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"Surely to goodness you don't eat in here by yourself." Hilda was horrified at the thought of a lone person eating in this immense room.

"No, my dear. I don't. As a matter of fact the closest I ever come to eating in here, is carrying my coffee through to the sitting room we just left," he laughed.

As she passed through the room, she admired the fireplace on the outer wall; this one fronted in dark green marble with a faint cream coloured striation, its mantle the same rich red-brown mahogany as the table. At the end of the room, he led her out the door to the left, and they were in a hall that passed under the stairs. Walking across, he opened the door and ushered her into another room.

This room was small by comparison to the others they had been through, but the windows and plants gave the impression that one had stepped into an enclosed garden. The dark green of the more formal rooms had been abandoned here. In its place, the walls were white with just a hint of green, the wainscotting just tones darker than the walls. The alcove formed by the bay windows, held a table and chairs, the same colour as the wainscotting. A nearby buffet in the same shade, stood along one wall and a small roll topped desk with matching chair, painted the same shade, stood beside another window. The draperies were pastel flowered fabric that along with the plants that stood on window ledges and hung from brass hangers in front of the windows. Two matching Oriental rugs partially covered the honey gold of polished pine floors; one, a circular one, was laid under the table and chairs, the other, a rectangle, ran the length of the room. Their soft greens and creams and roses were picked up in the woven linen table cloth and the original water colours that hung on the walls. Again there was a fireplace, its face of carved wood, painted the soft green of the rest of the woodwork.

"Jeremy, this is a lovely room. What a beautiful place to start one's day," she enthused. She looked out the windows in the alcove to the garden beyond. "These are French doors," she exclaimed.

"Yes. I have never liked patio doors, especially in old houses, so I had these made to replace the casement windows that were there when I bought this house," He motioned to the garden beyond, "I wanted access to the terrace from this room....so I could take my coffee out doors."

"You must have spent months re-doing the house," Hilda said, gazing around with admiration.

"One of the pleasures of having money to spend, is spending it how one wants to," Jeremy replied with wry humour. "No family to make demands on it."

They went back out into the hall and back towards the front of the house, to stop at the door that faced across the hallway, the first doorway they had entered. He opened the door and stood aside to let Hilda enter first. The room was double the size of the first room they had been in and was dominated by a fireplace that held pride of place in the

centre of the far wall. Sofas and chairs were arranged in groups throughout the room, with two large sofas facing each other in front of the hearth. An alcove at the far end of the room, held a grand piano with room over for a pair of upholstered chairs and a small round table between them. There were none of the flowered trimmings in this room. What accents there were, were from the oil paintings hung on the wall, the Oriental rugs that lay under each group of furniture and the bouquets of flowers that stood on the tables that flanked the door they had just entered. but it was not an oppressive decor, more a room in waiting for the people and laughter it had seen in the past and would hold again in the future. The green of the walls was more pronounced and the woodwork darker were. The Aubusson rugs had burgundies and black in the dark green of its background colour and borders, and the furniture picked out these colours.

"Good heavens, this is a mansion. Jeremy Fegan, how did you come to do all this?" Hilda waved her hand to encompass the room.

"I inherited the house. It belonged to my mother's people, the Dawsons. It was pretty much as it had been in the 1800s, except for some dreadful wallpaper that had been applied during the mid-nineteen hundreds. The woodwork had all been varnished and done with that terrible wood grain finish, so that had to be stripped away," he paused to glance at her for a moment before going on. "When I was younger, I thought that maybe some day, I would marry and bring a wife to this house. Then as the years passed, and I began to realize that was an unlikely dream, the house had become such an interest that I just kept at it."

"You would have probably had easier work and been just as successful if you would have gone into interior decorating," Hilda commented.

"I was just joking about us making dinner. I have a perfectly good cook who would be insulted if I were to take over his job, and my houseman would have a stroke if a guest had to do anything other than be waited on." He took her arm. "Where would you like to take your drink before dinner?"

"The terrace, I think. It looked cool and inviting when we were in the breakfast room," Hilda suggested.

The terrace overlooked lawns and formal walks bordered with beds of flowers. The walks led to what appeared to be a small walled orchard at the bottom of the property. For a moment, Hilda considered asking for a tour of the grounds, then decided to save that for another day. She was having difficulty reconciling the image of Jeremy Fegan, doctor, retired coroner, given to long hours of hard work, with the sybaritic, urbane man who sat across from her and whose tastes were expressed in the understated elegance of the rooms she had seen.

"If you are wondering why I have never invited you here before," he began, setting his drink on the table beside his

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