

to open them; and in the end Hatherly would have to dispose of them. Poor old Hats! he was becoming official undertaker to the family, and he was so touchingly proud of the whole creation—the estate, the house, the title, Sir Aylmer, himself. And Hats would not be the only person to miss him. . . .

That noise question had to be decided. It had no bearing on the great problem of accident against design; if he brought the house tumbling about his ears, *that* was still unaffected, but he did not want to make a noise, he did not like the idea of a crowd collecting and inquisitively prying into the hall while a solid young policeman sucked a stump of pencil and took notes. After all, *it* was *his* body; why the Hell should these damned outsiders be allowed to come and satisfy their morbid curiosity by staring at him? He must not make a noise, not enough even to attract the solid young policeman who was even then cutting short his conversation with one of the Marlborough House sentinels. . . . And, when he started, he must go quickly; there was no question of fear yet, but he would indubitably lose his nerve if he waited; it was like hesitating before a high dive. God! it was remarkably like!!

Deryk kept his eyes averted from the opening in the roof as he took stock of his position. The unfinished sketches were scattered in a half circle of crumpled balls, his coat lay where he had thrown it across the frame of the new skylight; the planks were neatly piled, the tarpaulin was beside the planks. He picked up the coupling rope and caught it in a loose knot round one ankle—not too tight to give him away, not loose enough to slip and spoil his effect. As he drew himself upright, the whole world seemed to be standing still; he had a crazy sense that nothing stood between him and the gigantic, unseen God in whom he had been taught to believe as a boy; London, never before silent even in the night, was silent now and airlessly hot, so that he could hardly breathe.

He walked quickly to the round opening and stood poised at the edge with his eyes closed and his pulses hammering