

which his guide knocked, or in either of the flanking windows.

Opening, the door disclosed a panelled entry tenanted by a white-lipped woman in the black and white uniform of a lady's-maid. Her frightened eyes examined Matthias apprehensively as he entered, followed by the chauffeur.

This last demanded briefly: "Doctor been?"

The maid assented with a nervous nod: "Ten minutes ago, about. He's with the lady now —"

"Lady!" the chauffeur echoed. "But I thought it was Mr. Marbridge —"

"I mean the other lady," the maid explained — "the one what done the shooting. When Mr. Marbridge got the gun away from her, he looked her up in the bathroom, and then she had hysterics. The doctor's trying to make her hush, so's she won't disturb the other tenants, but . . . You can hear yourself how she's carrying on."

In a pause that followed, Matthias was conscious of the sound of high-pitched and incessant laughter, slightly muffled, emanating from some distant part of the flat.

He asked abruptly: "Where is Mr. Marbridge?"

The maid started and hesitated, looking to the chauffeur.

"This is Mr. Matthias," that one explained. "Mr. Marbridge sent for him."

"Oh, yes — excuse me, sir. This way, if you please."

Opening a door on the right, the woman permitted Matthias to pass through, then closed it.

He found himself in a dining-room of moderate proportions and handsomely furnished. Little of it was visible, however, outside the radius of illumination cast by an electric dome which, depending from the middle of the ceiling, focussed its rays upon a small round dining-table of mahogany. This table was quite bare save for a massive decanter of cut-glass standing at the edge of a puddle of spilt liquor: as if an uncertain hand had attempted to pour a drink. Near it lay a broken goblet.

On the farther side of the table a woman with young