



The Midnight Visitor's Great Slip-Up

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Ausable, a stout and unassuming man, leads the young writer Fowler down the dimly lit, musty corridor of a French hotel. Fowler feels disappointed, expecting a dashing secret agent but finding someone who looks more like a grocery clerk.



As Ausable switches on the light in his small room, they are both startled to find a slender man named Max standing in the center. Max holds a small black automatic pistol, his eyes cold and focused on the secret report Ausable is expecting.



Instead of panicking, Ausable sinks into an armchair and grumbles about a non-existent balcony outside his window. He claims this is the second time someone has broken into his room using that dangerous architectural flaw.



A sudden, sharp knocking sounds at the door, making Max jump with nerves. Ausable calmly explains that he asked the police to check on him tonight to ensure the safety of the important documents.



Terrified of being caught by the authorities, Max backs toward the open window, keeping his gun pointed at the two men. He plans to wait on the balcony until the police leave, unaware of the trap being set.



With a final threat, Max steps back and drops out of the window into the dark night. A sharp, high-pitched cry echoes through the air as he disappears from sight, leaving Fowler breathless with shock.



The door opens, but instead of the police, Henry the waiter enters carrying a tray with a bottle and two glasses. Ausable smiles, revealing that there were never any police and the knocking was just his drink order arriving.



Just as Fowler begins to relax, a pair of white-knuckled hands suddenly grip the window sill from the outside. A disheveled and very dusty Max pulls his head up, his face a mask of frantic desperation.



Max is desperately clinging to a tiny, decorative iron railing that he managed to catch just inches below the window frame. He hangs there precariously, his legs kicking at the empty air while he tries to find his footing on the smooth wall.



Ausable takes his drink from the waiter and walks to the window, looking down at his dangling rival with a polite smile. He suggests that Max should stay there for a while to enjoy the view while they finish their refreshments in peace.