



Balcony Not Found

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Fowler, a young writer seeking adventure, follows the portly and unassuming Ausable down the dimly lit corridor of a gloomy hotel. He is disappointed to find that the famous secret agent looks nothing like the dashing heroes in movies, appearing more like an ordinary clerk than a master of mystery.



The moment they step into the small hotel room and flip the switch, the atmosphere changes from dull to deadly. Standing in the center of the room is a slender man named Max, holding a black automatic pistol aimed directly at Ausable's heart.



Ausable remains remarkably calm, sinking into an armchair and weaving a clever tale about a troublesome balcony outside the window. He casually mentions that he called the police to provide extra security for the top-secret report he is expecting tonight.



A sudden, sharp knocking at the door sends a bolt of terror through Max, who believes the police have arrived. Panicked and desperate to escape, he steps onto the windowsill and leaps into the dark night, expecting to land on the balcony Ausable described.



The door opens not to reveal the police, but a waiter calmly holding a tray with a bottle and two glasses. Fowler stands paralyzed with shock as he realizes there was never a balcony and that Max has fallen to the alleyway below.



In the days following the incident, Fowler is plagued by a cold, lingering dread that refuses to leave his side. In the dead of night, the curtains flutter without a breeze, and a chilling whisper echoes in his ear, accusing him of helping Ausable trick a man to his doom.



The haunting grows more intense as Max's dark shadow begins to flicker in mirrors and lurk in the corners of Fowler's vision. Fowler becomes a ghost of his former self, his face pale and his eyes wide with a terror that no one else can understand.



One evening, as Fowler attempts to confess his fears to Ausable, the lights suddenly flicker and die, plunging the room into icy darkness. Fowler's body stiffens and his voice changes into a harsh, guttural rasp as Max's vengeful spirit takes full control of his mind.



Thinking with lightning speed, Ausable points toward the dark window and shouts that the police are breaking down the door. The ghost's deep-seated fear of the law causes it to hesitate, giving Ausable the chance to flood the room with blinding light and banish the shadow.



With a final, piercing scream, the dark spirit is cast out of Fowler's body and disappears into the night forever. Fowler collapses into a chair, watching in awe as Ausable calmly sips his drink, proving once and for all that intelligence is the ultimate shield against fear.