

Dial M for Murder

Frederick Knott

MAX

TONY

Tony wanted to inherit his wife's money, so he persuaded an old college friend, Swann, to murder her. Instead, Margot killed Swann in self-defense. She was convicted of Swann's murder and sentenced to death. Max has a plan to free Margot, but it requires Tony's help.

MAX. Tony, I take it you'd do anything — to save her life?

TONY. (Surprised) Of course.

MAX. Even if it meant going to prison for several years?

TONY. I'd do absolutely anything.

MAX. I think you can — I'm certain. (Slowly) If you tell the police *exactly* the right story.

TONY. The right story?

MAX. Listen, Tony. I've been working this out for weeks. Just in case it came to this. It may be her only chance.

TONY. Let's have it.

MAX. You'll have to tell the police that you hired Swann to murder her. (Long pause)

TONY. (Rises) What are you talking about?

MAX. It's all right, Tony — I've been writing this stuff for years. I know what I'm doing. Margot was convicted because no one would believe her story. Prosecution made out that she was telling one lie after another — and the jury believed them. Now Swann is dead. You

can say any story you like about him . . . That you'd met him, and worked out the whole thing together. Now, Swann was only suspected of blackmail for two reasons. Because my letter was found in his pocket and because you saw him the day Margot's bag was stolen.

TONY. Well?

MAX. You can now tell the police that you never saw him. That the whole thing was an invention of yours to try and connect him with the letter.

TONY. But the letter was found in his pocket.

MAX. Because you put it there.

TONY. (Pause) You mean I should pretend that I stole her handbag?

MAX. Sure. You could have.

TONY. But why?

MAX. Because you wanted to find out who was writing her. When you read my letter you were so mad you decided to teach her a lesson.

TONY. But I can't say that I wrote those blackmail notes.

MAX. Why not? No one can prove you didn't. (TONY thinks it over)

TONY. All right, I stole her bag and blackmailed her. What else?

MAX. You kept my letter and planted it on Swann after he'd been killed.

TONY. Wait a minute — when could I have done that?

MAX. After you got back and before the police arrived. At the same time you took one of Margot's stockings from the mending basket and substituted it for whatever Swann had used.

TONY. Max, I know you're trying to help — but can you imagine anyone believing this?

MAX. You've got to make them believe it.

TONY. But I wouldn't know what to say. You'd have to come with me.

MAX. No. I couldn't do that. They know the sort of stuff I write. They mustn't know I've been here.

TONY. Max! It's ridiculous. Why should I want anyone to murder Margot?

MAX. Had Margot made a will? (Pause)

TONY. I — yes, I believe she had.

MAX. Are you the main beneficiary?

TONY. I suppose so.

MAX. Well, there you are.