**) Benson and Arthur**

**Arthur:** Can you imagine, Benson, how anyone could ever bring themselves to murder?

**Benson:** Indeed, sir, I can. I have been married for twenty years.

**Arthur: (Looking back at the photograph)** And *I* am to be married in twenty days! **(Pause.)** Oh Sybil! **(Pause.)** Benson?

**Benson:** Sir?

**Arthur:** May I ask your opinion on a delicate subject?

**Benson: (Surprised)** Me, sir?

**Arthur:** Yes, Benson. You know that I always value your rather earthy view on life.

**Benson: (Doubtfully)** Thank you, sir.

**Arthur:** Suppose, and this a purely hypothetical question, suppose that someone knew they were going to do something wrong… something very wrong… and they didn’t want to hurt… **(Looking at the photograph)** someone… should they tell that someone before… before…

**Benson:** ‘Before’, sir?

**Arthur:** Before, and again this is a hypothetical situation, before they married them.

**Benson:** Well, I should say, sir, that it would depend, on what they are doing wrong, and whether the **(looking at the photograph)** someone in question would approve or disapprove. Perhaps if you could elucidate?

**Arthur:** Well, hypothetically, suppose **(quickly)** he felt that to marry her, with the doom of murder hanging over his head, would be a betrayal like that of Judas, a sin worse than any the Borgias had ever dreamed of. What happiness could there be for them, when at any moment he might be called upon to carry out the awful prophecy written in his hand? What manner of life would be theirs while Fate still held this fearful fortune in the scales?

(Pause.)

**Benson:** The tale has the flavour of the penny-dreadfuls, but I would consider that the gentleman would have no alternative but to cancel the wedding, or at the very least postpone the wedding until he resolved the first matter.

**Arthur: (Enthusiastically)** Yes! Well considered, Benson!

**Benson:** May I ask, sir, how this hypothetical question has come to trouble you so?

(Pause.)

**Arthur:** Merely a question that came up in a discussion with Miss Sybil a few evenings ago.

**Benson: (Unconvinced)** I see. **(Pause.)** Is that all, Sir?

**Arthur:** Yes, Benson.

(Benson moves towards the door and stops as Lord Arthur speaks.)

**Arthur:** No! Please arrange for a basket of narcissi to be delivered to Miss Merton. No card.

**Benson:** Yes, sir.

**Arthur:** Thank you, Benson, that will be all.

**Benson:** Thank you, Sir.

(Benson moves towards the door and stops as Lord Arthur speaks.)

**Arthur:** No, wait! **(He goes over to the writing table, and during the following writes a cheque for £105 and puts it in an envelope.)** Please arrange for this letter to be taken to **(pause as he checks the card he was given by Podgers the previous night)** ‘One-hundred-and-three A West Moon Street’ for the attention of Mr Septimus Podgers.

**Benson: (Disdainfully)** The fortune teller!

**Arthur:** Cheiromantist. You disapprove, Benson?

**Benson:** We never learn from our *past* mistakes. Why should we learn from our future ones?

**Arthur: (Quietly)** It may depend on the degree of those future mistakes. **(Then, to Benson)** Well, please send this letter. There is no reply expected. Thank you, Benson.

**Benson:** Thank you, sir