

"Can it be Sergeant Gordon?" stammered the trembling Jackson, with his eyes starting out of their sockets.

"Sorry to interrupt this snug little party," said the sergeant, but business is business, as Mr. Isaacs so often says, and I won't detain you many minutes. May I first ask what you wanted a policeman for, Mr. Jackson?"

"I—I—I—didn't—that is to say—no—no." The words would not come out, the eye of the sergeant seemed to look him through, and he felt that murder was written on his brow like that of Cain.

"You didn't, didn't you? well, that is a pity, for there's one wants you, and he has come all the way down from London for the pleasure of meeting you."

"Wh—a—a-t for?" stammered Jackson, "I didn't do it. Indeed, in deed I didn't. She got drunk and fell over the landing, and ——"

"Liar!" cried the female, advancing to the front, throwing off the veil that concealed her bandaged features, and exhibiting the well-known face of Bella.

The effect was magical. Jackson and the two Jews sat livid with fright. Mr. Loder sprang to her and pressed her into a seat; for, notwithstanding the flush of excitement, she seemed weak and tottering.

"My poor creature, what do you want here?"

"To give my husband in charge!" she shrieked, with a wild frenzy of excitement.

Harold sprang from his seat.

"No, no, Bella, not from you; let not the blow come from you."

"You, poor dupe!" cried Bella, now hysterical in emotion. "No, I mean that pitiful cur sitting there," she pointed to Jackson, and all eyes were turned on him. "Years ago, long before I ever knew you, I married that villain; to carry on his monstrous robberies, I lived as a single woman; for money I let him sell me. It was a deep-laid scheme entered into by Isaacs, Jackson and Abrahams, to hold you in their clutches, that I went through the mockery of marriage with you. Oh, the misery I have endured! My brutal husband beat me and used me cruelly; at last they found out that I had some spark of womanly feeling left in my poor battered nature. Hearing of their scheme for extorting money from you, I seized upon the document upon which they held your ransom, and would have burned it, but when in the act Jackson struck me with a billiard cue and stunned me. Only stunned me, you miserable chicken-hearted coward,"—turning to Jackson—"he thought he had killed me and fled from the house. I lay still enough till he was gone, then I summoned assistance, sought out Sergeant Gordon, and now have come for one sweet moment of vengeance for all my miseries."

She stood like a Nemesis, withering with a look of supreme disgust, the cowering Jackson.

"I don't see," said Isaacs, who, watching how things stood, had plucked up some courage, "how this little matrimonial squabble affects our business. Harold Macfarlane, I accuse you of forgery. Sergeant Gordon, do your duty. This document, on which I advanced two thousand pounds, is forged—is forged, I repeat, by that man there."