

Whose Body?: A Lord Peter Wimsey Novel Study Guide

**Whose Body?: A Lord Peter Wimsey Novel by Dorothy
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Plot Summary

Lord Peter Wimsey is headed for a book auction when he learns from his mother that a corpse has been found in the bathtub of a local architect. Peter, an amateur sleuth, promptly makes arrangements to send his manservant, Bunter, to the auction in his stead and to go to the scene of the corpse. He arrives while the police are gone and the owner of the house, Mr. Thipps, grants Peter access to the bathroom. There he finds a nude man wearing nothing but a pair of expensive glasses, carefully arranged in the tub. The police soon come to the conclusion that Mr. Thipps, his servant named Gladys, her boyfriend William, or some combination of the three, are responsible for the man's death.

Meanwhile, a man has been reported missing, Mr. Reuben Levy. He is a financier and left the house without any clothing. The man investigating that case happens to be a friend of Peter's, Inspector Parker. Parker notes that the initial supposition is that the man in the tub is Levy, but that is soon proved false. As Parker and Peter begin working on their cases, they initially believe them to be two separate cases but eventually find a connection in Sir Julian Freke, noted surgeon, author and specialist of nervous disorders. Parker eventually discovers that Levy had last been seen in the neighborhood of Freke's residence next to the hospital, and that Freke had once been romantically involved with Levy's wife but she had chosen Levy over Freke.

Peter chases down the owner of the expensive glasses found on the corpse and discovers that it is an elderly attorney who could not possibly have been involved. At another point, Peter believes that an American financial man named John Milligan must have been involved. It takes longer to eliminate Milligan but Peter eventually does. As Peter considers a long list of clues related to the case, he knows that he has all the information necessary to solve the case if he could only put it together correctly. When it dawns on him that Freke must have killed Levy, taken the corpse of a vagrant that was left at the hospital for medical research to the bathtub near the hospital and buried Levy in the place of the vagrant, Peter is horrified and hopes that he is wrong though he knows that he is not. Once Freke realizes that Peter is onto him, he plans to commit suicide. The police arrive in the nick of time to prevent that and discover that Freke has left a comprehensive document, outlining all aspects of his role in the murder and pointing out that the only things that went wrong were unavoidable accidents.



Chapters I and II

Chapters I and II Summary

As the story opens, Lord Peter Wimsey is in a taxi at Piccadilly Circus headed for an auction of rare books when he realizes that he has forgotten his catalogue and needs to return to his house at 110 Piccadilly Square. When he goes inside, his manservant, Bunter, says that Peter's mother is on the telephone. Peter takes the call and his mother tells him the story of Mr. Alfred Thipps, an architect who is working on a church roof. According to his mother, Mr. Thipps found a body in his bathtub. Peter's mother says that Mr. Thipps lives at 59 Queen Caroline Mansions and that the body was nude with the exception of "a pair of pince-nez." Peter decides that he will send Bunter to the auction in his place and that he will go to the Thipps' residence. Peter tells Bunter what books he wants and gives him the catalogue which indicates his top prices he is willing to pay. Bunter then leaves for the auction and Peter heads to the Thipps' residence.

Peter arrives at Mr. Thipps' apartment and notes that Thipps' has a large bruise on his face, a wound he explains away by saying that he ran into a dining room door. Thipps' mother is older and believes that there has been some problem with the bathtub, other than the discovery of a body. She tells Thipps that he has always been a dramatic person and Thipps tells Peter that it is probably better that she does not realize what has really happened. Thipps says Gladys, the girl who discovered the body, is "reasonable" but shocked with the discovery. Police Inspector Sugg has already been called and has locked the bathroom but Thipps has a spare key and allows Peter to enter. Inside, Peter looks over the scene and discovers that the body is as it had been described to him. The body is naked, has on a pair of glasses, and Peter makes several other observations that he will later reveal to a fellow investigator. Peter realizes that Sugg will be returning soon and that his presence is not welcome by the police, so leaves. He is walking away down the sidewalk when Sugg gets out of an ambulance. Sugg recognizes Peter's retreating form though Peter does not turn around.

In Chapter II, Peter arrives home and discovers that Bunter has purchased the books he had wanted at less than his proposed price. He tells Bunter that they will spend the savings on whatever Bunter wants and he chooses a camera lens. The doorbell rings and Peter tells Bunter that he is to tell the visitor that Peter is not home, "unless it's anybody interestin'." Bunter returns with Mr. Parker, a police inspector who is Peter's good friend and confidant with regard to solving mysteries. Peter immediately asks Parker to tell about his current case and Parker says that he has been to Thipp's apartment, thinking that the body may be related to his own case, that of missing financier Sir Reuben Levy. Parker says that Levy was seen at home, 9a Park Lane, late one evening and the following morning the servants discovered that he had simply vanished.

There are a series of observations about the case, including that Levy was usually fastidious about folding his worn clothes and that he had not done that, that he is



nearsighted and had not taken his glasses, and that there were reportedly no clothes—including footwear—missing, meaning Sir Levy had left the house completely undressed. Parker says the one other interesting clue was that a maid had noted that Levy usually slept on a particular side of the bed and that the pillows indicated that had not been the case the night before his disappearance. Peter says that even if Levy had left the house to commit suicide, he would have taken his glasses to avoid being run over before he could reach his intended destination.

Parker says that when the nude corpse turned up in the bathtub at Thipps', he had thought it might be Levy but that the dead man in the tub is obviously not a wealthy financier—a point that Peter had already made. The man in the tub has calloused hands, dirty toenails, signs of old flea bites, and bad teeth. It is also noted that the man was shaved after his death and that there were hairs inside his mouth, indicating that he had had a bristly beard. Parker says that he believes Sugg has narrowed in on the Thipps' serving girl as a suspect and that he might also arrest Thipps though Thipps was out of town at the approximate time of death. As they go over all the observations they have so far, Peter says that the murderer has a great imagination and that he is excited about the investigation.

Chapters I and II Analysis

Peter and his mother are titled—he a Lord and she a Dowager Duchess. With this in mind, it probably seems at least somewhat incorrect or improper that Peter would be an amateur detective. However, his mother is, according to Peter, the way he finds many of his cases. This is an indication of the relationship between Peter and his mother. Peter's relationship with others is also described in these early chapters. For example, he is obviously more than employer to Bunter as evidenced by the fact that he allows Bunter to go to the auction in his stead and to participate in his cases. Peter notes that Bunter is helpful with the cases and is apparently very talented with the camera.

Peter's status is further confirmed by Mr. Thipps who is "touched" that Peter would take time to visit during the difficult time following the discovery of the body, believing that Peter's presence is an honor to Thipps rather than based on Peter's desire to solve a crime.

Peter learns from Thipps that Inspector Sugg had called on Sir Julian Freke, the chief surgeon at St. Luke's Hospital, to verify that all cadavers at the hospital are accounted for. The information is imparted in a very casual manner, probably meant to mislead the reader. In fact, Sir Julian Freke will turn out to be the person at the heart of this mystery, though Peter will not begin to suspect him for some time.

It should be noted that the people, places, and events of this story are not always fully explained. For example, Parker arrives and the reader is not fully introduced to this new character who is presented only as "Mr. Parker." Peter later refers to him as a police officer, saying, "You policemen are all alike." Parker is, in fact, the Chief Inspector from Scotland Yard, Charles Parker. There is also some reference to a "firm" that seems to

be referring to the trio of Parker, Peter and Bunter, though the three do not form an organized group.



Chapters III and IV

Chapters III and IV Summary

In Chapter III, Parker goes through their clues related to the man in the tub and recites what they can assume to be true, including that the man had been a common laborer but had recently lost his employment, based on the fact that his calluses were beginning to soften. He also had blisters on his feet, indicating that he had been walking around looking for a job. He had been carefully washed, had on a scented fragrance, and had been shaved, probably in an effort at disguise. Parker says their killer is smart and cool under pressure because he "adorned" the corpse with the expensive glasses. Peter says that the killer has a sense of humor. There arise several questions, including how the killer got the corpse into the apartment. Peter says that he would give anything to have a reason to become more involved in the case and at that moment, the phone rings. Bunter rises to answer it and returns to Peter, saying that it is a woman who seems quite deaf. Peter takes the call and returns with the news that Thipps has been arrested in connection with the murder of the man in his bathtub, and that the caller was Thipps' mother who is very hard of hearing. She says that as Thipps was being taken away, he had instructed her to call on Peter, asking for help. It is the invitation Peter needs.

They immediately plan to go out together, Peter obviously very excited at the prospect. He suggests that they work on the case of the man in the tub that night and says that he will search for Levy the following day. The three men leave the apartment but Peter says that Sugg will try to deny him access to the scene and goes back inside to "short circuit Sugg." They arrive at the Thipps' apartment to find Sugg on guard and refusing to allow Peter inside, citing the need to keep the public out. Peter takes a seat on a stairwell so that he can be more comfortable while he carries on the argument and is sitting there when the phone rings. Sugg is told by the Chief of Scotland Yard to give Peter access to the scene.

Peter, Parker and Bunter carefully look over the apartment and Bunter takes photographs. Mrs. Thipps has no family or friends she can call on for a place to stay and Peter finds that none of the neighbors are willing to take her in, so takes her to his mother, the Dowager Duchess. Peter updates his mother on the case, including that a young woman of questionable employment had reported seeing a man that a friend had identified as Levy the evening before Levy's disappearance. The second point is that Thipps initially told police he had come home at 10:30, a story that was later contradicted by a servant who said that Thipps did not actually arrive home until just short of midnight. Thipps also had a bruise on his face that he refuses to explain and this has prompted his arrest. The Dowager says that she knew Levy's wife, Christine, who had been a Ford prior to her marriage. The Dowager says that there was an outcry over her decision to "marry a Jew" and that her family would have preferred that she marry Julian Freke—the surgeon at the hospital across from Thipps' apartment and the man who certified that there were no bodies missing from the hospital morgue.



In chapter four, Peter and Parker have breakfast at the Dowager's house. Bunter arrives with his photographs and reveals a set of prints on the bathtub that reveal the "usual number of fingers" and that the murderer wore rubber gloves as well as rubber-soled shoes. Parker has also located fibers from the roof of the building, indicating that the body had been taken in through the window via the roof. The three then decide to go to Levy's house to examine the scene. Bunter arranges a make-shift crime lab in the kitchen of the home with the help of some of the Levy's servants. There he willingly admits that his job is difficult, seeking to gain the confidence of the Levy servants. They discover a hair that is a different color from Levy's, find the impression on the bed to be shorter than Levy, and find a footprint on the linoleum near the washbasin. With all this information, they deduce that someone dressed like Levy arrived at the house so that it appeared to the casual observer that he had come home, had waited until the middle of the night, then had simply walked out of the house.

Peter leaves Parker to go through Mr. Levy's documents and files and Bunter working on some photographs while he goes to meet the Honourable Freddy Arbuthnot at Wyndham's. Freddy says that Levy was to have met with a man he refers to as "Old Anderson," and that he does not believe Levy would have stood the man up. Freddy also says that Anderson is now afraid that the "railway people will get in now," and says that a "Yankee blighter, John P. Milligan" is representing the railway. Peter next goes to see Mr. Milligan, who agrees to see Peter because of his title as "Lord." Peter tells Milligan that his mother is trying to put together a charity event to raise money to re-roof the church that Thipps has been overseeing, works in Thipps' name as well as Levy's, but gets little reaction from Milligan. He also notes that Milligan's head is probably too big to have worn Levy's hat as a disguise and that Milligan's secretary is much too tall to have made the impression on the bed. Peter leaves disappointed with his sleuthing but with a promise of a donation toward repairs on the roof, a point that prompts him to wonder what his mother will say.

Chapters III and IV Analysis

Peter does not say what he was going to do when he returns to the apartment prior to going to the Thipps' apartment but it later becomes evident that he is making a phone call. After Sugg receives the phone call from the Chief, Peter comments—very nonchalantly—that the Chief and his mother are "dear friends." It seems that Peter's connections are an important part of his hobby as sleuth, but it is interesting that when he calls on some neighbors to take in Thipps' mother so that the old woman does not have to remain in the apartment where the corpse had been found, one neighbor is decidedly unimpressed. This attitude brings out the sarcastic anger in Peter who tells the neighbor that he will take the old woman to his mother because he would not want the neighbor to later feel any tinge of Christian conscience. As he walks away, he says that he is grateful that he knows how to be "bestially impertinent." This entire scene has little to do with the story other than to create the opportunity to further introduce Peter's mother, the Dowager Duchess.



It is noted that Peter and his mother are more alike than she and her other son, Peter's brother. She seems to have a great sense of humor and seems to find his amateur sleuthing an acceptable hobby. They discuss briefly the situation of Peter's current case and he sums it up with humor, that they have lost a man who was naked and found a dead man who was naked, therefore the police inspector has jumped to the conclusion that the two men are one and the same. He also notes that someone has to be held responsible and that the police will arrest someone just so that it can seem they have found the murderer without regard to whether they have really apprehended the guilty party.

When Peter and Parker are talking, it is evident that the two are at ease with each other. When Peter makes a particular deduction, Parker says that they cannot jump to conclusions which prompts Peter to quickly launch on a tirade in which he says that it would be impossible for Parker to even "crawl" toward a conclusion. Later, Peter says that he is tired of where this investigation is going and that he wants to do something else for awhile. To this, Parker reminds Peter that while Peter is an amateur sleuth who owes nothing to this case, Parker does this for a living and does not have the luxury of dropping the case for awhile to do something else. Peter has also told Parker that working on cases together is more fun because it makes him feel as if someone else is doing the majority of his work and that interfering with someone else's work is always fun. Their differences in attitudes do not seem to bother either of the men and they do continue to share information and to work together.



Chapters V and VI

Chapters V and VI Summary

In chapter five, Parker wakes in his flat at 12A Great Ormond Street to the smell of burned porridge. When the phone rings and Bunter asks Parker to come to Peter's house, Peter tells his housekeeper, Mrs. Munns, that she can "take the porridge home for the family." Parker reveals a diary he found at Levy's that includes an entry indicating that "Mr. Arbuthnot dropped in to tea; he wants to marry Rachel but I should like someone steadier for my treasure." They suppose that to be the Honorable Freddy Arbuthnot. Peter says that he believes Milligan could have a motive in that Milligan admitted his business ventures would be well served with Levy out of the way. Some of the fingerprints found at Levy's house were not Levy's, evidenced by the fact that there was a small scar on the thumb of one set and not on Levy's. Peter also produces photographs of fingerprints from the bathtub at Thipps' house and Parker interrupts, saying that just because Parker and Peter are friends does not mean that their cases should be related.

There is also a letter that day from Thomas Crimplesham in answer to an advertisement Peter had posted in the newspaper. The letter indicates that the man believes the glasses and chain found on the corpse in Thipps' tub to be his and says that he lost them on the train. They soon discover that the prescription of the glasses match that given by the man and now know the owner of the glasses. This immediately sparks a series of hypotheses from Peter, including that Crimplesham is the murderer and that he has calculated that answering the advertisement will take him off the list of potential suspects. However, Peter admits that all his suggestions have one thing in common—none of them explain why the glasses were left on the corpse at all.

Peter heads for Salisbury to talk to Crimplesham, taking Bunter with him at Parker's insistence and taking Levy's diary. He reads that Levy had scrupulously documented every engagement, including lunches with family and friends, and that Julian Freke had been a regular guest. There was also a meeting between Levy and Milligan which Peter notes as having given Milligan an opportunity to be in the house. Peter arrives in Salisbury and learns that Crimplesham is about eighty years old and has a "game leg." Peter realizes that he cannot be the person who carried a body to a roof and then through a window. Peter goes on to talk to Crimplesham who grows apprehensive when Peter explains the murder and says that Crimplesham's glasses are in the possession of Scotland Yard. When Peter questions him further, Crimplesham grows angry and has Peter shown out. Peter takes it well and simply heads to the hotel where he attempts to call Parker to come help. Crimplesham later tells his junior partner, Wickes, about the episode, saying that some man had posed at Lord Peter Wimsey. Wickes says the man was Peter Wimsey and Crimplesham goes to find Peter to apologize. When he arrives at the hotel, Peter has gone out and Bunter is waiting for a return call from Parker. The call comes through at exactly the moment to make Crimplesham wait to talk to Bunter.



In chapter six, Parker learns that there is to be an inquest related to the corpse in the bathtub and attends. There he encounters the Dowager and Mr. Thipps' mother. Mr. Thipps is called to testify and there is a moment of confusion as he admits that he did not know he was entitled to a lawyer, but he insists that he wants to tell the truth of his story. He says that he had been headed home when he had met an old friend and that they had gone to a club of sorts that had been raided just as Mr. Thipps planned to leave. A fall during his escape explains the bruise on his forehead. He says that a young lady helped him escape and stoutly refuses to give the name of the old friend. He says that he had a sandwich upon his arrival at home, that he had not gone in the bathroom, and that he had discovered the body the next morning. The servant, Gladys Horrocks, admitted that she was not certain she had locked the bathroom window and that she had actually stepped out with her boyfriend, William Williams, that evening, arriving back around two in the morning. Williams corroborates her story. Sugg testifies that Gladys had acted suspiciously, prompting her arrest. Sugg believes the body had been in the flat the previous evening, put in the tub during the night and the killer had slipped out through the window with the help of Gladys.

Julian Freke is called as a witness and he says that he believes the deceased was killed by a heavy blow to the back of the neck, and admits that it could have been an accident. He says that the man had probably recently "come into money," and that he believed the man had lived several hours after the blow to the neck. Dr. Grimbold disagrees with Freke on that point, saying he believes the man had lived for several days after the blow but rushes to say that he cannot be certain. Sugg is recalled and declines to answer questions about the eyeglasses but does say that there had been extensive efforts to identify the victim, all unsuccessful. William Watts is named as being in charge of the dissecting room and says that no one—even Freke—has the keys necessary to access the bodies. When the grand jury adjourns, Freke tells Parker that he would like to speak to him after the proceedings.

Parker and Freke walk to Freke's home together, chatting along the way. Parker accepts an invitation to come inside, believing that Freke has something to say and has not gotten around to it yet. After some additional conversation, Parker prepares to leave but Freke stops him, saying that he wants to disclose a piece of information but wants Parker's promise to keep it confidential. He says that Levy had come to see him on the night of his disappearance. At Parker's continued questions, Freke says that he had examined Levy and had discovered "grave grounds of suspicious, but as yet, no absolute certainty of mischief." He does not explain further but Parker seems to understand. Freke says he wanted Parker to know so that he would have no need to follow this line of clues and Parker thanks Freke for the information, saying he might otherwise have wasted time following worthless information. When Parker arrives home, he has a wire from Peter indicating that there is no need for him to come to Salisbury.

Chapters V and VI Analysis

Peter makes a long speech regarding the possibilities of how Crimbleham might have been involved in the crimes, including that the real villain may be blackmailing



Crimpleham into some role. It is Parker who suggests that the real killer might be Crimpleham's enemy who has attempted—and apparently succeeded—in throwing the suspicion all on Crimpleham. The two men cannot seem to agree at all on what the most likely scenario is, but do agree that they should confront Crimpleham. There then ensues an argument as to who should go. Peter insists that he will go alone because he placed the ad in the paper and he should return the man's property. Parker agrees on that point. Then Peter says that he should go alone in case Crimpleham has set a trap for what he believes to be the one person who could connect him with the murder. Parker argues that if that is the case, they should both go. Peter says that Parker should remain behind so that if Crimpleham is guilty, Parker can see that he hangs. There is a teasing note in Peter's statement, including the fact that he does not want Parker to risk his life, being the eligible bachelor he is.

On the way to his interview with Crimpleham, Peter tells Bunter that he is becoming disconcerted with the magnitude of the two cases that he seems to be working at once, comparing them to having let two rabbits loose at the same time. He also says that as soon as these cases are finished, he will stay away from police reports and refrain from becoming involved with another case. It seems doubtful, knowing Peter's personality, that this could be the case. An interesting thing about the two cases is that the situation involving Levy's disappearance seems, in Peter's words, to have a dead end but the case of the corpse in the bathtub seems to have no beginning because the man's name is not even known at this point.



Chapters VII and VIII

Chapters VII and VIII Summary

In chapter seven, Peter arrives at his flat where Bunter is waiting, having traveled down ahead of Peter. Bunter reminds Peter that he is supposed to have lunch with Lady Swaffham and Peter initially instructs Bunter to tell her he is sick. Then Bunter says that "Her Grace" is going to be there, which Peter takes to mean his sister-in-law. At that he says that he absolutely will not be going. Then Bunter says that he meant Peter's mother which gives Peter only a moment's pause, and when he learns that Milligan is going to be there as well, Peter prepares to rush to the luncheon. He arrives and apologizes for being late, only to find that his mother has realized that Peter has been talking to Milligan and that she immediately was on the alert for what might have been said, leading her to discover the entire story about Milligan's having been invited by Peter to speak at the charity event being organized by his mother. The conversation turns to the murdered man in Mr. Thipps' tub and the disappearance of Mr. Levy. Asked by another guest whether he knew Mr. Levy, Milligan says that the two men have "done their best to ruin each other." He then admits that, if they were in the United States, someone might suspect that Milligan had put Levy away somewhere until a business deal is complete. He says that there are no dealings such as that here, but does not explain why other than to say, "in your old country."

Peter later tracks down Parker and they spend some time together. Peter says that he feels guilty for his role in the investigations, seemingly because he enjoys the chase and allows his own emotions to play a role that he believes should not be the case. Parker gives Peter an overview of the inquest. They go over some additional information, such as the fact that Sugg believes that Thipps, his servant girl Gladys, or Gladys' boyfriend William had a role in the murder, and that he would searched specifically for clues to support that. That, according to Parker, indicates that there is no evidence to be found supporting the idea that the body was inside the flat prior to the murder. Parker says that Sugg overlooked the fibers he found on the roof because it did not fall in with his own theory. In Sugg's theory, the body had been brought in through the window using a ladder. Peter says that he is convinced that Crimpleham is not involved in any manner and that he does not believe their previous theory that Crimpleham might have been set up by someone wanting to hurt him. Parker then says that he had tracked down shares of a Peruvian oil stock and had discovered that it does not seem that Levy had even known about the stock, but that Freke had quietly purchased some and had sold them off at a modest profit days later. As they part, Peter learns that Freke had seen Levy the night of his disappearance and that a diagnosis of some disease does not fit with what Anderson said—that Levy seemed quite happy that night. Parker points out that this might not be anything important because Peter himself will joke in the dentist's office to cover his nerves.

In chapter eight, Peter believes that he has an important key to solving the mysteries at hand, but cannot remember what it is. He stays awake for awhile, reviewing the cases,



including that Levy was last seen on Prince of Wales Road, the image of the dead man in the bathtub, and the presence of the fibers on the roof of Thipps' apartment building. He then tries to take his mind off the case entirely and picks up a copy of Freke's latest book, purchased by Bunter after having seen a review of the book. It is while Peter is reading that the entire puzzle finally comes together in his mind. The important clues are that a neighbor had reported hearing a bump on the roof of the Thipps' apartment but had not been certain of the day; that Levy had been seen talking to a prostitute in Battersea Park; that there was a foreign hair on the hat Levy had worn the day he had gone missing; that the fibers from the roof could have been from lint bandages; that Sugg had called Freke to the crime scene from the hospital; that Freke had been all but engaged to Levy's wife prior to her decision to marry Levy; that Levy's coworker had said the corpse in the tub lived for days after the blow to his neck; that there is a connection to the Peruvian oil stocks; and that the villain had worn india-rubber gloves. Peter says there are other factors but does not outline them.

Now that Peter believes he knows the identity of the killer, he wonders what to do with the information. He goes to a "Who's Who" book and looks up Freke, Among the papers he has worked on is one dedicated to "the Study of Infantile Paralysis," "Disturbances of the Nervous System," and "Notes on the Pathological Aspects of Genius."

Chapters VII and VIII Analysis

Peter realizes that Mr. Milligan is likely to talk to his mother at this lunch and that he is going to mention the church roof and the charity event which Peter had fabricated. However, Peter's mother is quite astute, especially where her son is concerned. As soon as she learns that Milligan had been talking to Peter, she begins trying to figure out what it is that she is supposed to know. There is some insight here into Peter's personal relationships. For example, it is already known that his mother is somewhat involved with his dealings on a regular basis but now it is revealed that she also fully expects to play her part in backing up whatever scenario Peter has put into play. Another point is that Peter does not get along with his sister-in-law. What is more interesting is Peter's obvious fondness for Bunter and Bunter's for Peter. When Peter is about to leave for the lunch meeting without changing clothes, Bunter objects and refuses to budge. He takes Peter's appearance as a personal matter and insists that Peter is not dressed appropriately for the occasion. Peter gives in, as always, apparently pretending to be upset but it seems more reasonable to believe that he appreciates the man's care.

Peter asks Parker whether he likes his job, and Parker responds that he does. Peter then says that having entered into this investigation solely because of his own interest in crime puts him in a different position. He says that he believes Milligan might have killed Levy, but that he likes Milligan and does not want him to be guilty. He says that because Milligan likes him as well, the issue is further clouded. Peter says that, in his mind, he really has no right to interfere in the lives of these people. He seems to be realizing that while he finds enjoyment and even entertainment in his sleuthing, he is impacting the lives of others. Despite the fact that Parker says that a murderer should be caught by someone, and that Peter has as much right to catch a criminal as anyone else, Peter



seems unconvinced. Parker then points out that the ends justify the means if a criminal is brought to justice, and tells Peter that his problem is that he is treating the investigations like football games. Peter does not really seem convinced at this point, but does let the matter drop. It seems possible that he is still concerned because he has come to like one of the chief suspects in the case—Milligan.

Peter's realization that Freke is guilty comes without much explanation to the reader. Peter puts the clues together and comes to that conclusion, but then picks up the copy of *Who's Who* and looks at Freke. He reads the lengthy article and calls it "confirmation," but does not say at this point what it is that has made him come to believe that Freke is guilty. It will turn out that Freke is the culprit, but Peter's reasoning will not be revealed for some time.

Later, Peter wakes Bunter who realizes that Peter is having a psychotic breakdown related to his experiences in the war. Bunter plays along, saying that he hears the shelling too, that it is their own men firing, and that they are safe. Bunter refers to Peter as "Major," and the final statement of the scene is "Sergeant Bunter" calling Peter a "Bloody little fool." Bunter believes fatigue has played a role in the breakdown. The relationship between the two and whether Bunter is really a military man or if the title refers to his position in Peter's life now is not discussed.



Chapters IX and X

Chapters IX and X Summary

In chapter nine, Parker arrives at Peter's house to find the Dowager there. She says that Peter has been staying up too late, that a person cannot expect someone to get over a world war in a short period of time, and that she is taking Peter to the country to remain with her for a few days. Peter is writing when Parker arrives and immediately begins giving orders. He says that Parker is to take the note he has written to Scotland Yard for distribution to any workhouses, police stations, infirmaries or Y.M.C.A.s in the area in search of a man fitting the description of the corpse prior to his having been shaved and cleaned up. He then tells Parker that he is to search for "any mention of St. Luke's Hospital" if he locates someone who remembers the murder victim. He says that he believes Levy to be dead and that he also wants Parker to make friends with a medical student at St. Luke's. Finally, he declines to say who he believes the murderer to be, saying that if he is wrong he will feel that he has slandered an important person.

Peter leaves for the country on Saturday morning and on Tuesday, receives a letter from Bunter indicating that he has done as Peter instructed and spent an evening pumping Freke's manservant for information. The letter is very lengthy, outlining all the details of that meeting, including what Bunter had served the man and what his reactions had been to the fine liquor. Bunter says that the man had verified that Freke had a guest on the night Levy disappeared, that they had gone to the upstairs library together, that Freke had let the man out himself, that Freke had gone to the hospital during the night and that he had returned about three in the morning and had taken a bath, a common practice following a dissection. Just as Peter finishes reading the letter, a telegram arrives from Parker indicating that the description of the victim from Thipps' tub was recognized at a workhouse, that the man had been involved in an accident, and that he had been taken to St. Luke's at Freke's order. Parker ends the telegram by saying that he is puzzled, a fact that seems to delight Peter.

Peter immediately prepares to return to town and asks his mother to go along, saying that he is going to have some bad news to break to Mrs. Levy and that it would be good for her to have a familiar face with her when it happens. His mother immediately agrees. In chapter X, Parker has made friends with a student from St. Luke's, as instructed. Mr. Piggot is flattered by the attention if a little out of his element at Lord Peter's house. Over the course of the evening, the three men turn the talk to books and discover that Piggot enjoys detective novels though he criticizes the neat way aspects of the case are wrapped up. For example, he says that a person never really remembers what they were doing a week ago, let alone be able to produce all the details presented as fact in a novel. He says that he would never be able to swear to his whereabouts a week later. Peter says that Piggot remembers more than he gives himself credit for and begins asking questions that lead Piggot back to the previous Tuesday when Piggot had been dissecting the arm of a cadaver. Through additional questioning, Piggot recalls that the arm was fatty, that the hands had no calluses, that someone had made a joke that



indicated the cadaver to be Jewish, and that Freke had taken the head so that no one else had seen it intact.

Piggot leaves and Peter tells Parker that he wants him to stay the night, adding that he has seen a man outside and fears that Parker will be attacked. Parker declines but promises that he will take a taxi and that he will not share it with anyone. As he gets into the taxi, Freke comes running up, saying that he is in need of transportation and asks to share the taxi. Parker says that he had planned to go in a different direction from that indicated by Freke, that he is not in any hurry, and allows Freke to take the taxi for himself. He then returns to Peter's house and says that he will stay the night after all.

The two men then talk more about the case. There is the fact that Freke is jealous of Levy but that jealousy alone would not have prompted murder after all these years. In fact, Freke's pride is hurt and the humiliation is, according to Peter, the motive for the murder. Peter says that Freke could have killed Levy at his house on that particular night, then left the house to make the servants believe the guest had left, reentered by a side door through the hospital, and cut up the body for distribution to the medical students. He would also have found the man from the workhouse, lowered him with a surgical bandage down from the roof and into the window of the Thipps' apartment. The other important aspect of the case is that Freke is a student of crime and admires the great criminals of the time period. Peter says that a series of things—including Parker and Peter being linked—made Freke overly cautious after the fact.

Chapters IX and X Analysis

It is during chapters nine and ten that Peter becomes very secretive about his deductions. He gives the readers a series of clues but most are not well defined and the reader will likely be left guessing for some additional time, though it is now clear that Peter believes Freke to be guilty of the murder of Levy.

The aspects of the case are detailed and convoluted. For example, Freke tells Parker that Levy had come to visit him and makes up a medical reason for the visit. Peter says that Freke was pushed into this because Levy had unexpectedly been seen in the neighborhood of Freke's house on the night of his disappearance. There is also the discussion of whether the vagrant found in Thipps' bathtub was killed on the night prior to his discovery or at some other time. Freke says that the injury that ended the man's life would have caused his death in a matter of hours. A colleague says that the man would have lived several days. Peter notes that the colleague would never dare disagree with Freke unless he were certain of his information.



Chapter XI, Chapter XII and Chapter XIII

Chapter XI, Chapter XII and Chapter XIII Summary

In chapter eleven, Peter goes to Freke's office where he sees people with nervous disorders. There he meets a young mother who has a child with her. The woman says that Freke has been seeing the little girl for free because he is interested in the case. Freke agrees to see him and Peter describes the recent episode in which he suffered a brief breakdown. They discuss the fact that Peter is involved in police work and that he has a current situation wearing on his nerves. Freke says that he will give Peter an injection to help him get over the current situation but warns that he must take it easy. He advises a long vacation. Peter watches as Freke prepares to give him the injection but stops him at the last moment. He tells Freke that he once had a reaction to a shot and that he does not want one now. Freke smiles, agrees to give him a prescription instead, and tells him to make an appointment whenever he wants to come back.

In chapter twelve, Peter, Parker, the Dowager, Lady Levy, Dr. Grimbold and several others are at the cemetery where the casket containing the body of Levy—but disguised as the grave of the pauper from the workhouse—is interred. When the casket is exhumed, Lady Levy provides several pieces of information, including the location of a scar and a mole, to confirm identity. Lady Levy and the Dowager leave. Peter doubts that Freke will be captured before he kills himself but Sugg arrives at Peter's house later that night and says they did catch him though he had a hypodermic needle in his hand, apparently planning his own suicide. He left a full confession addressed to Peter and Sugg provides it for Peter to read.

In chapter thirteen, Peter reads the confession aloud. Freke says that a person devoid of delusions and with sufficient time can always carry out the perfect crime. Only an unforeseeable accident could become a problem as it was in this case. Freke says the first of those was that Levy was recognized in his neighborhood, and the second was that Thipps' routine was off. Those two, according to Levy, connected him to the situation as would never have happened otherwise. He goes on to say that he had bought some of the Peruvian Oil stocks and had dropped the hint to Levy that he had a report that would convince him that the stock was legitimate and a good investment. Meanwhile, Freke had been called in on the case of the vagrant who had fallen from scaffolding. Freke says that he had kept the man alive and even faked some aspects of pending recovery prior to the man's death on the night Freke invites Levy to visit. Freke says on his way home, he found the glasses. The body arrives from the workhouse and Freke sends the young man who would normally have handled it home, avoiding the possibility of a preservative being injected into the body. He then creates a report to fool Levy and when Levy arrives, dismisses his manservant and takes Levy into the library where he kills him with a poker, careful not to break the skin, and puts the body under the bed and dresses in Levy's clothes. He makes an appearance at Levy's house and notes that the ability to put the body in at Thipps' open bathroom window was a happy coincidence. He says that everything had gone so well up to this point that he takes



time to arrange the body "prettily" and that it is a sudden inspiration that prompts him to add the glasses he had found on the subway.

Freke's final note is basically a thank-you to Peter for having not underestimated him and granting him the victory. He closes by saying that had Peter agreed to the injection, he would have died a short time later. The note ends in mid-sentence, Freke's writing having been interrupted by Sugg.

As the story closes, Peter says that he now plans to have a dinner party for Milligan because he is not a murderer and that he plans to invite the Thipps as well.

Chapter XI, Chapter XII and Chapter XIII Analysis

The picture of Freke as a kindly scientist willing to help a young girl unable to pay for his services seems that it could have sent Peter back to doubting his purpose, but this time he is not deterred. Instead, he goes forward with the end goal—the capture of a murderer. Freke seems to have no doubt that Peter now knows of Freke's involvement in the murder. The document he leaves for Peter is interesting on several levels, chiefly because it is an example of Freke's ego. He wants to be certain that there is no way anyone will overlook the genius of his crime. Freke tells Peter that he had played chess sometimes with his father as a child, and that his father had been unable to see several moves ahead to realize when he had lost the game. Instead, his father had insisted that the entire game be played out, a rule that Freke found tedious. As Freke begins his letter to Peter, he commends Peter for having won the victory and tells him that he will not be insisting that the game be played out, but that he now concedes to Peter.



Characters

Lord Peter Wimsey

Lord Peter is a criminal investigator though his involvement in crime solving is, in his own words, a "hobby." Peter gets some of his tips for potential cases through his mother though he says that the two of them never talk about his activities as a criminal investigator. In the case of the body in the bathtub, Peter's mother tells him about the body in a way that indicates that she heard about it from a friend and was only imparting some piece of news to her son rather than telling him that there was a murder that he might be interested in. This is a sign of their relationship and of his mother's expectations for her son's public image. Lord Peter has an interesting sense of humor that is often dry and sarcastic. For example, when he is talking about the body in the tub, he asked whether someone had deposited the body "chez Thipps," referring to the man who lived in the apartment where the body was found. The police inspector, a man named Sugg, does not like Peter or his interference and Peter refers to him in overly-kind terms, indicating sarcasm, such as "Sugg of our heart." Peter is a military veteran and suffers flashbacks that are debilitating in their intensity.

Mervyn Bunter

Lord Peter's manservant who is more of a friend than an employee. Peter says that he seems to have allowed Bunter the position of honored servant so that Bunter takes control of some aspects of Peter's life. For example, when Peter is preparing to go out for a luncheon, Bunter insists that he change clothes, and gets his way. Bunter takes special pride in Peter and wants very much to be certain that Peter is always dressed impeccably. Lord Peter notes that Bunter is always willing to help with a case and his specialty is in photography. In fact, when Bunter is left behind in the city to pump Freke's manservant for information, he does so and makes a thorough report to Peter about it. He is a student of human nature and instinctively knows how to reach the people with whom he comes into contact. With other servants, Bunter talks about the trials of serving Peter, all with an eye toward gaining their sympathy and, therefore, their confidence. Bunter is obviously trusted by Peter, who sends Bunter to an auction in his place. An interesting point is that when Peter is suffering from a mental breakdown—a flashback to his days in combat—he goes to Bunter's room for help. Bunter immediately knows what to do and plays his role to ease the mind of his employer who, at that moment, is much more like a friend. The origin of their relationship is not defined but it seems possible that they served in the military together.

Parker

An inspector from Scotland Yard and a good friend of Peter's. The two men seem to routinely collaborate in their crime solving ventures. The first thing Peter asks when



Parker arrives to see whether he had encountered any good cases. Parker is more down-to-earth in most aspects of his life than Peter, likely because he works at the job of detective for a living. Parker tells Peter that he cannot afford to treat the catching of criminals like a game because it is not.

Sir Reuben Levy

The financier who disappears at the same time the body appears in Mr. Thipps' bathtub. Levy is invited around to Freke's apartment to learn more about a particular Peruvian Oil stock that Freke swears will make a very good return. Levy is killed while there, though no one realizes he is missing until the next day. His body is buried in a pauper's grave until Peter solves the mystery and leads police to exhume the body.

Inspector Sugg

The police inspector in charge of the case of the body in the bathtub. Sugg does not particularly like Lord Peter and believes his involvement in police work to be unnecessary interference. For his part, Lord Peter does not think highly of Sugg and makes fun of him and his dislike of Lord Peter, referring to him as "Sugg of our heart."

Alfred Thipps

The architect who lives in the apartment where the dead body is discovered in the bathtub. Thipps is not at home at the time of the murder but is eventually targeted by police as an accomplice anyway.

Mrs. Thipps

Mother of Alfred Thipps, she is deaf and initially seeks to explain away the chaos caused by the discovery of the body in the bathtub by saying that they had had difficulties with the bathroom fixtures.

Dowager Duchess

Peter's mother, the Dowager is less stringent than one might expect of a woman of her titled position. It is she who drops Peter the initial information about the body in the bathtub and she is more than willing to go along with Peter when he has to help the Lady Levy identify a body as that of her husband. She is willing to allow Peter to drop in with a guest, Mrs. Thipps, in the middle of the night without belaboring the point at all.



Sir Julian Freke

A noted surgeon at St. Luke's Hospital, he is summoned to the Thipps' apartment to view the body in the tub and is then asked to account for all the cadavers currently on hand at the hospital to rule out some prank. Freke assures the police that all the cadavers are accounted for. Freke is brilliant and when it becomes evident that Peter has fingered Freke as the murderer of Rueben Levy, Freke admits defeat and writes a lengthy letter, outlining all his actions in the case. This letter in itself is a statement of Freke's ego. He seems certain that he would have gotten away with the scheme if Levy had not inadvertently been spotted near Freke's home and if the man working on Levy's disappearance had not learned from Peter's mother that Levy's wife and Freke had a romantic history.

John P. Milligan

The American who owns Milligan Railroad and Shipping Company and who is in charge of the railway's holdings. Peter initially believes that Milligan may be involved in the murder and admits that he does not want Milligan to be involved because the two men like each other. As it turns out, Milligan is not involved.



Objects/Places

Piccadilly Circus

Where Lord Peter is when he realizes that he has left a catalogue at home.

110 Piccadilly Square

Where Lord Peter lives.

59 Caroline Mansions

Where Mr. Thipps lives.

Mr. Thipps' Bathtub

Where the body is found.

9 Park Lane

Where Sir Reuben Levy lives.

The Dowager House at Denver Castle

Where Peter's mother, the Dowager Duchess, lives.

Wyndham's

Where Peter meets with the Honourable Freddy Arbuthnot.

Milligan Railroad and Shipping

The company owned by John P. Milligan.

12A Great Ormond Street

The flat where Parker lives.



Prince of Wales Road

Where Levy was reported to have been last seen.

Peruvian Oil

The stock used by Freke as a ploy to entice Levy to visit.



Themes

Jealousy

Jealousy is the motive for the crimes that occur in this story. Freke, as is revealed over the course of the story, is jealous of Levy because Levy's wife, Christine, had originally been somewhat involved with Freke. The Dowager Duchess says that Christine had initially been involved with Freke though it was more of a situation in which her parents approved of the match. When Christine chooses Levy over Freke, Levy has yet to make his fortune. Her family is, according to the Dowager, upset though the Dowager says that Christine had likely made the correct decision, choosing love over her family's choice. While Peter says that it is impossible to believe that Freke would have harbored jealousy for the twenty years after the fact, Peter says that Freke would have harbored an even more passionate form of the emotion—humiliation at having been rejected in favor of a man who Freke clearly considers inferior.

Freke is not the only aspect of jealousy seen in this story. Sugg is jealous of Peter's involvement though he says that Peter has no business interfering. Sugg, however, has a good attitude about the situation after the fact, going so far as to thank Peter for his help.

Justice

Peter calls himself an amateur crime sleuth but Parker says that he does this for his living. The question of justice comes into play when Peter has a stab of conscience because he loses sight of the fact that his role is meant to further the cause of justice. The situation arises when Peter comes to know Milligan, whom he fears to be a prime suspect in the murder of Levy. The problem is that Peter likes Milligan and that Milligan likes Peter. Peter talks to Parker about the problem, saying that he does not want Milligan to be guilty. He says that if the crime solving were a problem worked out on paper, he would love the chase.

However, Peter says that he knows that if he finds evidence against Milligan, he will have caught someone that he likes. Parker says that Peter has to realize that justice is not a game and that justice should be the ultimate goal. Parker also says that Peter has as much right to help bring a criminal to justice as anyone, a fact that Peter comes to reject only because he fears the person he has come to believe might be the one he is bringing to justice.

Attention to Clues

Peter and Parker are involved in a series of questions that seem to have a series of answers but that really are a series of connected events. The two crimes are the disappearance of financier Reuben Levy and the appearance of a naked body in the



bathtub of a prominent architect. The series of questions involve the presence of an expensive pair of glasses, the importance of a Peruvian oil stock, the level of involvement of an American businessman and an elderly attorney. All these questions are important to the solution of the case and become the foundation for the majority of actions in the story. Some details of the story seem to be insignificant but most eventually are revealed as important in some way. For example, there is some discussion about a Peruvian oil stock that the detectives follow. However, the trail on this point literally fizzles out so that Peter and Parker come to believe that this is not an important aspect of the case. The reader much later discovers that the stocks are how Freke lures Levy to his house. There is also a discrepancy in the testimonies of Freke and a colleague that seem insignificant in the grand scheme of the investigation, related to how long the vagrant would have lived after the accident that caused his injury. Freke says it could only have been hours while his colleague says it could have been days. It is only later that the reader learns that Freke had literally kept the man alive for days in order to alter the timeline of the crimes that follow. By saying that the man could not have lived longer than hours, Freke indicates that the man had been injured just hours prior to his death. This allays suspicions that the man was the same man who had been working at the workhouse.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in third person, largely from the perspective of Lord Peter Wimsey, though there are occasional aspects of the story presented from some other point of view. The author does not use a typical perspective in that the reader is granted all the information Peter knows as he learns it, but is left to deduce what the various clues and pieces of information actually mean. While this may be disappointing to some readers, this use of suspense through perspective is a common literary tool, especially during the time of this author's work. One particular scene that uses a perspective other than that of Peter occurs when Peter is late for the luncheon. In that scene, Peter is late and his mother meets Milligan for the first time. Their conversation is related to the reader though Peter is not yet in attendance. The perspective through Peter's eyes becomes somewhat convoluted when he is reliving flashbacks of his military life during the war. In one of those instances, Peter seeks out Bunter for help and Bunter's conversation helps clarify the situation. In the other instance, Peter is in the cemetery during the exhumation of the body believed to be Levy and during that time, the reader is left to figure out what is going on based on previous aspects of the story.

Setting

The book is copyrighted 1923 and seems to be set during the same period. There are some aspects of the case that would be considered poor investigative police work in modern day fiction but were appropriate and accepted in this time period. For example, the Police Inspector arrives at Thipps' apartment and examines the crime scene, then leaves the scene unattended by police for some time. This is how Peter gets his first look at the crime scene without the police being present. Had he wanted, he could have completely violated the scene. There are other clues as to the time of the crime, including the fact that Mr. Thipps' mother uses the telephone and wakes the operator in order to make the call. The story is set in England with a great deal of the action occurring between several locations. Lord Peter's house is a common meeting place and he also spends some time at his mother's house. In addition, scenes occur at the two crime scenes, Mr. Thipps' flat—especially the bathroom—and Levy's home. The settings are described fairly comprehensively and there are details that add depth to the settings, making them more believable. The basic settings of country, region and even neighborhoods such as Piccadilly Square really exist though the majority of the specific locations—Mr. Thipps' flat and Lord Peter's library—do not.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in a mysterious way so that the reader is constantly left guessing. For example, the reader hears Peter's thought process that leads him to know the



identity of the killer and he immediately reads the Who's Who entry for Sir Julian Freke, which makes the reader understand that Freke is the person Peter believes guilty of one or both of the crimes, but the reader is left to decipher the clues as to why Peter believes this to be true.

The entire document left by Freke at the end of the story relates all the specifications of the crimes, bringing closure to the reader and wrapping up any questions the reader has remaining after Peter's details. While the details and plot may be convoluted to the point of confusion, the text itself is written in a fairly straight-forward, though dated, style. The vocabulary, while not simplistic, is not overly complex. For example, there is a sentence that reads, "the scattered elements of two grotesque conundrums, flung higgledy-piggledy into Lord Peter's mind ..." There are also some words and phrases specific to the place and time period. For example, "by jove," is used on several occasions. There are references to the fog, that it is like "pea soup." These add to the authenticity of the story. The reader should remember that the story is written by a woman who is among the first educated at Oxford and is set during her life time in the 1920s.

Structure

The story is divided into thirteen chapters. Each chapter is identified only by a Roman numeral without chapter titles. This means the reader has no clue as to the coming details of the story. Each chapter has from twelve to more than twenty pages. The chapters are generally divided into several particular story scenes. For example, Chapter VI, Parker goes to visit Lady Levy, attends the inquest, goes to Freke's house and hears that Peter will be returning soon from his visit with CrimPLEsham. The story is largely presented in chronological order. The noted exception to this is the letter written by Freke which details all aspects of the crimes in what amounts to a complete overview flashback. The plot is convoluted, with two crimes that initially seem unrelated. The two crimes are the death of an unknown man found in the bathtub of an architect's apartment and the disappearance of a financier named Levy.



Quotes

"So one is forced to suppose that a respectable middle-aged Hebrew financier either went mad between twelve and six a.m. and walked quietly out of the house in his birthday suit on a November night, or else was spirited away like the lady in the 'Ingoldsby Legends,' body and bones, leaving only a heap of crumpled clothes behind him," Chapter II, p. 20.

"Damn it all, Parker, there must be a motive somewhere. Can't have a crime without a motive, you know," Chapter III, p. 33.

"We've lost a middle aged gentleman without any clothes on Park Lane; We've found a middle-aged gentleman without any clothes on in Battersea," Chapter III, p. 39.

"I say, Parker, I think this co-operative scheme is an uncommonly good one. It's much easier to work on someone else's job than one's own—gives one that delightful feelin' of interferin' and bossin' about, combined with the glorious sensation that another fellow is takin' all one's own work off one's hands," Chapter IV, p. 44.

"'Jump? You don't even crawl distantly within sight of a conclusion. I believe if you caught the cat with her head in the cream jug you'd say it was conceivable that the jug was empty when she got there.' 'Well, it would be conceivable, wouldn't it?'" Chapter IV, p. 51.

"Assigning a motive for the murder of a person without relations or antecedents or even clothes is like trying to visualize the fourth dimension—admirable exercise for the imagination, but arduous and inconclusive. Even if the day's interview should disclose black spots in the past or present of Mr. Crimplesham, how were they to be brought into connection with a person apparently without a past, and whose present was confined to the narrow limits of a bath and a police mortuary?" Chapter V, p. 82.

"Most people don't association anything'—their ideas just roll about like so many dry peas on a tray, makin' a lot of noise and goin' nowhere, but one you begin lettin' 'em string their peas into a necklace, it's goin' to be strong enough to hang you, what?" Chapter VII, p. 123.

"But if it comes to really running down a live person and getting him hanged, or even quodded, poor devil, there don't seem as if there was any excuse for me buttin' in, since I don't have to make my livin' by it. And I feel as if I oughtn't ever to find it amusin'. But I do," Chapter VII, p. 127.

"Witnesses ain't detectives, they're just average idiots like you and me," Chapter X, p. 159.



"You're thinking that people don't keep up old jealousies for twenty years or so. Perhaps not. Not just primitive, brute jealousy. That means a word and a blow. But the thing that rankles is hurt vanity. That sticks. Humiliation," Chapter X, p. 169.

"We rang the bell and marched straight up past his man to the library. He was sitting there doing some writing. When we came in, he made a grab for his hypodermic, but we were too quick for him, my lord. We didn't mean to let him slip through our hands, having got so far," Chapter XII, p. 192.

"I never had any patience with that kind of attitude, and I will freely admit now that the game is yours. I must either stay at home and be hanged or escape abroad and live in an idle and insecure obscurity. I prefer to acknowledge defeat," Chapter XIII, p. 194.



Topics for Discussion

Choose three details of the murder that seem insignificant on the surface but actually play an important role in solving the crime. How does each come to be integrated into the final resolution?

Describe Sir Julian Freke. There are at least two times when Freke had an opportunity to harm the investigators: once the victim would have been Peter and the other time, Parker. What were these opportunities? Why did Freke see the need to harm the two men? What does Freke's decision to leave the concise document outlining the details of his murder say about his personality?

Who is the Dowager Duchess? How is she initially involved in the investigation? Outline her role in each step of the case. What is her interest? What is her attitude about Peter's interest?

Who is Piggot? What does Piggot say about a person's ability to remember what happened on some specific day? How does Peter prove him wrong? What is it that Piggot is able to remember about a particular day? Piggot says that the one downfall of detective novels is that the cases are wrapped up too neatly. Is this the case with this story? Support your answer.

Who is Crimplesham? Who is Milligan? How do both become involved in the plot? What is the purpose of their characters?

Who is Bunter? What is his role in Peter's life? Describe, in detail, what is revealed about their relationship. Tell how their relationship may have begun. Support your idea.

Describe the two cases and why they initially seem related and later seem unrelated. Describe, in detail, how the murder of Reuben Levy is carried out. Why is the moving of the vagrant's body necessary to Freke's plan? What is Freke's downfall?