

YOUNG DOCTOR

There is only one worthy goal for scientific exploration: piercing the tissue that separates life from death. Everything else from the deep bottom of the sea to the top of the highest mountain on the farthest plant is insignificant. Life and death, Sir Malcolm. The flicker that separates one from the other, fast as a bat's wing, more beautiful than any sonnet. That is my mountain. That is my river. There I will plant my flag.

The Young Doctor realizes his passion has carried him away. He sits back.

Sir Malcolm looks at him.

START

SIR MALCOLM

You've the soul of a poet, sir.

YOUNG DOCTOR

And the bank account to match.

Sir Malcolm smiles and summons a waiter.

SIR MALCOLM

(to waiter)

Whiskey and soda ... And for my friend?

YOUNG DOCTOR

I don't drink spirits.

SIR MALCOLM

Branch water.

The waiter goes.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I did not mean to offend. I'm not made for polite conversation.

SIR MALCOLM

I take no offense. On the contrary, I take heart I am sitting across from the man I need.

YOUNG DOCTOR

And for what purpose?

Beat.

SIR MALCOLM
You tell me.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Last night of course ... The body
you brought was ... unique.

SIR MALCOLM
You are a master of understatement.

YOUNG DOCTOR
It was not, strictly speaking,
human.

SIR MALCOLM
No.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Is there a name for it?

SIR MALCOLM
Oh, many ... many ... but only you
might know ... Vampire.

He says the word almost blandly, without affect.

Beat.

The Young Doctor looks at him.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Vampire?

SIR MALCOLM
Or perhaps I've misjudged you.
Perhaps we should have a
comfortable chat about an Egyptian
man of an indeterminate age with a
fondness for tattoos, after which
we would part ways and never meet
again. Which is it to be?

The question is a challenge.

YOUNG DOCTOR
As you say, I'm curious ... What
did you do with the body?

SIR MALCOLM
Incinerated it to ash.

YOUNG DOCTOR
You're lying.

SIR MALCOLM

Am I?

YOUNG DOCTOR

It was too rare. Too valuable to you. You have secreted it away. I would say packed in salt and ice for future investigation.

Sir Malcolm smiles. Nods. Well done.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Did you kill him, Sir Malcolm?

SIR MALCOLM

Yes.

The Young Doctor's eyes don't show a flicker of concern at this.

There is a more intriguing question on his mind.

He leans in.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Are there more?

SIR MALCOLM

At least one.

The waiter returns with their drinks.

SIR MALCOLM

I'll serve.

The waiter goes and Sir Malcolm serves the drinks:

SIR MALCOLM

I am in the position to offer you occasional employment. You seem to be a free-thinker who might imagine a world less constrained by what we think we know of as "truth."

YOUNG DOCTOR

You mean the supernatural.

SIR MALCOLM

I mean that place where science and superstition walk hand-in-hand ... An anatomist of your skill would be invaluable to my work.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I'm engaged in important research,
Sir Malcolm. I've no interest in
joining an amateur Occultist
society.

SIR MALCOLM

Nor I in forming one ... Is your
research funded by a hospital, or
university perhaps?

YOUNG DOCTOR

No.

SIR MALCOLM

You have a patron then?

YOUNG DOCTOR

You know I don't.

SIR MALCOLM

So the nature of the work is
controversial, I take it?

YOUNG DOCTOR

The nature of the work is private.

SIR MALCOLM

As you say ... For the occasional
services I speak of you would be
handsomely paid, of course,
allowing you to pursue your
personal investigations without
constraint ... No more inhaling
lime in the back room of an illicit
charnel house, Doctor.

YOUNG DOCTOR

First you must tell me why.

SIR MALCOLM

Why what?

YOUNG DOCTOR

What is it you're seeking, Sir
Malcolm?

SIR MALCOLM

The nature of my work is private as
well.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Then we have nothing more to say.
Good day, sir.

He moves to go.

SIR MALCOLM

Wait.

A beat.

Finally...

SIR MALCOLM

I'm looking for something dear that was lost to me ... When I have found it I will stop. As will you, when you have found what you are looking for. In that at least we're the same.

Beat.

SIR MALCOLM

Will you consider my proposition?

YOUNG DOCTOR

Yes ... I've only one other question ... There are a hundred better trained and more experienced surgeons in London ... Why me?

SIR MALCOLM

Because you were unafraid to pull back the skin and look beneath.

END

EXT. LONDON MANOR HOUSE - EVENING

A series of coaches and their attendant coachmen, waiting outside a lovely manor house. Lights and music from inside.

Sembene, Sir Malcolm's African servant, is waiting by his coach.

The other coachmen glance over, intrigued by the black face and facial scarring, whispering among themselves.

By this time, Sembene is used to the curious and hostile looks. He is monstrosly alien to most Londoners.

He ignores the other coachmen, lights a clay pipe. Waits.