

into her own hands. "Regent 484726—yes, please." After a short pause her face became animated with expectancy. "Is that Regent 484726? Is Sir Deryk Lancing at home?—Sir Deryk Lancing. Isn't that his house? Oh, I'm sorry! Ring off, please." She depressed the receiver-clip for a moment and turned to her companions. "The hall porter at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, mildly surprised but very paternal—sort of 'What-can-you-expect-of-a-woman? She-would-get-a-wrong-number.' Hello! You gave me a wrong number. R-r-regent 484726—Please— Not yet — Not yet. Give another ring, will you?— Not yet. Oh, it doesn't matter; I don't suppose there's anyone at home."

She hung up the receiver and rose to her feet.

"No reply of any kind. There's no one there. Come home to dinner, friends."

As a final concession to Idina, they went once more into Pall Mall and once more inspected the forbidding front door. In the gathering dusk the house looked larger and more deserted than ever, and its sense of inviolability was enhanced by the presence of a large policeman in the doorway. Yolande at once asked whether a gentleman had been seen coming out or going into the house. The constable shook his head. He had been there for a quarter of an hour; the house, of course, was unoccupied at present, but it was full of furniture, and he fancied that he had heard a noise, as though some one had knocked over a table. He had therefore taken up his position at a point where he could command both front and side doors.

"And no one has come out?" Idina asked him again.

"Not while I've been here, Miss."

Idina felt that any further delay, any more outward expression of uneasiness would make an unjustifiable demand of her companions' patience. Turning to Yolande with a forced smile, she nodded her willingness to start.

"But why won't you and your husband dine with me?" she asked, as Felix signalled to a taxi. "We're too late to dress, but that won't matter in August, on the eve of war."