

*(The sound of water running in the sink.)*

DESIREE: Do you mind if I smoke?

FRANK: I'd mind more if you didn't.

*(DESIREE takes a cigarette from his pack and lights it up.)*

DESIREE: So you prefer Old Golds?

FRANK: You smokin' my cigarettes?

DESIREE: I am. And you didn't answer my question.

FRANK: I figured it was rhetorical.

DESIREE: I am many things, Mr Ellery, but rhetorical isn't one of them.

*(FRANK comes out of the bathroom, wiping his face with a towel.)*

FRANK: Yeah, I smoke 'em. Probably as close as I'll ever get to real gold.

DESIREE: You have a sense of humor. I like that.

FRANK: Swell.

DESIREE: I have no patience for people without one.

FRANK: "I laugh because I must not cry." Lincoln said that.

DESIREE: That is all. That is all.

FRANK: I guess. I wasn't there when he said it.

DESIREE: No, Mr Ellery. That is the full quote. "I laugh because I must not cry. That is all. That is all." *(Beat)* I feel that we're at the point in the conversation where you must either put pants on or I must take something off.

*(Beat. FRANK finds some pants, begins dressing.)*

FRANK: So you want to hire me or something?

DESIREE: Yes. Indeed I do.

FRANK: Twenty dollars a day, plus expenses.

DESIREE: What kind of expenses?

FRANK: I don't know. You haven't told me what you want yet.

DESIREE: Fair enough. I would like you to investigate a murder.

FRANK: They got cops for that.

DESIREE: I trust the local constabulary as far as you could throw them.

FRANK: I think that's as far as *you* could throw them.

DESIREE: Oh, Mr Ellery. I have muscles you can't even imagine. *(Beat)* Besides, I believe you have a very specific insight to this matter that the police do not.

FRANK: I'm listening.

DESIREE: Bernard Wolcott has been murdered.

*(Beat)*

FRANK: Come again.

DESIREE: Not on a first date.

FRANK: What?

DESIREE: A joke, Mr Ellery. If you truly didn't hear me, I said, "Bernard Wolcott has been murdered". Shall I repeat myself again or are we all caught up?

FRANK: Someone killed Bernie Wolcott?

DESIREE: And we are on the same page. Yes, murdered in a most gruesome manner.

FRANK: How?

DESIREE: Will you accept the case?

FRANK: Details first.

DESIREE: Bernard was found this morning in his townhouse. He hadn't shown up for a meeting with one of his clients. When said client arrived at his place

of residence, they found him in his bedroom, dead as the proverbial doornail.

FRANK: I'm waiting to hear the gruesome part.

DESIREE: His heart had been removed from his chest. Brutally. Savagely.

FRANK: Jesus Christ.

DESIREE: The police arrived on the scene shortly thereafter. Appropriately enough, they said his upper torso had been "pulped."

FRANK: What do you mean?

DESIREE: It was a play on words. As you know, Bernard was a literary agent for several writers who...

FRANK: I know what he did. I want to know what the police were talking about.

DESIREE: Ah. Of course. Someone had cut open his chest, cracked his ribcage like a lobster shell, and ripped out his heart. The process was far from surgical, if you take my meaning.

FRANK: Brutal. Savage.

DESIREE: Precisely.

FRANK: And you're sure it wasn't natural causes.

*(DESIREE laughs.)*

DESIREE: I was told you had a singular wit.

FRANK: Says who?

DESIREE: Oh, you're not unknown in certain circles.

FRANK: What circles are those?

DESIREE: Haven't you guessed it? I was one of Bernard's clients.

FRANK: You don't say.