

George Parkinson picked up his brief-case¹ and said goodnight to his colleagues in the office. As usual there was a queue for the five-twenty bus and as usual - or so it seemed to George - it was cold and raining.

Standing in the queue, he thought to himself, not for the first time : *'What am I doing with my life ? Every day I get up at seven, I catch the number 86 bus and see the same people. I get to the office at nine and I sit at the same desk and do the same boring job. I have lunch in the staff canteen. Every evening I catch the same bus, go back to the same miserable flat in the suburbs², cook myself a meal and watch the same boring TV programmes. I don't like my job. I don't even like my colleagues. Do I continue like this for the next ten, twenty or even thirty years ?'*

He was still thinking unhappily about his life when he arrived at the building where he lived. He went up in the lift to the fourth floor where his flat was. As he was getting his door key from his pocket, he noticed that the door was open. *'That's strange'*, he thought, *'I always make sure it's locked before I leave in the morning.'* He sniffed. Yes ... there was an unmistakable aroma of tobacco. *'It's coming from my flat,'* he said to himself *'and I don't smoke.'* Slowly he pushed the door open.

"Please come in, Mr Parkinson !" said a voice from inside, *"I've been expecting³ you..."*