

A small room in a private club, night. Henry is sat at a table. He sits straight, tapping his finger in time to the clock's tick.

The door opens. Henry flicks his eyes to it and stops tapping. Louis enters the room with an envelope in hand and closes the door.

Louis

My sincere apologies for the wait, Mr. Tilcott.

Henry

I would have expected Byron to be here instead. Like usual.

Louis

Mr. Andrews couldn't make the trip. My apologies, again.

Henry

I'm sure it's no fault of your own.

Louis presents the envelope to Henry.

Louis

Mr. Andrews' dues, asking forgiveness for his lack of attendance.

Henry takes the envelope, and flips it over.

In cursive, the back reads: "Henry Tilcott. Payment, as discussed in person."

Henry

Thank you.

Henry places the envelope on his lap.

Henry

I'm interested in you, my good man.

Louis wasn't expecting this.

Louis

There's not much to know about me, sir. Mr. Andrews was otherwise engaged and asked me to deliver this on his behalf.

Henry

Byron's a busy man, I'm well aware of the fact. Why did he pick you to deliver this? (BEAT)
Oh, haven't I been so rude? What's your name?

Louis waits a moment, considering if to respond.

Louis

Louis Béliveau.

Henry

French?

Louis

Oui, monsieur.

Henry

(IN FRENCH) So you'll be fine speaking your mother tongue, then?

Louis stammers.

Henry

Interesting.

Henry picks up an envelope from his pocket and traces his fingers on the edges.

Louis

Mr. Tilcott, I must confess, my family sent me abroad in my youth for 'employment benefits', as they said. I haven't spoken the language since I was barely old enough to—

Henry

Has someone handled this, Louis?

Pause.

Louis

Excuse me, sir?

Henry

No, no; there's nothing wrong. Just, I see this bend right at the corner, here. It looks like a third hand has touched this. I merely wonder what could have caused it. (BEAT) The postman, perhaps?

Louis

I can assure you no-one has touched that envelope besides myself and Mr. Andrews.

Henry

Interesting, indeed. Now I look again, it doesn't look like a third hand. It's as if the lip has been resealed.

Louis

Resealed, sir?

Henry

Yes; like you expertly pried it open, for whatever reason, thinking no-one would notice at the corner.

Louis

Are you accusing me of tampering with your parcel?

Henry

Oh, not you as in *you*, my dear fellow. C'est-à-dire *vous*, non? Simply...

Henry shakes the envelope. It sounds like sand.

Henry

There's only supposed to be notes in here.

Louis

Mr. Andrews gave me that envelope to deliver to you at this address in this room. I'm not aware of its contents.

Henry

And it was as heavy as this when your journey started?

Louis

God as my witness, yes! I don't know what else you want from me, sir, and I'll be taking my leave now.

Henry

Could you open this for me, Louis?

Louis stops making his way to the door.

Louis

I was only told to make the delivery. I'm not even sure we should be conversing.

Henry

I'm sure Byron will have no quarrels.

Henry waggles the envelope at him.

Henry

Open it.

Louis

I'm sure Mr. Andrews wouldn't want me to.

Henry

Open the envelope, Louis.

Louis

It's your money—

Henry

Do it.

Pause.

Louis gingerly takes the envelope. Henry puts his hands together.

Henry

It's not like there's anything wrong, is there?

Louis

No, sir.

Henry

Then what's the worst that could happen?

Louis tears the lip, slightly.

Henry

Go ahead.

He opens the envelope fully.

Louis

It looks like there's—

Dust, poisonous, jumps out of the envelope. Louis begins coughing.

Henry grabs a handkerchief from his pocket, shoving it to his mouth as he runs out of the room. Louis' coughs grow severer.

He runs for the main entrance, Louis doubled over and choking, eventually collapsing. Confusion, then followed by chaos starts to spread through the building.

Henry bursts out of the front door, breathing ragged. He coughs, beating his chest. Not fatal, but still painful. Inside, someone screams.

Henry

You, cabbie!

He jumps into the nearest hansom.

Henry

Euston. Quickly. Make it before the 9:32 to Liverpool and I'll pay you double.

The cabbie cracks his whip and the horses set off with a start.

Cabbie

Commotion hap'nen in there. You know what's goin' on?

Henry

Oh, I don't know.

Henry takes the original envelope out of his breast pocket. He slits it open, and thumbs through the pound notes.

Henry

Something about money.