

BLIND ALLEY

BOOK ONE

IN ENGLAND

I

ON soft, felted pads, Kallikrates came out of the library. For a moment, framed in the oak doorway, he stood, his orange coat raised by apprehension. The narrow black lunes of his yellow eyes expanded as, laden with suspicion, he surveyed the noonday emptiness of the hall, the flickering shadows thrown by the log fire; he listened to the ticking of the clock, to the regular snore of Toss, the old collie, who lay before the hearth. His long, sinewy body was banded as an arc, animate with lust and fear; he waited for that something to happen which, instinct and experience told him, must ever be guarded against in the homes of men. But the silence was profound; the intensity receded from the watered agate of his eyes. Kallikrates understood that the conventions still prevailed, that men were eating. Content, he squatted, gave a few casual licks to the thick, silky fur of his left thigh.

Then a new thought entered his mind; he paused, thigh upraised, pink tongue edging as the petal of a peony the pale bluntness of his nose. Immensely watchful, conscious of encircling perils, Kallikrates crept along the wall of the corridor, found the study door open, leapt