

## **ABSURD ENDING**

It was eight thirty in the evening and private investigator Lorenzo Fresnos was expecting a visitor. His secretary had just left; outside it had started raining and Fresnos was getting bored. He had got very little sleep the night before and felt too groggy to do anything useful while he waited. He glanced over the books, bequeathed by the previous occupant in the office, and chose one at random. He sat down in his armchair and began to read, yawning.

He was woken up by a sharp noise: his book had fallen to the floor. He opened his eyes with a start and saw, sitting on the other end of his desk, a woman of about forty, with a pointed nose and anxious eyes, with auburn hair gathered together in a bun. On seeing that he had woken up, she smiled at him affably. Her eyes, however, were looking him over intently.

Lorenzo Fresnos felt irritated. It annoyed him that the woman had come in without knocking, or that he hadn't heard her, and that she had been spying on him as he slept. He would have liked to have said: "Delighted to meet you, Mrs..." (it was a first visit) but he had forgotten the name that his secretary had noted down in his diary. And she had already begun to speak.

"I'm really pleased to meet you," she was saying. "You can't imagine how I was longing for this interview. You can spare me plenty of time, can't you?"

"Of course I can, madam," replied Fresnos, rather curtly. Something, perhaps the anxiety that throbbed in her voice, or her over-familiar tone, had put him on his guard. "What can I do for you?"

The woman looked down and began to fiddle with the fastening on her handbag. It was an old-fashioned and elaborate handbag. Everything about her seemed a bit old-fashioned, thought Fresnos.