

Julia
Patrick

Miss Marple
Bunny
Miss Blacklock

JULIA. We all know she doesn't get any phone calls.

PATRICK. And what about her parents being sent to Siberia. Last time she told us they were executed in Red Square...

JULIA. While she stood there in the snow, with tears freezing on her cheeks.

MISS BLACKLOCK. We must be sympathetic towards her. She's lonely. Life must be pretty miserable with no-one you can talk to – no one from your background. I suppose that's why she makes up all these stories.

PATRICK. Lies, you mean!

MISS BLACKLOCK. Yes, I do, But I think I can see why she does it.

JULIA. Why are her stories always such doom, gloom and disaster.

MISS BLACKLOCK. That's what she enjoys. Like some people enjoy reading murder mysteries.

(There is a knock on the Main Door. It opens, and MISS MARPLE enters, carrying a bunch of violets wrapped in tissue paper. She is an elderly lady with an over-inquisitive mind which gets her into all sorts of trouble)

MISS MARPLE. The front door was open – I do hope I'm not intruding.

MISS BLACKLOCK. Not at all, Miss Marple...

(MISS MARPLE moves into the room.)

MISS MARPLE. Only I popped in to deliver these – *(She indicates the violets.)* – to Miss Bunny...

BUNNY. *beams brightly and gets to her feet*

BUNNY. Oh – oh, how lovely...

MISS MARPLE. You remember you admired them so at the Vicarage the other day. I told my nephew and he insisted I bring some along for you.

(She hands them to BUNNY.)

BUNNY. How kind. How very kind. (*She holds them out to MISS BLACKLOCK.*) Look, Letty. Aren't they lovely? And so unusual in the autumn.

MISS BLACKLOCK. My grandmother was able to grow them right up to the winter months. I adore violets.

MISS MARPLE. Yes, there's something very sentimental about them. Don't you think so, Julia?

JULIA. I think you have a very romantic nature, Miss Marple...

MISS MARPLE. Do you?

JULIA. But, I do see what you mean.

(*MISS MARPLE is close enough to PATRICK to give him a dig in the ribs.*)

MISS MARPLE. Well. I don't think Patrick does!

JULIA. There's no romance in *his* soul!

MISS MARPLE. Well, you're only his sister – you probably wouldn't see it if it was there.

BUNNY. Where shall they go, Letty? I want everyone to enjoy them.

MISS BLACKLOCK. What about here on the sideboard? There's even a vase waiting for them.

BUNNY. And it's already got water in it. It must be stale. I'll get some fresh. Won't be a minute.

(*BUNNY exits through Main Door with the violets and vase.*)

MISS BLACKLOCK. Do sit down. I'm so glad you called. I wanted to ask you to Bunny's birthday party on Sunday. I know she'd love you to be here.

MISS MARPLE. Thank you. I love parties. Perhaps there is something I can do to help.

JULIA. I'll be helping Aunt Letty, Miss Marple.

PATRICK. (*mimicking JULIA*) I'll be helping Aunt Letty, Miss Marple.

JULIA. Well, you'll be in bed till noon and you'll spend the rest of the day snoring in an armchair – so we can't rely on you for any help!

MISS MARPLE. The announcement in the *Gazette*. What does it mean?

MISS BLACKLOCK. You've seen that, have you?

MISS MARPLE. I should think everybody in Chipping Cleghorn has seen it by now. Has it anything to do with Miss Bunny's birthday?

JULIA. We've no idea what it means.

PATRICK. Probably some crank who thinks he's being funny.

MISS MARPLE. I see. I thought it was an invitation to play some sort of new game or something.

PATRICK. The murder game. Sounds good, doesn't it?

MISS BLACKLOCK. If you're interested Miss Marple, why don't you come along at six-thirty.

JULIA. Oh yes, do, Miss Marple.

MISS MARPLE. I'd love to but I have to go into Medenham Wells for my treatment and I'm not sure how long it's going to take. I'll do my best, though.

MISS BLACKLOCK. Is your rheumatism better?

MISS MARPLE. Very much, thank you. The spa waters are so good. Give it another week and I shall be back in St Mary Mead.

PATRICK. Chipping Cleghorn won't be the same without you!

MISS MARPLE. I shall miss it here. Although I think my niece won't be over sorry when I leave. They've been very patient with me.

JULIA. Would they like to come tonight?

MISS MARPLE. I'm sure they would love to. My nephew's very like me, he loves a mystery, but they're having dinner with the Bishop.

JULIA. It would have been rather reassuring to have the Vicar here.

MISS MARPLE. Knowing your neighbours, you won't be alone. The Colonel and Mrs. Easterbrook for a start...

PATRICK. No – they're in Bournemouth.

MISS MARPLE. Clara Swettenham wouldn't miss an opportunity like this. And young Edmund – with two beautiful young girls staying here.

JULIA. There's someone I could do without. And Phillipa says he's a layabout.

MISS MARPLE. I thought he was a writer.

JULIA. He is. But, she says it's an excuse not to get a real job and work for a living.

MISS MARPLE. *(smiling)* Perhaps she's got a point.

(BUNNY enters with the violets in the vase.)

BUNNY. Do thank the Vicar for me, Miss Marple. I'm touched – I really am. So kind of him.

MISS MARPLE. He was delighted you noticed them. He brought the original cutting back from Devon – the Dart Valley – he was born there.

BUNNY. *(distantly)* Devon violets. There's nothing quite like them. *(She crosses to the bureau and "arranges" them on top – trying a couple of different places before she is satisfied.)*

MISS MARPLE. Well, I must be going. I hope all will be well this evening.

(BUNNY looks across – she has forgotten.)

BUNNY. *(smiling)* What?

MISS MARPLE. The announcement – in the *Gazette*. A murder will take place here at six-thirty...

BUNNY. *(hand to mouth)* Oh – yes...

MISS MARPLE. If it wasn't a joke or some sort of game it would be very worrying for all of you.

MISS BLACKLOCK. We're made of sterner stuff than you think, Miss Marple.

MISS MARPLE. But, surely, Miss Blacklock. If there's going to be a murder there has to be a *victim*. If I were you

the question I'd be asking myself is: who is going to be murdered?

(A moment. They look from one to the other. We see the first signs of real fear beginning to creep into their souls, as the curtain falls.)