

A Paper-thin Alibi

'So; I just need to understand this.' Council for the prosecution leant forward and stared at Jack. 'You say this was *not* an accident? At least, something that *could*'ve been averted?'

'Absolutely! If someone had cared more, or just *taken* care, I never would have...' He looked down and started to sob into his cuff.

'I'm sorry, and realise this must be hard for you, but we do need to ascertain the facts.'

Jack straightened, and unconsciously felt his forehead, something of a habit since his unfortunate fall.

'Please continue.'

'It was during the drought. We needed to wash and drink. So we-'

'For clarity - *we*?'

'Me and Jill. We went up the hill; to fetch a pail of water.'

The lawyer nodded sagely. 'And then?'

'Jill hadn't been feeling too good so I offered to carry the pail – it was heavy – we started to come down – it was *steep* -'

'Take your time, Jack. What happened next?'

'I caught my toe.' He shook his head, haunted by the moment. 'And I sort of tumbled forward, then I-'

'Stop if you need a break.'

The court gasped. A minute later the lawyer resumed.

'An unfortunate accident? If not, then what d'you maintain?'

Jack's face contorted as he swung round and pointed directly at his partner. 'That *she* tripped me! That she wanted me dead and would claim the life insurance we'd taken out only the previous week!'

Another gasp from the public gallery.

'Then how do you explain her tumbling after?'

'It was just an act!'

'And the vinegar and brown paper?'

Jack suppressed a sardonic laugh. 'Vinegar! Brown paper! Who treats a fractured skull with a kitchen condiment?!'

'No more questions, m'lud.'

Jack and Jill

300 words