

Marta: Alan? Shall I come another time?

Grant: No, no, Marta, not you. You're always welcome. You are looking very chic.

Marta: Thanks, I'm glad you like it. This will have to be a flying visit; I have rushed over between matinee and evening performance. Here, I brought you some chocolate.

Grant: How lovely.

Marta: And I brought a couple of books, though I feel I shouldn't have bothered.

Grant: I can't read anything.

Marta: Why not? Oh, Alan darling, are you in pain?

Grant: I'm in agony, but it's not my leg.

Marta: What is it then?

Grant: Boredom. I am struck with what my cousin calls "the prickles of boredom".

Marta: Your cousin is correct. One would expect boredom to be a great yawning emotion, but it isn't, of course. It's a small niggling thing.

Grant: It is neither small nor niggling. It is like being beaten with a bunch of nettles.

Marta: What about taking something up? They say that Yoga is very good for the soul.

Grant: Very funny.

Marta: Or I could bring you some wool and knitting needles. You could make yourself some bed socks.

Grant: Your compassion is overwhelming.

Marta: Do you like crosswords? I could bring you a book of those.

Grant: God forbid.

Marta: How about some academic investigating, then? Solving an unsolved problem?

Grant: Crime you mean? Bit of a busman's holiday, isn't it? Besides, I know all the case-histories by heart and there is nothing more that can be done about any of them. Certainly not by someone who is flat on his back.

Marta: I don't mean your Scotland Yard files. I mean something more, what's the word, classic. Something that's puzzled the world for ages.

Grant: Like what?

Marta: I don't know, how about the casket letters?

Grant: God, no. Not Mary, Queen of Scots. I know she's beloved by all you actresses, but I could never be interested in such a silly woman.

Marta: Silly?

Grant: Very silly.

Marta: Oh, Alan, how could you? She was a martyr.

Grant: A martyr to what?

Marta: Her religion.

Grant: The only thing she was a martyr to was rheumatism. She married Darnley without the Pope's dispensation and Bothwell by Protestant rites.

Marta: You will be telling me next that she wasn't even kept prisoner.

Grant: Do you imagine her in a little room at the top of a castle with bars at the window, seeing no one except for the guard who brings her meals? She had a personal household of sixty attendants, all paid for by Elizabeth, who she repaid her by conspiring with European monarchs to try to claim the throne.

Marta: How do you know so much about her?

Grant: I had to do an essay on her at school.

Marta: You didn't like her, I take it.

Grant: I didn't like what I found out about her.

Marta: Not Mary, Queen of Scots, then. How about The Man in the Iron Mask?

Grant: I can't even remember who that was. In any case, I couldn't be interested in anyone who was so coy he hid his face behind some tin plate.

Marta: Oh yes. I suppose faces are important in your line of work. Oh! I think I have just the thing!

Marta takes an envelope out of her bag and hands it to Grant.

Grant: *(Taking several sheets of paper out of the envelope.)* What's this?

Marta: Faces! Dozens of them. Our esteemed director had these printed so that we could study them to help us "get into character".

Grant: How very systematic. Who is this?

Marta: Lucrezia Borgia. Doesn't she look just like a duck?

Grant: Now that you mention it! And who is this Elizabethan gent?

Marta: The name is underneath, Dear.

Grant: Oh, yes. Ah, the Earl of Leicester. Elizabeth's Robin. I don't think I've ever seen his face before.

Marta: Darling, I must fly, or I will be late. How are you, by the way?

Grant: Getting better, apparently.

Marta: Oh, good.

Grant: But I don't see it myself. Until next time, then.

Marta: Take care.

