this necklace had a powerful magic energy," she said. "Come to think of it, my deepest desire whenever I wore it was to be *sane* and normal again."

Elvira raised an eyebrow at Hudson questioningly, but Hudson was unmoved. It really was too *far-fetched* for him to believe. People were always way too *eager* to label something as *charmed* or *cursed* after a few coincidences. Besides, it had hardly brought Natalie her *heart's desire*, which was no doubt to be with Andrew. Still, he saw little reason to argue the point with the woman.

"I think we had better get going and leave you to get some rest," Hudson said to Charlotte. "You need to *recover* your strength." Then he turned to Andrew, "I am afraid we will need you to come down to the station with us, Mr Harper, and give us your *statement*" Andrew nodded to the inspector.

"I will come back as soon as I am finished at the police station," he promised Charlotte, giving her a kiss on the cheek. "Okay, darling. See you later. Bye," she smiled back at him. Charlotte watched Hudson, Elvira and her husband leave, *sighed contentedly* and lay back in the bed. Finally it looked like every-thing was going to be all right.

From the hospital car park, Frances saw them leave, too. She waited until they had driven away in convoy before she got out of the white station wagon and made her way to the hospital entrance. She knew what she had to do, but it was not going to be easy. Charlotte *was flipping* through a magazine when Frances *slipped* into her room a few minutes later, so she didn't notice the woman until she heard the door click closed behind her. She looked up expectantly and then *froze in shock*. She recognized her sister instantly even though she hadn't seen her in 15 years. "Frances?" she *gasp*ed. "What are you doing here?" Frances didn't say anything for a moment, then she took a deep breath and spoke, "I came to see you. Sorry to *sneak* in like this, but I thought you would probably refuse to see me if I did it any other way. I thought.. .well, I hoped we could maybe..." she *falter*ed. "I thought we could talk. I know a lot of bad stuff happened between us in the past, but I am doing a lot better now.. .and, well.. .you are the only family I have got. I am truly sorry about Trixie", Charlotte *flinched* at the name of her beloved murdered pet, "and about all the other stuff. It's the disease. It makes you believe crazy stuff. I tried to visit you at home. I sat outside for over an hour, but I couldn't *pluck up the courage* to go to the door. Your life looked so perfect, the rich husband, the beautiful home..."

Charlotte gave a small smile, "Nothing is as perfect as it seems," she said taking her sister's hand and giving it a *squeeze*. "I am sorry, too. I should have been there for you. I think I have a bit of a better understanding now of what you must have been going through. It must

have been terrible having to face it alone." Frances's face relaxed with *relief*. "Maybe we could go out for tea some time?" she asked *tentatively*.

Charlotte laughed and said, "I'm afraid I am off tea, make it coffee and we have a deal."

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