

HAMMERSCHMIDT. (*Eyeing him:*) Did you intend to stay? I'm surprised. I thought you were so exhausted from all you had to do here today, that you'd rather go home.

HORVATH. I didn't say, I was exhausted, Mr. Hammerschmidt.

HAMMERSCHMIDT. Nevertheless I want you to go, Mr. Horvath. We'll manage to get along without you.

(*Silence — short pause.*)

(*KADAR has finished wrapping the parcel, turns up the collar of his jacket and leaves the shop without comment.*)

(*Short pause.*)

HORVATH. (*In a low voice that trembles slightly:*) I'd appreciate it, Mr. Hammerschmidt, if you'd tell me what it is that is bothering you.

~~HAMMERSCHMIDT. I told you a minute ago. Do you want to hear it all again?~~

(*SIPOS pinches HORVATH's arm.*)

~~HORVATH. Stop pinching me, Sipos.~~ (*In a trembling voice:*) I slave away in this shop, not so much as a paid clerk but as though it were my very own Mr. Hammerschmidt.

HAMMERSCHMIDT. (*Significantly:*) Is that so? Like it was your OWN you say? Is that what you think? Not in your wildest dreams...

HORVATH. (*Unheeding:*) I'm always looking for work to do to make the business run better. If it's slow in the shop then I work in the lab. This morning for instance before the mid-morning rush, I filled four hundred tubes of Mona Lisa and you sir, talk to me like I was some sort of slacker. There's no conceivable reason for it. At least none that I can see.

HAMMERSCHMIDT. No reason?

HORVATH. No, not the slightest. I'm sorry to be going on like this sir... The only thing I can imagine is that some jealous individual might be making up stories and putting false ideas about me in your head.

HAMMERSCHMIDT. No one has been putting ideas in my head. ~~My opinions are my own. What do you think Mr. Horvath,~~ I'm not intelligent enough to have opinions of my own?

HORVATH. You've had a different opinion of me these past nine years, Mr. Hammerschmidt. It's only suddenly in the last several days that there has been this inexplicable change.

HAMMERSCHMIDT. (*Beside himself:*) That's right. That's right, because in these last several days I've found out that... (*Stops dead.*)

HORVATH. What sir? What did you find out?

HAMMERSCHMIDT. (*Obviously changing the direction of the conversation:*) That you're getting too big for your britches around here and that you are not doing your job properly. I will not stand for it.

HORVATH. If you have not been satisfied with my work, sir, why haven't you told me?

HAMMERSCHMIDT. I am telling you. I keep on telling you. How often do you have to be told?

HORVATH. (*Paling:*) If it's like that sir, perhaps I should make other arrangements.

HAMMERSCHMIDT. Are you threatening me? What do you think happens now? I beg you to stay? You know what Mr. Horvath, earlier I said you could go. Why don't we make that a permanent arrangement. How soon may I expect you to take your leave of us?

HORVATH. (*Stands thunderstruck, then quietly...*) Immediately, sir.

(*Exits stockroom.*)

HAMMERSCHMIDT. (*To MISS MOLNAR:*) Is your cash drawer balanced?

MISS MOLNAR. Yes, Mr. Hammerschmidt, would you care to check it?

(*Stands up.*)

HAMMERSCHMIDT. Perhaps later. Give me the key.