

There's Always Juliet

A Comedy in Three Acts

John van Druten
1931

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THERE'S ALWAYS JULIET

By John van Druten

PLAYS

CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE

YOUNG WOODLEY

THE RETURN OF THE SOLDIER
(From the novel of Rebecca West)

DIVERSION

AFTER ALL

LONDON WALL

HOLLYWOOD HOLIDAY
(With Benn W. Levy)

THERE'S ALWAYS JULIET

NOVELS

YOUNG WOODLEY

A WOMAN ON HER WAY

John van Druten

***THERE'S ALWAYS
JULIET***

A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS

SAMUEL FRENCH
NEW YORK LOS ANGELES
SAMUEL FRENCH LTD. LONDON

1932

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To

HENZIE AND MARTIN

“There’s Always Juliet” was first presented by
Mr. Gilbert Miller at the Empire Theatre on Monday,
February 15th, 1932, with the following cast:

Leonora Perrycoste EDNA BEST

Florence MAY WHITTY

Dwight Houston HERBERT MARSHALL

Peter Walmsley CYRIL RAYMOND

Staged by AURIOL LEE

CHARACTERS

LEONORA PERRYCOSTE

FLORENCE

DWIGHT HOUSTON

PETER WALMSLEY

SCENE: *Leonora's sitting-room in a flat in the West
End of London.*

ACT I

Monday evening. (The curtain is lowered during the act to indicate the passage of a few hours.)

ACT II

Tuesday evening.

ACT III

Wednesday afternoon. (The curtain is lowered during the act to indicate the passage of several hours.)

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SCENE: LEONORA'S sitting-room in a West End flat near the Ritz in London. The room is very comfortably and attractively furnished. In the back wall are two large recesses taking up practically the entire wall space. The one to the Right contains a writing-desk, and a door in its right wall, just out of sight of the audience, leading to LEONORA'S bedroom, off Right.

The other recess contains a grand piano and some bookshelves. Just below the piano is a large, low armchair.

On the slant on the Left are double doors leading to a hall-way and the rest of the flat.

Fireplace downstage Left, with a bench in front of it. Above it a small table for drinks. A large, low chesterfield on the slant to the fire, well downstage.

Large French windows, with a tiny balcony and flowers in boxes outside, downstage in the right wall. A chaise-longue more or less parallel to them. Telephone on a small table above the windows.

When the curtain rises, LEONORA PERRYCOSTE comes in through the double doors, wearing her hat and light summer coat and carrying a handbag. She is obviously a little preoccupied. She comes to the chaise-longue, sits on it meditatively, looks at the telephone, rises, and walks restlessly about again. She takes a cigarette from a case in her bag and fits it into an ivory holder. The holder seems to give her an idea. She goes to the telephone and dials a number.

LEONORA

Hello. Is Mrs. Enfield there? . . . Oh, Betty, it's you. . . . This is Leonora. . . . Yes. I say, did I leave my cigarette-holder there this afternoon? . . . Oh, an ivory one. It's got my initials on it. Don't bother now . . . any time will do. Just remember, if you do find one, that it's mine, will you? . . . Nice party, Betty. I enjoyed it. (*With just too much carelessness.*) By the way, who was that nice American man? . . . Oh, you know. Dark and rather nice-looking. . . . Oh, is *that* his name? Who is he? . . . Oh, I see. Tom and Catherine brought him, did they? . . . What? . . . Oh, no reason. I just thought he seemed nice. What are you laughing at? Well, what's the matter? . . . Oh, all right. *Be* mysterious. About the what? . . . Oh, yes, the holder. Thanks. Good-bye. (*She rings off, puts down the telephone.*)

[FLORENCE, a kindly family-servant parlourmaid of about fifty, comes in from the bedroom, carrying a pair of mules.

FLORENCE

I thought I heard you come in, miss. Excuse me, miss, are you busy?

LEONORA

No. What is it?

FLORENCE

I put out the gold dress, miss, as you didn't say. I don't know whether I did right.

LEONORA

Well, I'm only going to the family. It does seem rather waste.

FLORENCE

I can easily get out another, miss. The black one, perhaps. That's quite shabby.

LEONORA

Yes. All right, I'll wear the black.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss. (*Changing LEONORA'S shoes for her.*) You haven't heard from the mistress, have you, miss? About when she's coming home, I mean?

LEONORA

No, not again. Some time next week, I think. Why? Are you getting anxious?

FLORENCE

Oh, no, miss. I only just wanted to know for the dentist.

LEONORA

Why? Is he interested?

FLORENCE

No, miss, but it's my teeth. You see, I've been having trouble lately. It's my wisdom, and Mr. Parker says I'd better have it out. And seeing that it's sort of wedged in like, and I'm not good with the gas, it might mean a day in bed. Just for the shock. So I thought perhaps I ought to get it over before they come back.

LEONORA

Yes. Well, all right.

FLORENCE

I was all for letting nature take its course . . . see if it wouldn't work itself out . . . but Mr. Parker says at my time of life it's apt to get into the blood stream, so perhaps I oughtn't to risk it.

LEONORA

(unseriously)

Would you like me to go away?

FLORENCE

Oh, no, miss. There's no need for you to upset yourself. You needn't know anything about it till it's all over.

LEONORA

That makes me sound like a prospective father, somehow. (FLORENCE *looks at her quite blankly.*) It's all right, Florence. I was being funny.

FLORENCE

Oh. Oh! (*She sees the joke and giggles.*) Really, Miss Leonora! (*She takes LEONORA'S hat, coat, and shoes into the bedroom and then returns.*) Well, then, perhaps I'd better say Wednesday.

LEONORA

All right.

FLORENCE

You won't be having a party, or anything, that night?

LEONORA

To celebrate, do you mean?

FLORENCE

(quite seriously)

No, miss, but I was only thinking Rose can wait at table if it's only just a couple of you. But if there was more . . .

LEONORA

It's all right. I'm not entertaining on a large scale these days.

FLORENCE

No, miss, I know. And I've been thinking it seems a waste, really, with the whole flat to yourself. I expect you find it a bit lonely with the master and mistress away, really, if the truth were known.

LEONORA

Oh? I hadn't noticed it.

[She moves towards the bedroom.]

FLORENCE

Is there anything else, miss?

LEONORA

What? Oh, no thank you.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

[Starts to leave.]

LEONORA

(as she goes)

Oh, get me Mrs. Sinclair on the telephone. *(Calling after her.)* Sloane 2484.

[She goes into the bedroom.]

FLORENCE

(dials a number)

Hullo? Is that Sloane 2484? Is Mrs. Sinclair in? Oh . . . Miss Perrycoste would like to speak to you, madam. *(Puts down receiver, and goes to bedroom door.)*

Mrs. Sinclair, miss.

[LEONORA returns in underclothes, cold-creaming her face. She goes to telephone. FLORENCE goes out Left.]

LEONORA

Hello? Is that Catherine? . . . Leonora. Yes. How are you? . . . I know. We didn't get a chance to talk. I didn't see you when I left. Look here. We haven't seen each other for ages. Why don't you come in and have a cocktail to-morrow? Yes. They're away. Bring anyone you like with you. Why don't you bring that American man you had with you this afternoon? What was his name? Houston. *(Front door bell rings off stage.)* . . . Oh, I don't know. I thought he seemed rather nice. Don't bother if you don't want to. I just thought if he was on your hands. What are you laughing at? . . . No, what is it? . . . Oh, all right. See you to-morrow, then. Good-bye. *(She puts down the receiver and starts going towards her bedroom. Re-enter FLORENCE with a card on a salver, which she presents to LEONORA.)* Someone for me, Florence? *(She takes the card. Her*

mouth opens in surprise.) Is he here?

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. I told him you were dressing to go out.

LEONORA

Oh. What's the time?

FLORENCE

Just on half-past seven, miss.

LEONORA

(after a moment's pause)

All right. Show him in, and bring in the cocktail things, will you?

[She starts towards the bedroom.]

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. Excuse me, miss, but if you've got to be at Earl's Court by eight . . .

LEONORA

(calling after her)

Yes, Florence. Show him in.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

[FLORENCE goes, and returns in a moment with DWIGHT HOUSTON, a dark, good-looking young American of about thirty-two. He wears a dinner-jacket with a double collar and a soft shirt. He looks around him.]

FLORENCE

I expect Miss Leonora will be back in a moment, sir. Won't you take a seat?

DWIGHT

Thank you.

[He stands by the chesterfield. FLORENCE goes out into the hall again. DWIGHT looks around him with interest, inspecting the room as though to gauge a personality. He walks about, looks out of the window. FLORENCE comes back from the hall with a tray on which are gin, two vermouths, cointreau, and a bottle of port, also a cocktail-shaker and two glasses. She puts them on the table above the chesterfield and goes out, stopping to give him a second look. He looks round; their eyes meet, and she goes.]

He looks at the tray, picks up the bottle of port, and inspects it with some surprise. LEONORA comes in from her bedroom wearing the gold evening dress. She stands for a moment looking at his back, then moves forward. He hears her; then he turns and sees her; and puts down the port.

DWIGHT

Oh. Hello.

LEONORA

Hello.

DWIGHT

You don't . . . mind my coming?

LEONORA

Did you expect me to?

DWIGHT

Well . . . I . . . I didn't know. You got my card?

LEONORA

(smiling)

Yes.

DWIGHT

You didn't think it . . . nerve?

LEONORA

No. As a matter of fact, I didn't. Do you think I ought to have?

DWIGHT

I was afraid you might.

LEONORA

Yes. Well . . . let's not go on talking like this, shall we? You were looking at the port?

DWIGHT

Yes. Is that an English custom? Port at cocktail time?

LEONORA

No. It's a habit of father's. Florence thinks all men are the same.

DWIGHT

Is your father here?

LEONORA

No. He's at Vichy.

DWIGHT

Because of the port?

LEONORA

Yes.

DWIGHT

Oh. (*He nods sagaciously.*) Have you ever put port in a cocktail?

LEONORA

No. Have you?

DWIGHT

Yes. It's filthy.

LEONORA

So I should think. How did you come to try?

DWIGHT

A game at a party. You make a cocktail out of ten different ingredients and make people guess what they are. You go on till they've all guessed . . . all the ingredients.

LEONORA

I must try that next time I give a sticky party. It certainly ought to help make it go.

DWIGHT

Yes.

[*Pause.*]

LEONORA

Well . . . shall we sit down or something? (*FLORENCE comes in with ice in a bowl, and places it on the tray.*) Won't you have a cigarette?

[*She offers him a box.*]

DWIGHT

Thanks. Won't you?

LEONORA

Thanks. (*She does. They light them.* LEONORA *is a little embarrassed.* FLORENCE *goes out.*) Let me make you a cocktail . . . without port.

DWIGHT

Can't I help?

LEONORA

It's all right. (*Goes above the chesterfield to the table and starts to make cocktail.*) How did you find me? How did you get my address?

DWIGHT

I called up our hostess and then Catherine. Asked where you lived.

LEONORA

(*stares at him for a minute*)

Oh! Did you? Oh! So then that was why . . .

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

Nothing.

[*She begins to giggle.*]

DWIGHT

What are you laughing at?

LEONORA

(*giggling*)

No, nothing, really.

DWIGHT

Tell me.

LEONORA

(*squeaking*)

No!

DWIGHT

Our hostess wouldn't tell me where you lived. I think she suspected my motives.

LEONORA

What did she say?

DWIGHT

Oh, she was very English and tactful. But she gave me to understand that white slavers were not encouraged. (LEONORA *laughs.*) She referred me to Catherine. After all, I'd never met her before. Catherine took me there. But I don't know whether that's a guarantee of respectability.

LEONORA

I don't know that it is.

DWIGHT

No.

LEONORA

No. (*They both laugh.*) She and Tom are a bit of a mess, aren't they? Father and mother don't approve of my knowing them. They asked mother to tea once, and when she went to wash her hands she found a cold kidney in the soap-dish, (DWIGHT *laughs.*) I tried to explain it was just Bohemianism, but it didn't go down at all well. How well do you know them?

DWIGHT

Not very.

LEONORA

Do you like that sort of thing?

DWIGHT

No. Frankly, I can't stand mess of any sort.

LEONORA

I think one ought to be tidy.

DWIGHT

That's always been my standard of respectability.

LEONORA

Oh, I like that. Are *you* respectable?

DWIGHT

I'm tidy.

LEONORA

I'm glad.

DWIGHT

Of course, we haven't been introduced.

LEONORA

I know. What do we do about it?

DWIGHT

Can't we tidy up and introduce ourselves? This is Dwight Houston. I'd like you to know him. We were at school together. I want you to be great friends.

LEONORA

How do you do? This is Leonora Perrycoste. I've known her for years.

DWIGHT

You two ought to have a lot in common.

LEONORA

(with social politeness)

Oh, yes?

DWIGHT

Well, now, I think I'll leave you together. Will that do?

LEONORA

I should think so.

[They shake hands, and she returns to the cocktails.]

DWIGHT

What happened to you? I looked for you everywhere when Catherine dragged me away. Where were you?

LEONORA

I don't know. I suppose in the other room.

DWIGHT

I looked in the other room. Every other room.

LEONORA

Well, then . . . Oh, I know. It must have been when I was in the pantry, helping to wash the glasses.

DWIGHT

I never thought of looking in the pantry. When I came back, you'd gone.

LEONORA

Came back?

DWIGHT

Yes. For my cigarette-holder.

LEONORA

Oh? Did you leave it there?

DWIGHT

I don't use one. Then when I got home I called up and asked for your address.

LEONORA

On what pretext? That I might have walked off with the cigarette-holder you haven't got?

DWIGHT

No, I just told the truth.

LEONORA

Which was?

DWIGHT

That I wanted to see you again.

LEONORA

How very nice of you.

DWIGHT

Charmed, I'm sure.

LEONORA

Here!

[Pours out cocktails.]

DWIGHT

Thanks. *(He holds up his glass for a toast.)* Well . . . where your treasure is . . .

LEONORA

Skoal.

DWIGHT

(surprised)

How do you know that?

LEONORA

I saw *Anna Christie*. Besides, I've met other Americans.

DWIGHT

Well . . . (*He lifts his glass, and she hers, and they drink.*) I was hoping perhaps you could dine with me.

LEONORA

I'm dining out.

DWIGHT

So your maid said.

LEONORA

I'm sorry.

DWIGHT

I'm dining out, too. Of course, I could duck it. (*She does not reply.*) Could you duck yours?

LEONORA

I'm afraid not.

DWIGHT

Are you sure?

LEONORA

Um.

DWIGHT

I'm sorry.

LEONORA

What's the time?

DWIGHT

Twenty of eight.

LEONORA

I shall have to go.

DWIGHT

Oh, but I've only just come.

LEONORA

I'm sorry.

DWIGHT

Are you intimating that . . . my attentions are unwelcome?

LEONORA

No. Of course not.

DWIGHT

What time is your dinner?

LEONORA

Eight.

DWIGHT

Where?

LEONORA

Miles away.

DWIGHT

May I drive you there?

LEONORA

Have you a car?

DWIGHT

In a garage in New York. But we'll get a taxi . . . tell it to go round by Windsor. . . . They tell me the castle looks lovely at sunset. I wish you weren't going out. (*No reply.*) Be late, anyway.

LEONORA

I can't.

DWIGHT

Just a little late. Just enough to be distinguished. To show you don't give a damn. Please. After all, think of the trouble I've gone to, finding you. I nearly got myself arrested. Don't walk out on me just yet. Please! Look here, will you give me five minutes . . . just to try and make you want to see me again? Then, if I fail—well, I'll go quietly.

LEONORA

And if you succeed?

DWIGHT

Then I'll come back, if you'll let me. You're not dining with that man who was at

the party?

LEONORA

What man?

DWIGHT

The one who dragged you away from me. I didn't know how strong the primitive instincts in me still were until that happened. I wanted to brandish a club or something. You're not engaged to him, are you?

LEONORA

Good Lord, no!

DWIGHT

Thank God. You're not . . . married . . . or engaged . . . or anything, are you?

LEONORA

I don't know what you mean by "or anything."

DWIGHT

But you're not?

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

I suppose, if I were English, this would be class suicide on my part. I sat wrestling with myself as I put the studs into my shirt, wondering whether I oughtn't to get myself presented through seven duchesses and an archbishop, or whatever your English customs are. We used to have a book on etiquette back home, written by "A Lady of Title"—that's what he called himself—and I remember thinking that social intercourse in England must be something like Masonic ritual. I used to wonder how a man and woman in England ever contrived to get married and have children. I felt it would be so embarrassing for the chaperon, to say nothing of the parties concerned.

LEONORA

It's too bad, the way all the quaint old customs are dying out. It's awfully hard to find a really authentic bit of English etiquette anywhere now.

DWIGHT

I expect the Americans buy it all up. But honestly, I was scared stiff I'd be thrown down the elevator shaft with the door slammed in my face. Do you realise

I risked worse than death for you?

LEONORA

Permanent disfigurement?

DWIGHT

Social ostracism! Anyway, I risked it. I got your address from Catherine, and when I came out of my hotel I just kind of mechanically gave it to the taxi-driver. *I didn't know it was just across the road. (Holds out his glass.)* May I have another?

LEONORA

Help yourself.

[He does so. She goes over and rings the bell.]

DWIGHT

Is that to have me shown out?

LEONORA

(with a laugh)

No. Give me some more.

[She holds out her glass. He fills it.]

DWIGHT

I think you're swell.

LEONORA

Don't mention it.

DWIGHT

And you make good cocktails.

LEONORA

I try to please.

[Enter FLORENCE.]

FLORENCE

You rang, miss?

LEONORA

Yes. Will you telephone Mrs. Wavertree and say I've been delayed? Say I'll be a little late. I'll get there when I can.

FLORENCE

(with a disapproving eye on DWIGHT)

Yes, miss. What reason shall I give?

LEONORA

Don't give any reason. Just say I've been delayed.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

[Goes out.]

DWIGHT

(with enormous sincerity and simplicity)

That's grand of you.

LEONORA

(is a shade embarrassed. A silence)

Do you know London well?

DWIGHT

No. Very slightly. Less than almost anywhere else, as a matter of fact.

[Pause.]

LEONORA

Oh. Does that mean . . . less than almost anywhere else that you've been to, or just less than almost anywhere else?

DWIGHT

Well, it's the same thing, really.

LEONORA

Oh, well, that's what I meant. I mean, I meant, was it?

DWIGHT

(politely)

Was it what?

LEONORA

Was it the same thing?

DWIGHT

Look here, don't you think that perhaps we had better go back and begin this all

over again?

LEONORA

All right. You said you knew London less than almost anywhere else, and I said did that mean . . .

DWIGHT

(interrupting)

Do you mean have I travelled a lot?

LEONORA

Well, yes. I suppose that's what I did mean.

DWIGHT

Yes, a lot.

LEONORA

Where?

DWIGHT

Almost everywhere.

LEONORA

Except England?

DWIGHT

No. Except London. I once tramped all the way from Glasgow to Southampton, but I missed London.

LEONORA

Why?

DWIGHT

The lifts I got weren't going that way.

LEONORA

Lifts? You mean you were really tramping? Jack London and that sort of thing?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

(eagerly)

Do tell me.

DWIGHT

There's nothing to tell, really. Just that. It was about twelve years ago.

LEONORA

Where else have you been?

DWIGHT

I've bummed my way most places.

LEONORA

Meaning?

DWIGHT

Oh! These barriers of language! *Worked* my way . . . *begged* my way . . .

LEONORA

Of course, *I've* been to the Lido. No, but really. Do go on. This is thrilling.

DWIGHT

Not a bit, I assure you.

LEONORA

Yes, honestly. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that just now about the Lido. I wasn't being flippant . . . at least, I was. But it was just to cover an awful sense of . . . well, sort of inferiority that swept over me.

DWIGHT

Why?

LEONORA

Oh, I don't know. I always feel like that about people who've done things, really been to real places.

DWIGHT

Real places?

LEONORA

Yes. It makes me feel so ashamed of my bed and bath. I give up bath salts for a week every time I read a book of travel. No, but don't you know what I mean? It makes me feel that I've been bred too soft. You don't look like a hobo.

DWIGHT

What do you want? Four days' stubble on my chin? Khaki shirt and running-pants?

LEONORA

No, but . . .

[*She stops, looking at him.*

DWIGHT

What are you looking at?

LEONORA

Your nails and your teeth. They're too good.

[DWIGHT *laughs.*

DWIGHT

A good American makes a point of his teeth in the jungle, just as a good Englishman does of his dinner-jacket.

LEONORA

Self-respect in the outposts.

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

I've never believed it, really. Yet I know father would. Not that I can picture father in the jungle, somehow. Where have you been, actually?

DWIGHT

All over. The Orient—South Seas . . .

LEONORA

Have you? Tell me, is it all it's supposed to be?

DWIGHT

Pretty well. Both ways.

LEONORA

I wish you'd tell me about it.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

Oh! Hundreds of things. I want to be Desdemona and sit with my mouth open.

DWIGHT

Did she?

LEONORA

(recovering herself)

Always. Haven't you seen the illustrations?

DWIGHT

What do you want to know?

LEONORA

Oh, moonlight on the reefs, and cannibals, and the anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.

DWIGHT

That takes time.

LEONORA

I know. And I've got to go out.

DWIGHT

May I ask you something?

LEONORA

I should think so.

DWIGHT

Well . . .

LEONORA

What is it?

DWIGHT

If you weren't going out, would you dine with me?

LEONORA

(quite simply, after half a beat's hesitation)

Yes.

DWIGHT

I'm glad. Would you have . . . before?

LEONORA

Before what?

DWIGHT

Just . . . before. When I first came.

LEONORA

(after a thought)

No. I don't think I would.

DWIGHT

Why not?

LEONORA

I didn't know you.

DWIGHT

You don't know me now.

LEONORA

No. But I'd like to.

DWIGHT

Why? So that I can tell you stories? because I'm a . . . travelled man?

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

Why, then?

LEONORA

Oh, I don't know. I just would.

DWIGHT

Did you think I was being fresh? To come here after you?

LEONORA

A little.

DWIGHT

But you didn't mind?

LEONORA

It intrigued me. . . .

DWIGHT

But you wouldn't have dined with me.

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

Why not?

LEONORA

Well, in the first place I think I'd have felt you were taking too much for granted.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

That I would dine with you. Had you any doubts that I would?

DWIGHT

Plenty . . . and fears that you wouldn't.

LEONORA

If I'd said that I would right away, what would you have thought?

DWIGHT

I'd have thought, "What *is* England coming to?"

LEONORA

Why did you want me to?

DWIGHT

Because I liked you . . . so much . . . this afternoon.

LEONORA

And yet we said nothing.

DWIGHT

Does that matter, really? Have we said anything now?

LEONORA

No, I don't know that we have.

DWIGHT

And yet now I'll go away quite happy. When may I see you again?

LEONORA

When can you?

DWIGHT

Any time.

LEONORA

Are you here for long?

DWIGHT

About three weeks, I think. There's a chance of my being called back sooner.

LEONORA

Are you . . . what was it you called it . . . bumming . . . now?

DWIGHT

No. I'm here on business. I'm living at the Ritz.

LEONORA

(surprised)

Are you in business?

DWIGHT

(vaguely)

I'm an architect. I'm over here looking at buildings.

LEONORA

I see. We've got plenty. Have you seen Liberty's?

DWIGHT

My God, yes!

LEONORA

Well . . . then you know the worst. But if you're an architect . . . do architects bum?

DWIGHT

No. I've become respectable the last seven years.

LEONORA

Do you like that . . . after the other thing?

DWIGHT

I'm very fond of my comforts.

LEONORA

Did you get tired?

DWIGHT

No. My father died, and I had to.

LEONORA

I see. Did you hate it?

DWIGHT

I'm a curious person. I don't think I hate anything. If you've a job to do . . .

LEONORA

(forcefully)

Yes!

DWIGHT

Why do you say it like that?

LEONORA

That's just it. I've no job to do and I hate . . . almost everything.

DWIGHT

What's the trouble?

LEONORA

Just that. I'm bored, and I hate myself for being bored. No one's got a right to be. Wasting my time . . .

DWIGHT

What do you want to do with it?

LEONORA

Anything worth while.

DWIGHT

And what do you think is?

LEONORA

That's what I most want to find out. Certainly not the old-fashioned idea of hanging round waiting for matrimony, playing a sort of mental "‘Tisn't you—'t isn't you," with every man I meet.

DWIGHT

Well, why not do something until it happens?

LEONORA

If I only knew what. Welfare work? Bookbindings? Learning X-rays?

DWIGHT

No.

LEONORA

Well, suggest something, and then I shall know why heaven sent you into my life.

DWIGHT

I'm afraid I can't . . . off-hand.

LEONORA

Exactly. So I go on . . . wasting my time . . . being . . . untidy. Going to parties, like this afternoon's, knowing silly, raffish people like Tom and Catherine, in the hope of finding some excitement that I know I'd be too timid to take hold of if it offered.

DWIGHT

Why are you talking like this?

LEONORA

I don't know. I don't care for myself much, sometimes.

[DWIGHT *observes her closely for a moment, her back turned to him.*

DWIGHT

(lightly)

That's too bad! *(She still keeps her back turned.)* Come on. Snap out of it. *(She turns to him.)* Leonora . . . by the way, do you mind if I *don't* call you Leonora? It's my sister-in-law's name, and I can't bear her.

[LEONORA *smiles.*

LEONORA

What would you like to call me?

DWIGHT

(looking at her for a moment)

Steve.

LEONORA

Steve?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

Why?

DWIGHT

I don't know. I'd like to.

LEONORA

Of course, if you feel like that about it . . .

DWIGHT

Steve.

[He holds out his hand. She takes it with her left one.]

LEONORA

What is it?

DWIGHT

I like you, Steve.

LEONORA

I think I like *you*.

DWIGHT

Good.

[Enter FLORENCE.]

FLORENCE

Excuse me, miss, but it's ten past eight.

LEONORA

Oh! *(She stares at FLORENCE for a minute.)* Oh, thank you, Florence. *(She looks back at DWIGHT, who is sitting with his eyes fixed on her. They hold each other's gaze for a moment, quite steadily. FLORENCE looks at them and then turns to go.)* Oh, Florence?

FLORENCE

(returning)

Yes, miss?

LEONORA

(with her back to DWIGHT)

Ring up Mrs. Wavertree again, will you, and say—*(long pause)*—say I've been so delayed that I've got a headache.

FLORENCE

I beg your pardon, miss?

LEONORA

Say I can't get there.

FLORENCE

(doubtfully)

Very good, miss. Any reason this time?

LEONORA

Oh, say that . . . that . . . Oh, say I came over all queer. She'll believe it if you put it like that.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

[She goes out disapprovingly. There is quite a long silence.]

LEONORA

I did, you know.

DWIGHT

May I say . . . thank you?

LEONORA

I don't know why not.

DWIGHT

You *will* dine with me? (LEONORA *nods*.) Then thanks . . . a lot. Where would you like to go?

LEONORA

(vaguely)

Oh . . .

DWIGHT

Would you care to dance?

LEONORA

Let's just . . . find somewhere, and see. Shall we?

DWIGHT

Alright.

LEONORA

Another cocktail first? (*He holds out his glass. She fills them both with the dregs of the cocktail-shaker.*) Mostly ice-water, I'm afraid.

DWIGHT

My national drink . . . after Scotch. (*They drink.*) By the way, may I use your telephone, just to call up and break my date?

LEONORA

Oh, of course.

[*DWIGHT goes to the telephone, takes out a little book from his pocket, looks up a number, and dials it.*]

DWIGHT

I didn't know you had the dial-'phone in London.

LEONORA

It gets worse every day.

DWIGHT

Your maid looked a little disapproving, I thought.

LEONORA

She probably read your card.

DWIGHT

Why, I restrained myself specially on her account!

LEONORA

Florence was with us when I was born. She was very exercised about it.

DWIGHT

I don't blame her.

LEONORA

She's not used to this kind of thing.

DWIGHT

I'm glad. (*He answers the telephone.*) Hello? Is that . . . the number I dialled? Oh, is that you, Bobby? . . . Dwight here. Say, listen. I shan't be able to get along to-night. I've got held up. . . . Yeh. When I got back to my hotel someone was waiting for me. I shan't be through for a couple of hours at least, but I will if I can. . . . How's that? Catherine? Is she there? . . . All right. I'll hang on. (*He*

turns back to LEONORA.) Catherine wants to speak to me.

LEONORA

You'd better not tell her where you're speaking from.

DWIGHT

Not on your tin-type. . . . Hello, Catherine. . . . Yeh. What are you doing there? . . . What? . . . Yes, I got held up on business. . . . Yes, of course, after I called you. . . . What? I say, what are you getting at? . . . No, of course I haven't. What chance have I had? . . . To-morrow, cocktail time? . . . Why, yes, I'd love to. . . . Oh, stop kidding. . . . Yeh. Too bad, isn't it? Well, good-bye. (*He puts down the receiver and turns with a broad grin to* LEONORA.) What do you think? She's asked me to come along and have a cocktail here to-morrow.

LEONORA

(*giggling*)

Oh? Well, will you?

DWIGHT

What do *you* think. I kind of think she's on to something.

LEONORA

Well . . . if you ring up and ask for my address . . .

DWIGHT

I kind of think there's something else.

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

I can't make out.

LEONORA

Well—er—never mind. Let's go, shall we? (*Enter* FLORENCE.) You gave that message, Florence?

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. Mrs. Wavertree says she's very sorry, and she'll ring up in the morning to find out how you are.

LEONORA

Is that all?

FLORENCE

Well, she did ask if you had a temperature, miss.

LEONORA

And what did you say?

FLORENCE

I said I didn't think you'd taken it.

LEONORA

(*to DWIGHT*)

I'll just get my coat. You needn't wait up for me, Florence.

[She goes into the bedroom. FLORENCE, with an offended, disapproving dignity, gathers up the cocktail glasses.]

DWIGHT

Oh, excuse me, but do you think you could get us a taxi?

FLORENCE

Very good, sir.

DWIGHT

(*as she is going*)

And if anyone telephones, Miss Perrycoste's temperature is just over a hundred.

FLORENCE

Is that all, sir?

DWIGHT

Well . . . say a hundred and one, if it's a near relative.

FLORENCE

I'll telephone for a taxi.

[She goes out. DWIGHT stands waiting a moment. LEONORA comes back, wearing her cloak and carrying her bag.]

DWIGHT

I'm afraid I've made an enemy of Florence. She'll probably shut the door in my face to-morrow.

LEONORA

I'll leave word you're to be admitted. Just mention my name. Shall we go?

[They go to the door and out, as the curtain falls to denote a time lapse of about five hours.]

ACT ONE

SCENE II

SCENE: *The same. About five hours later.*

When the curtain rises, the stage is in darkness. Then a light in the passage outside is switched on.

DWIGHT *and* LEONORA *appear. She is still wearing her cloak and he is in his evening clothes as before, having presumably left his hat in the hall. They come into the room. LEONORA switches on the light. On the table where the cocktails were is a bottle of lemon squash, a syphon, a glass, and some sandwiches.*

LEONORA

(as they come in)

Come in. Will you have a drink?

DWIGHT

Thanks.

LEONORA

Whiskey?

DWIGHT

(assenting)

You *said* a drink.

LEONORA

I'll get it. Florence only leaves lemon squash out for me.

DWIGHT

Don't nice girls drink whiskey in England?

LEONORA

Not a great deal, as a matter of fact.

[She goes into the hall. DWIGHT lights a cigarette and wanders about.]

DWIGHT

(going to the dining-room door)

Can I help?

LEONORA

(off)

It's all right.

[She returns, carrying a whiskey decanter and a tumbler. He takes them from her and puts them on the table.]

DWIGHT

Lemonade for you?

LEONORA

I think just plain soda. *(He pours it out for her. Looks around on the tray.)*
What are you looking for?

DWIGHT

I was forgetting this was England.

LEONORA

Ice?

DWIGHT

Um.

LEONORA

Oh!

DWIGHT

The English are so insular.

LEONORA

I know. It's what makes them what they are. I'll go to the Frigidaire, if you like, though I'm rather afraid of it.

DWIGHT

Don't bother.

[He pours out his drink.]

LEONORA

Sandwich?

[He refuses. They sit down on the chesterfield and light cigarettes.]

LEONORA

What's the time?

DWIGHT

Quarter after.

LEONORA

One?

DWIGHT

Um. Do you want to go to bed?

LEONORA

Not yet.

DWIGHT

That was a corking idea of yours to go to the . . . what was the name of the place?

LEONORA

Holborn Empire. I've still got that beastly song in my head. (*She begins to sing quietly.*) "I'm alone because I love you."

DWIGHT

(*carrying on*)

"Love you with all my heart."

LEONORA

(*still singing*)

Tra-la-la-la-la . . . what are those words . . . "I had to be true . . ."

LEONORA, DWIGHT

"Sorry I can't say the same about you."

[*They both laugh.*]

LEONORA

I think it's the silliest song I ever heard.

DWIGHT

I'm inclined to agree with you.

LEONORA

(*goes on humming for a moment; then to herself forcibly, hitting herself*)

Oh, shut up, will you?

DWIGHT

Try something else to take the taste away.

LEONORA

I can't think of another song.

DWIGHT

Try one of that woman's . . . what was her name?

LEONORA

Lily Morris? I'm glad you've seen her.

DWIGHT

Did you say you had her on the Victrola? Can't we put her on?

LEONORA

I'm afraid we should wake Florence.

DWIGHT

Oh, dear!

LEONORA

(singing as before)

DWIGHT

She's grand. *(They both laugh and drink.)* It's been a grand evening.

LEONORA

I've enjoyed it.

DWIGHT

Funny. I nearly didn't go to that party this afternoon.

LEONORA

So did I . . . I mean, so didn't I.

DWIGHT

There you are, you see. It just goes to show.

LEONORA

That's what I always say.

DWIGHT

Do you know, you're the first English girl I've ever met that I really liked. The only one who's . . . got under my skin.

LEONORA

That does sound horrid for you. I've liked lots of Americans.

DWIGHT

We're a nice people, really.

LEONORA

I think so. (DWIGHT *looks round. Then rises.*) What are you looking for?

DWIGHT

Ash-tray.

[He finds one on the piano, looks at the piano and kneels on the piano-bench and begins with one finger to pick out the melody of "I'm alone because I love you," making a couple of mistakes in it and finally stumbling entirely.]

LEONORA

(rising and coming over to him)

Wait a minute. Let me.

[She sits down at the piano and begins to play it. They both sing it. As she finishes, DWIGHT is standing behind her, with one knee beside her on the piano-bench. He puts one arm round her neck, his hand resting on her shoulder, the other hand on hers, stooping with his head against hers. She remains still for a moment and then rises. He rises too, still holding her hand, and draws her gently in his arms and kisses her. Then she pats his cheek and disengages herself, crossing the room back to the mantel-piece. He stands looking at her.]

DWIGHT

And what does that mean?

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

The playful tap you gave me. (LEONORA *shrugs her shoulders.*) Angry with me?

LEONORA

Good Lord, no!

DWIGHT

I'm afraid of Englishwomen.

LEONORA

Oh, don't call me an Englishwoman. It sounds like . . . golf-clubs and fishing-tackle.

DWIGHT

There's nothing like that about you . . . Steve. (*He goes to her, takes her hands, and draws her to him again, this time in a proper embrace and a good deal more passionately.*) I've been wanting to do that all evening.

LEONORA

Have you?

DWIGHT

Terribly.

LEONORA

I think I've been . . . rather wanting you to.

DWIGHT

Well, then, we're both satisfied.

[He kisses her again, and then draws her down on to the sofa and into his arms, holding her to him. They remain like that a moment, his cheek against hers. Then she stirs.]

DWIGHT

What is it?

LEONORA

I was thinking that . . . if we're going on like this you'd better shut those doors. I shouldn't *really* like Florence to see.

DWIGHT

Is she in the least likely to?

LEONORA

No. I think she's in bed. But I'd feel better.

DWIGHT

O.K. (*He gets up and closes the doors, and then comes back to her, sits beside her again, and takes her in his arms again.*) Steve dear.

LEONORA

Speaking to me?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

Nothing. Just “Steve dear.” *(Pause.)* I’m very happy. *(Silence for a moment while she lies back in his arms. He strokes her hair and puts his face against it.)* I like your hair.

LEONORA

I take a lot of trouble with it.

DWIGHT

I like *you*.

LEONORA

So I gather.

DWIGHT

Oh, stop being funny, will you?

LEONORA

What do you want me to be? Tragic?

DWIGHT

No.

LEONORA

What then?

DWIGHT

Quiet.

LEONORA

Oh!

[They are silent again a moment.]

DWIGHT

Dear Steve! *(He begins to fondle her. She remains impassive.)* What’s on your mind?

LEONORA

Nothing. Why?

DWIGHT

You're worrying about something.

LEONORA

How do you know?

DWIGHT

I can feel you are.

LEONORA

I say!

DWIGHT

Aren't you?

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

Well, what is it then?

LEONORA

(restlessly)

I don't know. *(She disengages herself.)* Don't you think this is a little silly?

DWIGHT

Silly?

LEONORA

Um.

DWIGHT

No. Why?

LEONORA

(turning to him)

Look here, I'd like to be . . . awfully frank.

DWIGHT

(smiling)

Go on.

LEONORA

I'm not in the habit of doing this kind of thing . . . with strange men, and I'd rather

we didn't misunderstand each other.

DWIGHT

Well?

LEONORA

I don't know what . . . you're imagining, but . . . I'm sorry . . . it's no good.

DWIGHT

I see.

LEONORA

I'm sorry.

DWIGHT

What made you think I was imagining?

LEONORA

Aren't all men always? Or is that very cynical of me?

DWIGHT

No. It's perfectly true.

LEONORA

You *were* imagining?

DWIGHT

I was "wondering."

LEONORA

I know. That's why I had to tell you.

DWIGHT

That was nice of you too.

LEONORA

I'm sorry.

DWIGHT

That's all right.

LEONORA

It's not because I don't like you.

DWIGHT

(*smiling*)

No?

LEONORA

It's just that . . . I'm not made that way. I don't think it's anything to be proud of. I'm not conceited about it. It just happens . . . to be like that.

DWIGHT

Why are you telling me all this?

LEONORA

Because I like you. And I want to be fair to you. Or do I mean to myself? I don't want you to think . . .

DWIGHT

(smiling)

I don't.

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

That you were leading me on. That's what you meant, wasn't it?

LEONORA

Yes, I suppose so. I do like you, and *(holding out her hand)* I would if I could . . . really.

DWIGHT

You're a darling.

[He takes her in his arms and kisses her.]

LEONORA

No, please don't.

DWIGHT

Why? Why not? If I no longer "imagine"? . . .

LEONORA

I'm afraid I like it too much.

DWIGHT

Oh, I see.

LEONORA

So . . .

[*She makes a gesture, goes over and sits below the piano.* DWIGHT *takes a cigarette, wanders round for a moment, then leans against the side of the chesterfield.*

DWIGHT

Well?

LEONORA

Well?

DWIGHT

What do we talk about?

LEONORA

I don't know.

DWIGHT

No. It's a little difficult, isn't it? (*Pause.*) Shall I go?

LEONORA

I don't want you to.

DWIGHT

I assure you, I don't want to. Still, it's rather difficult like this.

LEONORA

I know.

DWIGHT

I think . . . I'm a little in love with you, Steve.

LEONORA

Because I . . . repulsed you?

DWIGHT

(*protestingly, laughingly*)

No.

LEONORA

It does work that way sometimes, I've heard.

DWIGHT

Yes. It's the principle on which our mothers were brought up.

LEONORA

I'm sure my grandmother never told my mother such a thing.

DWIGHT

No. But it was the underlying theory.

LEONORA

There's a lot to be said for the Victorians.

DWIGHT

Must I keep my distance like this?

*[She looks at him, then slowly shakes her head, smiling a little ruefully.
He comes to her.]*

DWIGHT

My dear.

[He kisses her.]

LEONORA

(rather breathless with it, protesting)

Oh, no . . .

DWIGHT

You're so adorable. *(Very softly, bending over her.)* I love you, Steve.

LEONORA

(looking up at him, in a breath)

I love you too.

[They kiss again. He sits down beside her, a little spent by the force of their kiss.]

LEONORA

(recovering herself)

This is ridiculous.

DWIGHT

Why?

LEONORA

We've known each other . . . what is it . . . five hours?

DWIGHT

That's long enough, surely?

LEONORA

To be in love?

DWIGHT

I fell for you the minute I saw you. I was watching you from across the room long before I came and talked to you. Didn't you know?

LEONORA

I knew I wanted you to come and talk to me.

DWIGHT

Well, then . . .

LEONORA

Yes, but . . . that's not quite the same thing, is it?

DWIGHT

Why else do you think I came round here? (*Laughing.*) Because I . . . "imagined" . . . to use your phrase?

LEONORA

Perhaps.

DWIGHT

No. I was too caught up even to think whether I "imagined" or not. It never entered my head, really, until ten minutes ago on the davenport.

LEONORA

Do you mean that?

DWIGHT

Um.

LEONORA

I don't see why I should take it as such a compliment, but I do.

DWIGHT

Darling! What do we do now? I feel we should rush out and do something violent: knock down a cop or something. It's grand, isn't it?

LEONORA

It is, rather.

DWIGHT

(unseriously)

Like spring!

[They grip each other's hands hard, and look at each other.]

LEONORA

(with pent-up exhilaration)

Ow!

DWIGHT

Yes, I feel a bit light-hearted myself. We'll see each other lots?

LEONORA

Lots. Three weeks, you said?

DWIGHT

(nods sadly)

Let's not talk about that.

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

Mind over matter. We'll have fun, the way we had this evening. What shall we do to-morrow? Let's go into the country, can we, for the day?

LEONORA

I thought you were here on business. Haven't you . . . appointments?

DWIGHT

I ought to see a man Thursday, just for an hour, in the morning.

LEONORA

(ragging)

That's what it is! Business, business all the time. *(Back to natural.)* All right, then . . . we'll take my car, go down to Sussex, somewhere on the Downs.

DWIGHT

I've heard of Sussex.

LEONORA

I should think so.

DWIGHT

Isn't it overrun with novelists?

LEONORA

We can dodge them.

DWIGHT

I had an idea it was in Scotland.

LEONORA

Really?

DWIGHT

Well, no, not really. That's just American humour.

LEONORA

Oh, like the difference between *Punch* and *Life*?

DWIGHT

Yes, but . . . let's not start that old argument.

LEONORA

I wasn't going to.

DWIGHT

Weren't you? "I never *can* see the humour in your American comic papers."
Couldn't I hear that coming?

LEONORA

We shall quarrel in a minute.

DWIGHT

Yes. We were talking about Sussex. Hasn't it got a dialect? That's where they say "dumble-down," isn't it?

LEONORA

No. That's Somerset.

DWIGHT

Oh, these suburbs!

LEONORA

How do you know about "dumble-down"?

DWIGHT

(*laconically*)

Bee Lillie. Shall we drink ale? You don't know how disappointed I was the first time I came over and found that ale in England was the same as beer . . . I'd always pictured ale as something terribly special, like sack or mead.

LEONORA

I know. Or possets.

DWIGHT

Uh? What are possets?

LEONORA

Well, I don't really know. A sort of night-cap, I think.

DWIGHT

(*savouring the word*)

Possets! It sounds silly, doesn't it? I'll tell you what! Let's not have them!

LEONORA

Let's not! I know a little inn where we'll lunch, with a stream and a garden.

DWIGHT

"Our England *is* a garden."

LEONORA

And "a garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!"

DWIGHT

God . . . what?

LEONORA

Wot!

DWIGHT

What's *wot*?

LEONORA

Past tense of . . . what is it? . . . wit.

DWIGHT

Conjugate!

LEONORA

Oh, I can't! I wit, thou wist, he wot. No, I can't.

DWIGHT

Well, Sussex, to-morrow.

LEONORA

If it's fine.

DWIGHT

It will be. Let's not come back till late. Quite late. Shall we hear a curlew? Or a night-jar?

LEONORA

I'll see what I can do.

DWIGHT

By the way, aren't you forgetting something?

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

You've got a date with me already?

LEONORA

I have? Oh! Tom and Catherine. Cocktails. Good Lord, yes! Oh, but we can't . . . now . . . meet like that . . . as though . . . as though . . .

DWIGHT

As though this hadn't happened? Why not? Couldn't you carry it off? I should enjoy not batting an eyelid. Shall we?

LEONORA

No. I'll ring up Catherine; get out of it somehow.

DWIGHT

And she was trying to be so kind, bringing me along because I'd asked for your address.

LEONORA

(dryly)

Yes. No, let's go into the country.

DWIGHT

I'll call for you . . . how early?

LEONORA

About ten?

DWIGHT

Well, I'm a lazy riser, but I'll make an exception. Ought I to go now?

LEONORA

I think you ought.

DWIGHT

I never shall if you don't turn me out.

LEONORA

I think you'd better.

DWIGHT

All right. *(They rise, and come into each other's arms again.)* Funny Steve.

LEONORA

Oh, but this is absurd of us. I don't know you. I don't know the first thing about you. And here we are, behaving as though . . . we *can't* be in love with each other.

DWIGHT

Well, don't let's bother too much about it, shall we? We seem to like each other, anyway. Besides, there's always Juliet.

LEONORA

Juliet?

DWIGHT

She and Romeo did it in five speeches.

LEONORA

I always said that was an improbable play!

DWIGHT

(quoting)

"If I profane with my unworthing hand . . ." How does it go on?

LEONORA

I don't know. We've got it somewhere.

[She goes over to the bookshelf. He follows her. She runs her hand along a line of Shakespeare in the Temple edition.]

DWIGHT

Here!

[He takes it down.

LEONORA

I'll find it.

DWIGHT

It's all right. *(He hunts for the quotation.)* Here! *(Reading):*

Fresh, I call it!

LEONORA

(reading):

DWIGHT

There you are!

LEONORA

Well, we're hardly Romeo and Juliet, are we? Still, it's nice to think we've got a precedent, sort of!

DWIGHT

We've got a million.

LEONORA

I suppose we have. I've never believed in it until now.

DWIGHT

We live and learn. Good night, hideous! *(He puts his hands on her shoulders. Quotes again.)* "Sweet, good night. This bud of love by summer's ripening breath . . ."

[She lays her hand across his mouth.

LEONORA

Ssh!

DWIGHT

Why?

LEONORA

I don't want to take it like that.

DWIGHT

How then? Like our song? (*He begins to sing.*) “I’m alone because I love you . . .”?

LEONORA

(*joining him*)

“Love you with all my heart.”

[They go to the door, still singing. Then as he opens it, they check themselves, for fear of waking FLORENCE, and tiptoe out, fingers to lips, disappearing along the passage. Their voices can be heard.]

DWIGHT

(*off*)

Good night.

LEONORA

(*off*)

Good night.

DWIGHT

(*off*)

Ten o’clock?

LEONORA

(*off*)

I’ll have the car ready.

DWIGHT

(*off*)

Good night . . . Steve.

[There is the sound of the front door shutting quietly. Presently, LEONORA comes back into the room, switching out the lights outside as she does so. She is rubbing her cheek against her hand meditatively. She looks round the room, sighs a little, picks up the Shakespeare, opens it, looks at it in silence for a moment, turns a page, reads.]

LEONORA

(*reading*)

[She shrugs her shoulders to herself, then takes the book, goes over and replaces it on the shelf, picks up her coat and begins to switch out the

lights, singing quietly as she does so:

[She goes into the bedroom, leaving the door open, so that the shaft of light from the inner room slightly illuminates the stage. She continues singing. The curtain begins to descend.

THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

SCENE: *Is the same, about ten o'clock the next evening.*

When the curtain rises, FLORENCE is setting the tray of drinks on the small table while the clock strikes ten. She looks up at it, then she goes through into LEONORA'S bedroom. The telephone rings.

FLORENCE *comes back and answers it.*

FLORENCE

Hullo? . . . Yes, madam. . . . No, madam, she isn't. . . . I don't know, I'm sure, madam. . . . One moment, madam. I think that is her now. I'll just go and see. (*She puts down the telephone. Enter LEONORA and DWIGHT. They are in country clothes.*) Mrs. Wavertree on the 'phone, miss. She's rung up several times.

LEONORA

Oh. What for?

FLORENCE

To know how you were, miss, (*LEONORA puts her hand over her mouth.*) The first time was just after you'd gone out. I had to tell her, miss. And then she rang up again this afternoon.

LEONORA

Oh, Lord!

FLORENCE

(*reprovingly*)
Yes, miss.

LEONORA

Well, I'd better speak, I suppose. Oh, dear! What shall I say? What shall I say, Florence?

FLORENCE

I don't know, I'm sure, miss.

LEONORA

What did you tell her this morning?

FLORENCE

I just said you'd gone out, miss. I didn't say for the day . . . I lied, miss. I said I

didn't know.

LEONORA

Oh, Florence!

FLORENCE

Yes, miss.

LEONORA

Oh, well, here goes! (*To DWIGHT.*) Help yourself to drinks. (*FLORENCE goes back into the bedroom. LEONORA takes up the telephone.*) Hello? Aunt Emily? . . . Yes. Oh, I'm better, auntie. . . . I really don't know. Just an . . . an attack. It was most peculiar. . . . I don't know. Giddiness. . . . I felt sort of . . . lightheaded. Yes, I expect so. . . . I know . . . I'm sorry. . . . Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, I *am* sorry. . . . Yes, I know. . . . I know. . . . I know. Oh, auntie, I am sorry. (*She giggles.*) No, I'm not laughing. Really I'm not. . . . Yes, I know. I meant to ring up. Only . . . Oh, I've just been . . . out. I've been in the country. I thought it might do me good. It was looking lovely. . . . Yes, Florence told me. It was sweet of you. I do appreciate it, really I do. Oh, I'm sorry. . . . Oh, did you? . . . Yes, so did I. Father seems a lot better, and a lot thinner, mother says. . . . Oh, good. I'll probably write to-morrow. Well, good-bye, auntie. . . . Yes, of course. Well . . . soon. Very soon. Good-bye. Give my love to uncle. (*She rings off.*) Oof!

[*Flops on to chaise-longue.*]

DWIGHT

Was she very sore?

LEONORA

Well, just a bit. I forgot all about her.

DWIGHT

Send her some flowers.

LEONORA

It'll take more than flowers. Weeks of atonement. Thank God, father can't stand her. She's his sister. He'll be on my side. (*She leans back.*) Oh, dear! I'm tired.

[*She yawns, pulls off her hat, and drops it on the floor.*]

DWIGHT

It's the fresh air. (*Yawns himself.*) The wind on the heath, brother.

LEONORA

It was good, though.

DWIGHT

All except dinner.

LEONORA

I know. That *was* foul. I'm sorry.

DWIGHT

What did you call that stuff they gave us for dessert? Mould?

LEONORA

Shape.

DWIGHT

Shape! Well, that's about all it had. And I always thought English inns were so grand. Another illusion shattered, I wish poets weren't such liars. I will say the country was good, though. The trees . . . and those cottage gardens, coming home.

LEONORA

Do villages like that make you want to renounce the world? They do me.

DWIGHT

You're impressionable, aren't you? The South Seas . . . country villages . . . the least thing will set you off. You ought to cure yourself of this habit of wanting to renounce the world. You'd be miserable in a nunnery, you know.

LEONORA

I suppose I should. But it's fun . . . dramatising oneself. I don't believe there's a single dramatic situation I haven't pictured myself in. I can be happy for hours imagining myself dying of a broken heart, or being ruined—financially—and having to face life in the raw. I'm always so beautifully brave.

DWIGHT

You've obviously had a very happy life.

LEONORA

I suppose so. Sheltered, anyway. I've never really . . . known trouble, as the saying is. I've had my tonsils out, but that wasn't really serious.

DWIGHT

(*thoughtfully*)

No.

LEONORA

What's the matter?

DWIGHT

Nothing. Why?

LEONORA

You went all . . . wistful. Have I trod on a secret sorrow or something? Did you love your tonsils? (*He laughs.*) What is it? Tell me. You've done that before today.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

Gone serious on me. This afternoon on the Downs you suddenly behaved as if there was a sunset. What's the matter? (*Unseriously.*) Are you . . . keeping something from me? Have you been to prison or something?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

(*taken aback*)

Really?

DWIGHT

Really and truly.

LEONORA

What for?

DWIGHT

Trying to photograph a Buddha's behind, in Burma!

LEONORA

(*relieved*)

Oh. Is that all? You frightened me.

DWIGHT

You wouldn't have liked it if I really had turned out to be a crook?

LEONORA

No. You're not, are you?

DWIGHT

I'm not.

LEONORA

That's all right, then.

DWIGHT

(taking her face in his hands)

You know, you've got a funny face, really, when you come to look at it.

LEONORA

So have you. Your mouth's crooked. I like your ears, though. I hate ears that stick out.

DWIGHT

(patting his ears)

I keep them pressed. *(He goes back for his glass.)* Want a drink?

LEONORA

No, but I'd like some air. Draw back the curtains and open the window, will you? There's a dear.

[She smiles at him. He crosses, rumpling her hair as he passes her, and then goes to window, draws curtains, and opens the window. Stands looking out. There is silence a moment.]

LEONORA

What are you looking at?

DWIGHT

Just . . . the world outside. *(Turning back to her, in an affected, theatrical, sentimental sort of voice.)* The world that you will never see, poor little Emily, on your bed of sickness.

LEONORA

(becoming the stage invalid child)

Is it very beautiful? Tell me about the world outside, daddy.

DWIGHT

(at window)

There's snow as far as you can see, Emily. The robins have eaten all the crumbs we put out for them. (*Sitting beside her on the chaise-longue and speaking with strong emotion.*) Poor little girl. You'll never be able to run and skip and throw snowballs like the other children.

LEONORA

Don't cry, daddee. Don't cry. See! *I am smiling!* You must smile too.

DWIGHT

Would you like me to lift you up and give you a peep at the world that you will never see?

LEONORA

Yes! Please, please, please, daddee!

DWIGHT

(*putting an arm round her and raising her very gently*)

Careful now. (*She begins to cough feebly and tubercularly.*) Shut up, you sap! It's not your lungs; it's your legs!

LEONORA

(*changing her tactics*)

Oh, my back, my back! Oh, but the world is lovelee, lovelee! (*She closes her eyes and half swoons in his arms. Faintly.*) Lovelee!

[*She performs a stage death, and he lays her down gently.*]

DWIGHT

(*after looking at her*)

Dead! Dead! And never called me mother!

LEONORA

(*sitting up instantly*)

DWIGHT

(*bleats*)

Baah!

[*She laughs.*]

LEONORA

Idiot! Oh, idiot!

DWIGHT

You know, Steve, the reason I love you is that you're such a god-damned fool.

LEONORA

(becoming conscious of the open bedroom door)

Ssh!

DWIGHT

(getting her alarm)

Oh! *(Tiptoes over to the bedroom door theatrically, and peeps in and assures himself that FLORENCE has gone. Then, into the bedroom.)* Booh!

LEONORA

Oh, Steve! You lunatic!

DWIGHT

What did you call me?

LEONORA

(catching herself)

Oh . . . ! I called you Steve. It's funny . . . I don't know why, but I've been thinking of you as Steve ever since yesterday.

DWIGHT

All right. Let's both be Steve.

[He comes back to her.

LEONORA

(holding out her hand)

Steve.

DWIGHT

(taking it)

Steve.

[He sits down on the edge of the chaise-longue and kisses her.

LEONORA

Oh, dear! This can't last.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

Things being fun like this. You're a darling fool, Steve. (*Then, with a complete change of tone.*) I say, are you hungry?

DWIGHT

I could toy with some food.

LEONORA

(forcibly)

So could I! I could do more than toy!

DWIGHT

What do you say we go out somewhere? Have a tub and change and go to supper? Or will you fall apart?

LEONORA

A tub makes a new woman of me.

DWIGHT

Well, then, I'll dash over to the Ritz and be back for you in half an hour. How's that?

LEONORA

(getting up)

Fine! It's been a good day.

DWIGHT

It's been a grand day.

LEONORA

Three weeks! Twenty-one days! Oh, Steve! You are fun!

DWIGHT

(looking at her)

It's not true! That's all! It's just not true! (*He kisses her.*) Well, see you some more, real soon.

[He kisses his hand to her and goes. LEONORA rings the bell, picks up her hat. She whirls around deliriously. Enter FLORENCE, carrying some letters.]

FLORENCE

You rang, miss?

LEONORA

(*very gay*)

Yes. I'm going out. (*Hugs her.*) Oh, Florence, I feel so silly! Would you turn on my bath and put out the . . . what shall I wear . . . what do I look nicest in, Florence?

FLORENCE

Well, miss, there's your new white. You always look your best in something simple, I think.

LEONORA

All right, Florence, I'll be simple!

FLORENCE

Very good, miss. Your letters, miss. (*Gives her them.*) Oh, and miss!

LEONORA

Yes?

FLORENCE

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair called this afternoon. Mrs. Sinclair said you had invited her.

LEONORA

Oh, dear! Yes, I had! I meant to put them off. Did they say anything else?

FLORENCE

No, miss.

LEONORA

Were they very cross?

FLORENCE

No, miss. I told them you had gone into the country for the day. They seemed more amused like. Mrs. Sinclair said I was just to tell you that she had called and that she'd tried to get hold of the American gentleman, but that he was away for the day.

LEONORA

(*grinning a little*)

Oh, yes. Did she ask you any questions?

FLORENCE

Well, yes, miss. She did, in a manner of speaking.

LEONORA

What?

FLORENCE

Well, she seemed a bit inquisitive, miss, if I may say so.

LEONORA

Oh!

FLORENCE

As if . . . well, as if she was trying to pump me, like.

LEONORA

What did you tell her?

FLORENCE

Nothing, miss. She didn't get any change out of me.

LEONORA

My trusty Florence.

FLORENCE

Oh, she did say, miss, that next time Mr. Houston called I was to tell him Mrs. Enfielden had his cigarette-holder.

LEONORA

(with a smile)

And you said?

FLORENCE

I said I'd tell him, miss. I'm afraid I forgot just now.

LEONORA

I see, Florence. Thank you. That's torn it quite beautifully.

FLORENCE

Beg your pardon, miss?

LEONORA

Not at all.

FLORENCE

Have I done wrong, miss?

LEONORA

(airily)

No! Oh, no! Just ruined my reputation. That's all.

FLORENCE

(begins repentantly)

Well, I'm sure I . . . *(Then gets truculent.)* Well, anyway, miss, how was I to know what you wanted Mrs. Sinclair to know or not? If there's anything you want to hide, you'd do much better to tell me, miss! *(LEONORA gasps and then giggles.)* After all, if I may say so, miss, I am responsible for you, like, to the master and mistress while they're away. But I'd never tell on you, miss—not unless I thought it was my duty. You know that.

LEONORA

(mock serious)

Florence, what *are* you talking about?

FLORENCE

(very hurt)

Nothing, miss. It doesn't matter.

LEONORA

Florence, do you think I'm doing wrong?

FLORENCE

I don't know, I'm sure, miss, *what* you're doing. It's no concern of mine.

LEONORA

(with stage intensity)

You see, Florence, there comes a time when all the ordinary routine of life seems suddenly so meaningless and futile; and then a door opens and everything is changed: you walk on champagne, you . . . have you any idea what I'm talking about?

FLORENCE

No, miss.

LEONORA

Perhaps it's just as well.

FLORENCE

Is there anything else, miss?

LEONORA

Florence, I am innocent!

FLORENCE

(sedately)

Yes, miss.

[She begins to go.

LEONORA

(turns back to her letter and then looks up)

Oh, Florence! Mother and father are staying on another week at Vichy. I expect it's the extra pound of flesh. *(No answer from FLORENCE. LEONORA looks airily at the ceiling.)* Personally, I think it's high time they came home.

[FLORENCE remains impassive.

FLORENCE

Is that all, miss?

LEONORA

Yes. And don't be angry with me, Florence. It's just my way.

FLORENCE

I'll go and turn on your bath, miss.

[She goes into LEONORA'S bedroom. LEONORA opens another letter, obviously an invitation, looks at it, "No, I will not!" The telephone rings. She answers it.

LEONORA

Hello? . . . Yes. Speaking. . . Oh, hello! Peter? Which Peter? . . . Oh, Walmsley! . . . Yes. Hello. . . What? . . . To-morrow evening? . . . I'm afraid I can't. Yes. So am I. . . No. I'm afraid I can't manage that, either. Well, I don't know, Peter. I'm rather busy these days, really. . . I don't know. I don't look like having much time free . . . well, for the next three weeks, really. I've . . . I've got some Americans to look after, and they take rather a lot of entertaining. *(She listens as though to a very long speech, grows bored with it, puts down the receiver, wanders across the room, fetching and lighting herself a cigarette, then returns and picks up the receiver again. PETER, at the other end, has apparently not noticed her absence.)* Oh, Peter, shut up. If you go on like that I won't come out with you . . . at all. Well, come in for a cocktail some time. . . Don't be silly. . . Yes. I am sorry. Good-bye, Peter.

[She rings off, collects her things, and goes into her bedroom, passing FLORENCE, who comes out as she goes in.]

FLORENCE

I put your things out, miss.

[FLORENCE goes over to the window, shuts it, draws the curtains, picks up the envelopes that LEONORA has dropped, takes DWIGHT'S dirty glass and goes to the door. The front door bell rings off. The stage is empty for a moment. Then FLORENCE returns with DWIGHT. He has not changed his clothes, but is dressed as before.]

DWIGHT

Tell her it's very important, will you? Tell her not to change.

FLORENCE

I'll see how far she's got, sir.

[She goes into the bedroom. As she goes, before the door shuts, DWIGHT calls.]

DWIGHT

Hello there, Steve!

LEONORA

(off)

Goodness! You've been quick.

[FLORENCE stands in the doorway between the two.]

DWIGHT

We're not going.

LEONORA

(off)

What? Why not?

DWIGHT

Come in here. I've something to tell you.

LEONORA

Just a minute. I'm not dressed.

DWIGHT

Well, slip on something.

[FLORENCE comes away from the door, potters around the room, shaking up cushions.]

LEONORA

(off)

What is it?

DWIGHT

Come in here and I'll tell you.

LEONORA

(off)

Shan't be a minute, (DWIGHT wanders down to the piano and with one finger picks out the first line of "I'm alone because I love you." FLORENCE looks at him and goes. Pause. Then LEONORA comes in in a peignoir and mules.) What is it? What's the matter?

DWIGHT

(turning to her)

Honey, it's bad news.

LEONORA

(blankly)

Bad news?

DWIGHT

When I got back to the hotel, I found this waiting for me.

[He takes a cable out of his pocket and gives it to her.]

LEONORA

What is it?

[She opens it, reads it, and then stares at him.]

DWIGHT

I rushed straight round to you.

LEONORA

Wednesday the 13th? That's to-morrow.

DWIGHT

I know.

LEONORA

Are you . . . going to?

DWIGHT

I guess I've got to.

LEONORA

(looking at the cable again)

Who is Addison?

DWIGHT

My partner.

LEONORA

It says: "*Can* you sail?"

DWIGHT

It means: "*Will* you?"

LEONORA

And "Will you?" means "You must." (DWIGHT *nods.*) I see. You do have to jump through hoops, don't you?

DWIGHT

Honey, I hate it. I knew there was a chance of this happening.

LEONORA

Well! That's that, then.

[She moves away from him.]

DWIGHT

(following her and putting his arms round her)

Don't be sore at me.

LEONORA

(pulling herself together)

It's all right.

DWIGHT

Let's sit down and talk about it.

LEONORA

Will you come back?

DWIGHT

I can't before next year.

LEONORA

Next year?

DWIGHT

I know.

LEONORA

Oh, but . . . but . . . (*She pulls herself together again.*) Well! It's been very nice knowing you, Mr. Houston. I always said it was too good to last.

DWIGHT

Can't you come to the States?

LEONORA

Me? How?

DWIGHT

Get on a boat.

LEONORA

No, but how can I? What reason could I give . . . to mother and father?

DWIGHT

Just that you wanted a holiday.

LEONORA

Holiday? English people don't go to America for a holiday!

DWIGHT

I don't see why not. We come to you.

LEONORA

I know. But that's different.

DWIGHT

Well, say you want to see New York and the Empire State.

LEONORA

They'd think I'd gone mad. I tell you, English people don't go to America except on business.

DWIGHT

Do they think it's so awful?

LEONORA

No. They think it's so far.

DWIGHT

No farther than you are from us.

LEONORA

Miles farther. Like Hampstead and Kensington. Anyway, I tell you it isn't done.

DWIGHT

Haven't you friends in America that you could go and visit? (*She shakes her head.*) I seem to remember a proverb about Mohammed and the mountain.

LEONORA

Mohammed hadn't got parents.

DWIGHT

How do you know? How much do they control you?

LEONORA

Well, I have to consider them.

DWIGHT

Do you get on with them?

LEONORA

Yes. Very well. Father's a pet. Mother's inclined to dither a bit. They're rather darlings, though.

DWIGHT

But they wouldn't let you come to the States?

LEONORA

Not without a reason.

DWIGHT

They're not the kind who'd indulge your slightest whim?

LEONORA

I'm afraid not.

DWIGHT

Well! That's that, then.

LEONORA

Yes. (*Pause.*) Well, let's be sensible about it. What must be, must be—and other European proverbs. What time do you sail?

DWIGHT

Noon. Boat train from Waterloo at 8:30.

LEONORA

And you've got to pack?

DWIGHT

That won't take long.

LEONORA

Well, shall we go out all the same?

DWIGHT

I'd rather stay here and talk. For a bit, anyway.

LEONORA

Alright. What shall we talk about?

DWIGHT

Us.

LEONORA

Have you anything to say?

DWIGHT

Lots. (*He moves nearer to her.*) I'm crazy about you, Steve!

[*He takes her in his arms.*]

LEONORA

(*protesting*)

No! No! Don't!

DWIGHT

Why not?

[*He kisses her. She responds, and then pulls herself away.*]

LEONORA

Don't go on, please, or I shall cry. (*And begins to do so. Through her tears.*) I

hate scenes.

DWIGHT

Steve . . . would you consider . . . marrying me?

[She turns to him, staring at him.]

LEONORA

Steve!

DWIGHT

Would you?

LEONORA

(dazzledly)

What? . . .

DWIGHT

Could we do it to-night?

LEONORA

Of course not.

DWIGHT

Do you have to have an Act of Parliament?

LEONORA

(laughing)

No! . . .

DWIGHT

I'll be gone in the morning.

LEONORA

I know.

DWIGHT

Would you come after me and marry me?

LEONORA

(bewildered)

Oh . . .

DWIGHT

Wouldn't you? Do—Steve—please. . . . It isn't much to ask. . . .

LEONORA

I couldn't. . . . It would be crazy. Oh! I want to this minute . . . terribly—just so as not to lose you . . . but I've got some sense.

DWIGHT

What's sense got to do with it?

LEONORA

Everything. Oh, Steve, it has. Look at it sensibly. I've known you twenty-four hours . . .

DWIGHT

Did you sleep last night?

LEONORA

Not a great deal.

DWIGHT

Neither did I.

LEONORA

Yes, but is marriage a cure for insomnia? Steve, we can't get married like this. I don't know a thing about you except that you're fun and that I like you.

DWIGHT

I should have thought those were reasons enough.

LEONORA

No! But be sensible!

DWIGHT

How can I . . . over you? I tell you, I'm crazy about you. Don't you believe we'd make a go of it?

LEONORA

God knows. Oh—if we could get married to-night, I'd be tempted to, I know; but the qualms I'd have, striding up to the what-ever-it-was we got married at! And imagine the journey on the boat if we sailed together, married, and the engines thudding: "It's for life. It's for life. It's for life."

DWIGHT

(lightly)

Not in America!

LEONORA

And suppose I said I'd come after you and marry you, just imagine the scene with mother and father. (*She begins to improvise.*) "Mother, I've got something to tell you." "Yes, dear, what is it?" "I'm going to get married." "Oh, really, dear? Who to?" "Dwight Houston." "And who may Dwight Houston be?" (That's father.) "He's an American." "An American! And how long have you known him?" "Oh, about twenty-four hours." I can't even *imagine* the reply to that.

DWIGHT

(*taking it up*)

But, mother, I'm in love with him.

LEONORA

In love with a man you've known twenty-four hours?

DWIGHT

And he's in love with me.

LEONORA

How do you know?

DWIGHT

He said so. Besides, I know.

LEONORA

What you want, my child, is a good whipping, and to be put on bread and water for a week, until you come to your senses.

DWIGHT

I shall run away and marry him.

LEONORA

(*bursting into imaginary tears*)

You're a wicked, ungrateful girl to speak to me like that! . . . No, but seriously, don't you see. (*Imitating her mother again.*) Going all that way away to America to marry a man you don't know anything about. Why, he may be a dreadful person! Supposing he were to beat you, and you all that way from home?

DWIGHT

I can always go to the Consul.

LEONORA

And America. A strange country . . . all those Red Indians . . . and buffaloes.

DWIGHT

And elks . . .

LEONORA

And gangsters. No, but it's true. How could I? If you were English, it would be mad enough. But, as I say, a new country . . . new people . . . new everything. I *don't* know anything about you. We seem to have talked of *me* all day—or just nonsense. It's a bit of a risk. Just because of an infatuation.

DWIGHT

Is that all it is?

LEONORA

How do I know? Quite possibly.

DWIGHT

You don't mean that.

[He comes close to her.]

LEONORA

I do. *(He kneels on the chesterfield, leaning over her. She tries to hold him off.)* I do. *(He kisses her.)* Oh, Steve.

[It is a long kiss, and then they both subside, a little exhausted.]

DWIGHT

Steve, dear, come. Even if you won't promise to marry me, come to America. Come and see how you like me . . . with my own background. Give me a chance. Get to know me. Bring a chaperon. Bring two. Bring twenty. Say you'll come!

LEONORA

(pressing her forehead with her hands)

Oh, I don't know. I can't think. Even if I did say I would . . . let myself be carried away . . . how do I know what I'll feel after you've gone?

DWIGHT

I shall feel worse than ever.

LEONORA

I know. So shall I.

DWIGHT

Then come. What do you want to know about me? I'll tell you anything.

LEONORA

Well . . . where you live. How you live. Oh, I don't know.

DWIGHT

I've an apartment on Park Avenue. That doesn't mean anything to you.

LEONORA

Are you well off? I'm only trying to be practical. I'm sure it's the first question father would ask.

DWIGHT

Quite. I can support you.

LEONORA

But tell me . . . tell me something about your life.

DWIGHT

Well, I get up at nine . . . have my orange-juice . . .

LEONORA

(protesting)

No.

DWIGHT

Well, it's a bit vague. Write all you know of the history of America in not more than five hundred words.

LEONORA

Have you a family?

DWIGHT

I've a mother. She lives in Colorado, where my home is. *(He looks at her, and then continues with slight difficulty.)* I've a son.

LEONORA

A . . . ?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

(after a second, brightly)

I told you I didn't know anything about you.

DWIGHT

I was married nearly seven years ago.

LEONORA

I see. You haven't a wife by any chance, have you?

DWIGHT

Not any more.

LEONORA

Oh. I'm sorry.

[With sincere sympathy.]

DWIGHT

Oh, it's all right. She's not dead. She's married again.

LEONORA

You're divorced, then? Where is your son?

DWIGHT

With my mother.

LEONORA

How old is he?

DWIGHT

Six. I've had him to myself the last five years. Would you like to see his picture?

LEONORA

Please. *(He takes a photo-case from his pocket and shows it to her. She looks at it and then at the photo on the other side of the case.)* Is that your mother?

DWIGHT

Yes.

[She looks at the other photo again.]

LEONORA

He's like you.

DWIGHT

Thank you.

LEONORA

What's he called?

DWIGHT

Jonathan.

LEONORA

Jonathan. *(She goes on looking at the photo a moment, and then at him. They hold each other's eyes for a moment. Then she gives him back the case.)* Nice!

DWIGHT

Um. Kinda nice.

LEONORA

Tell me about your wife.

DWIGHT

(vaguely)

Oh . . .

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

It's such a long time ago.

LEONORA

Why did you break?

DWIGHT

I think she found she didn't like me very much.

LEONORA

And you?

DWIGHT

I think I did. Once. Do you mind?

LEONORA

Of course not. You're fond of . . . Jonathan?

DWIGHT

What do *you* think?

LEONORA

If he lives with your mother . . . do you see him much?

DWIGHT

Not a great deal. I call him every Sunday.

LEONORA

Telephone, do you mean?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

How strange.

DWIGHT

What is?

LEONORA

All of this. I told you I didn't know you.

DWIGHT

It makes a difference?

LEONORA

A little.

DWIGHT

How?

LEONORA

It makes it all . . . more grown up.

DWIGHT

Do you think I ought to have told you before?

LEONORA

(simply, but not definitely)

No . . .

DWIGHT

I do. I've been wanting to all day. That was why I went all wistful, as you called it.

LEONORA

Oh.

DWIGHT

Only . . . I didn't want it to get that serious.

LEONORA

Then you agree it makes it serious?

DWIGHT

In a way. But that isn't what I mean. I mean that I didn't want *us* to get serious about each other too soon. We were having fun, and if this hadn't happened . . . my having to go back, I mean . . . it might have all worked round quite naturally. Like this, it's a bit of a shock.

LEONORA

A bit.

DWIGHT

But this summons has made a difference. Will you marry me, Steve?

LEONORA

I can't. Oh, not because of what you've told me, though it does change things, but because it shows me so clearly what I'd be running into.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

Well . . . how little I know of what I'm running into. Five minutes ago I was discussing it almost as a joke.

DWIGHT

Let's not let the fun go out of it. We're still us.

LEONORA

And if it was going to be difficult with mother and father before, how much more now. Divorce . . . a son . . . a . . . a past, I suppose you'd call it . . . or *they'd* call it. They're not exactly the best credentials, are they? I don't mind for myself . . . at least I think I don't . . . I hope I don't . . . but *they* . . .

DWIGHT

I suppose so.

LEONORA

I do love you, Dwight. There! I've called you Dwight. That shows how serious I am.

DWIGHT

Darling! (*Takes her in his arms.*) I love you so much.

LEONORA

Me too.

DWIGHT

Then won't you marry me?

LEONORA

(*after a pause*)

I can't. Like this. It's not enough.

DWIGHT

What's not enough?

LEONORA

Love. This kind of love. I said I loved you. I don't think that's true. I'm *in* love with you. That's what's not enough. Being in love's no kind of guarantee for happiness . . . in marriage, anyway. Is it? Is it?

DWIGHT

It mayn't be a guarantee, but it's not incompatible. Won't you . . . try? As I say, come over and make my acquaintance, meet the family, see how you like the way I live. Won't you, Steve?

LEONORA

I don't trust all this. It's never happened to me before. I don't believe in it. Besides, it wouldn't be the least good . . . my trying to . . . get to know you. So long as I'm *in* love with you, I haven't the chance to know whether I'd like you or not. What are you smiling at?

DWIGHT

You, saying that.

LEONORA

It's true. I think it's true.

DWIGHT

I like *you*.

LEONORA

You want me.

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

And I want you. That's why I don't trust . . . any of it. It's all too swift and hectic. I might come over and find you a most awful blackguard. But I'd still be in love with you. (DWIGHT *laughs a little*.) We've begun this at the wrong end, my dear.

DWIGHT

I see. Well, what do we do about it?

LEONORA

I can't imagine.

DWIGHT

(*accepting the situation: shortly*)

Alright.

LEONORA

I *am* right.

DWIGHT

I guess so. (*There is a long silence. DWIGHT takes a cigarette and lights it, his back turned to her. She looks at his back and then goes over to the window, draws back the curtains again, and stands looking out. He looks at her back. Then he comes down to the piano and almost mechanically begins fingering out the melody of "I'm alone because I love you."* LEONORA *in the window begins to cry, silently at first, only her shoulders shaking. Then presently she gives way to it completely. DWIGHT hears her and goes to her quickly.*) Honey, don't! (*He puts his arms round her.*) Don't, please!

[*He pulls her round to him and takes her into his arms, weeping on his shoulder for a moment. Then she pulls herself together.*]

LEONORA

I'm so sorry. I'm sorry to be such a fool.

DWIGHT

It's all right.

LEONORA

Oh, Steve, forgive me. I hate people who make scenes. (*She blows her nose loudly.*) There! That's better. Now! Now we'll just go on as though this hadn't happened.

DWIGHT

Sure!!

LEONORA

(*too brightly*)

What shall we do? Go out to supper, or would you like me to come and help you to pack? Men are always so helpless when it comes to packing.

DWIGHT

Oh, stop being bright, will you?

LEONORA

It was you who said let's not let the fun go out of it.

DWIGHT

Well, I was wrong if it's going to be like that.

LEONORA

Well? What do you want to do?

DWIGHT

I want to make love to you. That's caddish of me. Isn't it?

LEONORA

Yes. (*A long pause. Then suddenly.*) Oh, Steve! Be caddish!

[*She throws herself on her knees beside him.*]

DWIGHT

Darling!

LEONORA

Darling! (*He hugs her. Weakly.*) Oh, dear!

DWIGHT

I know. It's hell, isn't it?

LEONORA

(brightly)

Hell!

DWIGHT

I love you. Do you hear? And don't you dare forget it.

LEONORA

(her face against his)

I won't.

DWIGHT

That's right. Will you write to me?

LEONORA

Um.

DWIGHT

All the time?

LEONORA

Um.

DWIGHT

Tell me everything you do?

LEONORA

Everything.

DWIGHT

Never forget me?

LEONORA

Never.

DWIGHT

I'll be back next year.

LEONORA

Next year! *(She raises her head.)*

DWIGHT

(looking at her)

Steve, dear! Dear, funny Steve! *(Gaily.)* I love you. I love your eyes, your funny cat's eyes that go up at the corners.

LEONORA

They don't.

DWIGHT

Don't argue. I say they do. And your nose. (*He pulls it.*) And your ears.

LEONORA

You've never seen them.

DWIGHT

Never mind. I love them all the same, and all of you.

[Another embrace that begins humorously and ends a good deal more passionately.]

LEONORA

Oh, dear! Fancy me doing this here . . . here in our flat! You *are* a new experience to me, Steve.

DWIGHT

I believe I am!

LEONORA

What *is* it about you?

DWIGHT

Personality.

LEONORA

That indefinable something. Oh, dear! This is like one of those awful plays where people are going to be executed in the morning. I almost wish we were. Then there wouldn't be to-morrow. Oh, Steve! I'm going to hate to-morrow.

DWIGHT

Beloved, so am I.

LEONORA

Yes. But you've got your job and your home, and . . . (*She baulks.*) I shan't have anything but the memory of you and this.

[She raises herself, and they kiss passionately again.]

DWIGHT

(very much carried away)

You're so adorable . . .

LEONORA

(breathlessly)

Steve! Let's be together to-night! Before you go!

DWIGHT

(holding her very tight)

My dear!

LEONORA

Can't I come down to Southampton with you now? Let's go now. Pack your bags, take the car, and go. *(No response from DWIGHT.)* Steve! What's the matter?

DWIGHT

No. We mustn't.

LEONORA

Why?

DWIGHT

I've a kind of idea we'd like each other a lot too much. It's my turn to be sensible now. Supposing we went? Supposing we did spend the night together, and it was all we hoped, all we'd like it to be, I've still got to go in the morning.

LEONORA

Well, then! We'd have had that.

DWIGHT

And be just that much worse off. No, my dear. Let's not make it any more difficult. It's bad enough parting like this. It would be a thousand times worse if we'd . . . really loved each other. Aren't I right?

LEONORA

Yes. Oh, why are we both so damned sensible? Why can't one of us sweep the other off his feet?

DWIGHT

I know.

LEONORA

Well, having exhausted every other possibility, I suppose this is the end. The real end.

DWIGHT

I'm coming back.

LEONORA

Next year. What's the good of that? You can't heat up a soufflé.

DWIGHT

We're going to write.

LEONORA

Nor keep it in a thermos.

DWIGHT

Won't you change your mind?

LEONORA

Don't let's begin again.

DWIGHT

What then?

LEONORA

I suppose we've got to say good-bye.

DWIGHT

Now?

LEONORA

I should think we might as well. It isn't going to get any easier. I'd come and watch you pack, put you on the train, only it would be just hurting myself. I'd rather get it over.

[Pause. DWIGHT appears to be about to say something, then to change his mind.]

DWIGHT

O.K.

LEONORA

What were you going to say just then?

DWIGHT

Nothing.

LEONORA

What was it?

DWIGHT

It doesn't matter now. (*He holds out his hand.*) Good-bye, then, Steve. Good luck to you.

LEONORA

And you.

[*She takes his hand. Enter FLORENCE through the double doors.*

FLORENCE

Excuse me, miss, but is there anything more you want to-night?

LEONORA

(*startled*)

What? Oh, no, thank you, Florence. I'm not going out.

FLORENCE

I see, miss. Then I'd better put your things away.

LEONORA

Yes.

[*FLORENCE goes into the bedroom.*

DWIGHT

(*after she has gone*)

Well . . .

LEONORA

(*nodding*)

Yes. Go now.

DWIGHT

Good-bye, my dear.

[*They stand looking at each other as if wondering whether they are going to kiss or not. Then he turns and goes out swiftly. LEONORA goes over to the window, stands looking down. FLORENCE comes back.*

FLORENCE

Is there anything else, miss?

LEONORA

(absently)

What? No. I don't think so.

FLORENCE

Then I'll say good night, miss.

[She senses something of LEONORA'S mood, and moves very slowly to the door, keeping an eye on her as she does so. LEONORA is obviously watching DWIGHT go down the street.]

LEONORA

(aware of FLORENCE, though with her back to her)

The world outside is very beautiful, Florence.

FLORENCE

Beg pardon, miss?

LEONORA

It's all right.

[DWIGHT has obviously disappeared. She comes away from the window.]

FLORENCE

There's nothing else, miss?

LEONORA

(listlessly)

No. Oh! You might get me some biscuits or something. I believe I'm hungry.

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. *(She goes out. LEONORA trails across the room, pours herself out some soda-water and drinks it. Then she goes back to the chaise-longue and drops on it listlessly, looking before her. FLORENCE comes back with some crackers on a plate. She puts them on the telephone table.)* You wouldn't like some milk or anything, miss?

LEONORA

(very subdued)

No, thank you.

FLORENCE

(after a pause, with an eye on the window)

Shall I draw the curtains now, miss?

LEONORA

Yes. All right. (FLORENCE *draws the curtains*. LEONORA *takes a cracker and begins to eat it*.) Mr. Houston's gone, Florence. You can lock up.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

LEONORA

He's gone back to America.

FLORENCE

(*startled*)

To-night, miss?

LEONORA

He's sailing in the morning.

FLORENCE

(*interested*)

Oh, really, miss! (Long pause. LEONORA *goes on eating*.) Well, I'll say good night, miss.

LEONORA

Good night, Florence.

[FLORENCE *goes, turning once at the door*. LEONORA *eats another mouthful of cracker and then begins to cry, quietly at first and then more plentifully*.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

SCENE I

SCENE: *The same, the following afternoon.*

TIME: *Three o'clock.*

Immediately after the rise of the curtain, LEONORA comes in. She wears walking-dress and carries a letter. She moves listlessly, and depressedly sits down on the chesterfield, looking ahead of her for a moment, then attempts to throw off her mood, turns over her letter, and begins to read it.

FLORENCE *comes in.*

FLORENCE

Oh! There you are, miss.

LEONORA

Yes, Florence. Here I am.

FLORENCE

You never said you weren't going to be in for lunch, miss. Cook was keeping it hot till half-past two—close on.

LEONORA

Oh, I'm sorry.

FLORENCE

(intimately)

You might say a word to her, miss. I think she's a bit hurt, like.

LEONORA

Oh.

FLORENCE

You know what she is, miss, if she's crossed.

LEONORA

No, Florence. I've taken good care not to know. But I gather from mother she gets a bit bizarre.

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. And this coming just now . . .

LEONORA

Why just now?

FLORENCE

Well, miss, she's just had a bit of an upset in her private life, and it's left her a little sensitive, so to speak.

LEONORA

Oh. And you think a word from me . . .

FLORENCE

Well, miss, I think she'd appreciate it.

LEONORA

Very well, Florence.

FLORENCE

You have *had* your lunch, I suppose, miss?

LEONORA

(after a moment's pause)

No. As a matter of fact, I haven't. But it doesn't matter. I don't want any.

FLORENCE

Oh, but you must have lunch, miss. I'll get you something.

LEONORA

No, Florence, really I'd rather not.

FLORENCE

Just a bite, miss. Isn't there anything you fancy? A bit of caviare, perhaps? You like that.

LEONORA

(listlessly)

No. Oh, you can get me a whiskey and soda if you like.

FLORENCE

(shrugging her shoulders)

Very good, miss.

[She goes to the door.

LEONORA

Oh! No one telephoned, I suppose?

FLORENCE

Mrs. Sinclair wanted to know, miss, whether you could tell her where she could get in touch with Mr. Houston.

LEONORA

(a shade savagely)

Oh, did she? Well, next time she asks that, tell her that Mr. Houston has gone to America and that I don't know his address. *(Pause.)* I don't, Florence.

FLORENCE

Don't you, miss?

LEONORA

No.

[FLORENCE goes out. LEONORA takes off her hat and gloves and wanders listlessly around the room. FLORENCE returns with a tray of whiskey and some caviare.]

FLORENCE

Shall I pour it out for you, miss?

LEONORA

Please, Florence. *(FLORENCE pours out a very minute whiskey. LEONORA looks up.)* Oh! Florence! I want to taste it. *(FLORENCE minutely increases the quantity.)* Go on. *(FLORENCE adds a drop more.)* Go on. I'll say when. *(FLORENCE dubiously goes on pouring whiskey until she has made a reasonable drink.)* All right. Like that. And about the same amount of soda. *(FLORENCE silently complies, and gives her the drink with rather more soda than requested.)* I said the same amount.

[She sits down and starts reading her letter.]

FLORENCE

Well, miss, on an empty stomach, I don't know if it's wise. I brought you some caviare, miss. Do try it.

LEONORA

All right, Florence. I'll try.

FLORENCE

(*spreading the caviare on a wafer*)

However did you come to miss your lunch, miss?

LEONORA

I just didn't want any. At least, I didn't want to come home, and there was nowhere I liked the look of eating at alone. I think I got a bit martyred about it in the end.

FLORENCE

If you don't have breakfast, miss, you can't get along without your lunch.

LEONORA

No. (*Looking up from her letter.*) Oh, by the way, Florence, Miss Tozer's engaged.

FLORENCE

Is she, miss?

LEONORA

Yes. Isn't it nice?

FLORENCE

Do you know the gentleman, miss?

LEONORA

No. (*Reading.*) But she says he's *terribly* good-looking, and she's *terribly* happy! (*Sullenly.*) Quite a romance!

FLORENCE

You'll have to look sharp, miss.

LEONORA

Yes. I'll be alone to dinner to-night, Florence. Tell cook just an egg or something.

FLORENCE

Oh, miss, you can't. (*Pause.*) Excuse me, miss, but you're not fretting about anything, are you?

LEONORA

Why do you ask that?

FLORENCE

Oh, I just wondered, miss. No lunch—wanting an egg for dinner—that's always a sign, I think.

[LEONORA *smiles feebly.*

LEONORA

I'm all right, Florence.

FLORENCE

I know it's none of my business, miss, but, after all, I have known you since you was a baby—*before* you was a baby, really, in a manner of speaking. And you did used to talk to me when you was in the schoolroom.

LEONORA

I know, Florence.

FLORENCE

I felt last night, miss, that there was something wrong, and I thought perhaps it might do you good to talk to someone. They do say troubles shared is troubles halved.

LEONORA

That's in marriage! (*Changing her mood.*) Oh, you're a dear, Florence. I'm sorry I was beastly to you yesterday.

FLORENCE

Oh, that's all right, miss. You were only being funny.

LEONORA

(*bitterly*)

Damned funny.

FLORENCE

You know you've always been like that, miss. Showing off, like, to somebody new. It was the same when you was at school and used to bring someone back to tea that you were proud of. You always used to try and be funny with me.

LEONORA

Did I?

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. I always knew it didn't mean anything, really. Go on, miss. Have another of these, miss.

LEONORA

No, thanks.

FLORENCE

Just one more. (*Coaxingly.*) One for Florence, like we used to say in the nursery. (*LEONORA smiles and takes another sandwich.*) There you are! And when you've drunk up your whiskey, what about a nice little lay down?

LEONORA

I'll try. And if the telephone goes, I'm out.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

LEONORA

And I won't lunch or dine with anybody. Anybody, you understand. And if they ask you where I am, tell them I've gone to . . . Madam Tussand's!

FLORENCE

(*troubled*)

I do wish your mother and father was back.

LEONORA

I'm thankful they're not.

FLORENCE

Well, miss, you can't go on like this. Starving yourself. Not seeing anybody. I shall have to have the doctor to you.

LEONORA

(*impatiently*)

I'm all right, Florence. I'm all right.

FLORENCE

Oh! Very well, miss.

[*She goes to the door, hurt.*]

LEONORA

Oh, Florence, I'm sorry. Only I can't stand being fussed.

FLORENCE

I've never seen you like this before, miss.

LEONORA

No. It's a surprise to me, too.

FLORENCE

You've never been one for moping.

LEONORA

No.

FLORENCE

(*very hesitantly, after a pause*)

It's . . . it's Mr. Houston, isn't it, miss?

[LEONORA *nods*.

FLORENCE

I thought it was. I couldn't help noticing.

LEONORA

Did you like him, Florence?

FLORENCE

Well, miss . . . I didn't really see much of him. He's a nice-*looking* gentleman.

LEONORA

Yes.

FLORENCE

And he's gone back to America, you say? I expect he'll be coming back. Won't he?

LEONORA

Not until next year, Florence.

FLORENCE

Um. That seems a long time, I expect. But it'll soon pass, miss. It's wonderful how time flies when you come to think back over it. Of course, you haven't known him very long, have you, miss?

LEONORA

Not very.

FLORENCE

Not that that's got anything to do with it, really, I don't suppose. Excuse me, but are you engaged to him, miss?

LEONORA

No, Florence.

FLORENCE

Oh, I'm sorry, miss.

LEONORA

(*smiling*)

Oh, he did ask me!

FLORENCE

Oh! (*Then, brightly.*) Oh, well, I daresay he'll ask you again, miss. Write it to you, perhaps.

LEONORA

(*wretchedly*)

No!

FLORENCE

There . . . there isn't anything *against* him, miss?

LEONORA

Not in the way you mean, no.

FLORENCE

I'd like to see you married.

LEONORA

Well, it doesn't look as if you'd got much chance.

FLORENCE

Oh, don't say that, miss. There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

LEONORA

That, Florence, in my present state of mind, I believe to be profoundly untrue.

FLORENCE

Why don't you go out to-night somewhere, miss? Go to a play or the pictures. Ring up somebody and ask them to go with you . . . or *take* you.

LEONORA

I don't think so.

FLORENCE

Well, why not go round to Mrs. Wavertree's, then?

LEONORA

Oh! My God!

FLORENCE

I'm sure she'd be glad to have you.

LEONORA

No, Florence!

FLORENCE

Well, Mrs. Enfield, p'raps?

LEONORA

No, Florence!

FLORENCE

You ought to make an effort, miss.

LEONORA

No, Florence. I'll dine alone, thank you.

FLORENCE

Would you like some champagne with your dinner, miss? Buck you up a bit.

LEONORA

Florence, if you go on sympathising with me, I shall howl.

FLORENCE

Oh, Miss Leonora!

LEONORA

I'm in a very unpleasant state, and I'm far better left alone.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

LEONORA

Thank you for your ministrations, Florence. I'll have the champagne for dinner. Perhaps I can get drunk.

FLORENCE

That's more like your old self, miss!

LEONORA

Florence! You've never seen me drunk!

FLORENCE

I didn't mean that, miss. I mean, it's like you to make a joke of things.

LEONORA

Yes, Florence. It isn't always easy.

FLORENCE

No, miss. (*She goes out. As she gets to the door, she turns back.*) Oh, excuse me.

LEONORA

Yes. What is it?

FLORENCE

Excuse me, but you won't mind Rose waiting on you at dinner to-night?

LEONORA

(*puzzled*)

No. Why? Is it your evening out?

FLORENCE

No, miss. I expect you won't remember, but I spoke to you about it the other day. I'm going to the dentist.

LEONORA

Oh. Is that to-day?

FLORENCE

Yes, miss.

LEONORA

What time is the execution?

FLORENCE

Half-past five, miss. He couldn't take me before. So I thought, if you wouldn't mind, p'raps I might go straight to bed when I got home.

LEONORA

Yes, of course. You'd better have some of the champagne.

FLORENCE

Oh, no, miss, thank you. I never take things like that.

LEONORA

Buck you up a bit.

FLORENCE

It's very good of you, miss, but I'd rather not. Cook might make me some Mellen's, perhaps.

LEONORA

How revolting.

FLORENCE

(smiling)

You didn't ought to say that about Mellen's, miss. It was that what saved your life when you was a baby.

LEONORA

Was it? *(Miserably.)* I can't think what for.

FLORENCE

Thought we was going to lose you, we did. You couldn't keep a thing down.

LEONORA

Florence! Spare me!

FLORENCE

(smiling)

Well, it will be all right about to-night, then?

LEONORA

Of course.

FLORENCE

Thank you, miss.

LEONORA

Would you like me to come with you?

FLORENCE

Oh, no, miss.

LEONORA

Yes. Would you?

FLORENCE

I wouldn't dream of such a thing, miss.

LEONORA

No. But wouldn't you like me to, really?

FLORENCE

Well, it's awfully good of you, miss . . .

LEONORA

Not at all, Florence. I'm going to devote the rest of my life to good works. Besides, it will take my mind off myself.

FLORENCE

Why *don't* you ring up someone and have a jolly evening, miss?

[LEONORA *smiles feebly at her, and FLORENCE goes. LEONORA trails round for a moment, then goes over to the window and looks out.*

LEONORA

(*after a pause*)

There's snow as far as you can see, Emily . . . the robins have eaten all the crumbs we . . . (*Her voice breaks, and she comes away from the window with her handkerchief against her lips. She goes over to the bookshelf, takes down "Romeo and Juliet," settles herself down on the chesterfield with it, opens it, reads for a minute, and then pitches it across the room. She looks a couple of times at the telephone and then goes over to it, stands a moment hesitant, and then dials a number.*) Hello? Is Mr. Walmsley there? . . . Could I speak to him? . . . Oh, I think he'll speak to *me*. . . . Miss Perrycoste. (*She holds on.*) Hello? Peter? . . . This is Leonora. . . . Yes. How are you? I say, Peter, does that invitation for to-night still hold good? . . . Yes, I'm free. . . . My what? Oh! My Americans, They've gone. . . . Yes, they got a cable. They sailed to-day on the *Majestic*. So I thought if you had nothing to do we might still go out together. . . . Oh. . . . Oh, I see. No. Don't bother. It doesn't matter. . . . It's all right, Peter. You needn't bother. . . . Oh, all right then. . . . Oh, I don't know. . . . No, let's go to a theatre. I'd rather. . . . Oh, something jolly. A revue, if there is one. I'd like a good laugh. . . . Yes, all right. Half-past seven. . . . Don't be so silly, Peter. Well, I don't *feel* like an angel. Good-bye. (*She rings off, and rises with distaste in her face, prowls round the room in growing impatience, goes over to the mantelpiece, and starts fidgeting with an ornament. Almost unconsciously she begins to sing: "Why am I always a bridesmaid, never the blushing bride?" and after a few bars becomes aware of what she is doing.*) Oh, hell! (*She smashes the ornament in the grate.*) And that's a damned silly thing to do, too! (*Imitating a governess.*) Leonora, I'm surprised at you. I don't

know what's come over you. (*In a different, self-disgusted voice.*) Nor do I. (*In her first voice.*) It's not like you to behave like this. (*In her second voice.*) I know! (*She gives an exclamation of rage with herself.*) Wah! (*She looks out of the window at the sunshine outside.*) Oh!!! I wish it was raining!

[*She turns and goes angrily into her bedroom.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE II

SCENE: *The same. About eight hours later.*

The opening of this scene should be directed exactly similarly, as regards moves, etc., as the opening of Act I, Scene II, with PETER replacing DWIGHT. The mood, however, especially that of LEONORA, is entirely different.

When the curtain rises, the stage is in darkness. Then a light in the passage outside is switched on. PETER WALMSLEY and LEONORA appear. They are both in evening dress. PETER is a good-looking, rather over-forcible Englishman, slightly of the Guards type, of about thirty. They come into the room. LEONORA switches on the light, looks round. On the table is a bottle of lemon squash, etc., as before.

LEONORA

(as they come in)

Come in. Have a drink?

PETER

Thanks.

LEONORA

Whiskey?

PETER

Yes, thanks.

LEONORA

I'll get it.

PETER

They don't leave it out for you, what? *(She goes into the dining-room. PETER hangs round, lighting a cigarette, then follows to the door.)* I say, can't I help?

LEONORA

(off)

It's all right.

[She returns with tumbler and decanter as before.]

PETER

Lemon squash for you?

LEONORA

No. I think whiskey. (*He pours it out.*) I'm afraid there isn't any ice.

PETER

(*horrified*)

Ice? Good God, do you put ice in a whiskey and soda?

LEONORA

(*murmuring*)

A trick I learned e'en now, of one I danced withal.

PETER

Filthy American habit! (*He gives her her glass. Lifts his own.*) Well, here she goes.

LEONORA

Skoal

[*Drinks.*]

PETER

(*drinks*)

I wanted that! For this relief much thanks.

LEONORA

What's the time?

PETER

Quarter past.

LEONORA

One?

PETER

Yes. Do you want to go to bed?

LEONORA

Not just yet.

[*They settle down on the chesterfield.*]

PETER

Damned good show, didn't you think?

LEONORA

(absently)

Um.

PETER

Jolly good tune, that.

LEONORA

Which?

PETER

Well, there was only one, wasn't there? That's what I like about musical shows these days. One decent tune, and you get a chance to remember it. You know. *(He begins to sing a fragment of a very sentimental number, quite seriously.)*
Good, what?

LEONORA

Lovely. So sentimental.

PETER

Oh, come off it.

LEONORA

What?

PETER

Pulling my leg like that. *(He puts an arm around her.)* You're looking awfully nice to-night, Leonora.

LEONORA

(uninterested)

Oh?

PETER

Awfully nice!

[He starts to caress her.

LEONORA

(instinctively drawing away)

No . . . no.

PETER

What's the matter?

LEONORA

Nothing. Only . . . don't.

PETER

(disappointed)

Oh, I say!

LEONORA

(to herself)

Oh, go on. Pay for your dinner.

PETER

What's that?

LEONORA

Oh, nothing. *(She presents her cheek.)* Go on, Peter. *(He kisses it, then she leans back, then she leans forward again, presents her cheek again.)* Now your theatre tickets!

PETER

What?

LEONORA

Go on, Peter. *(A little more bewildered, PETER kisses her again. Then she leans back again, then she leans forward again, presents her cheek a third time.)* Now your supper!

PETER

What's the matter, Leonora? You've been so nice to me all the evening. Letting me hold your hand . . .

LEONORA

I'm afraid I'm a bit absent-minded to-night.

PETER

I cut a most impressive dinner to come to-night . . . I offended no end of dowagers . . .

LEONORA

I'm sorry.

PETER

Oh, I was only too glad to, when you asked me. But I did hope it meant you felt a bit more hearty about me.

LEONORA

I'm sorry, Peter. But I've told you before . . .

PETER

Oh, I know. But you don't have to want to marry me not to mind my kissing you. You've let me kiss you before.

LEONORA

Have I? Well, it was always rather like getting a cricket-ball in the face. I suppose really it shows what a respect you have for me. What have I done to sacrifice it now?

PETER

What do you mean?

LEONORA

Well, you're much more like a tennis-ball this evening.

PETER

I suppose you mean more serious?

LEONORA

I suppose so.

PETER

Well, I'm fond of you. You know that, Leonora.

[He begins to grab her again.]

LEONORA

Oh, Peter, please. . . . Not to-night.

PETER

But why? Have you fallen for someone else? (*She does not answer.*) Is that it? (*Still no answer.*) Who? (*No answer.*) You're not engaged, by any chance? (*She holds up her left hand, showing its innocence of rings.*) Oh. Just walking out? (*Still no answer.*) I see. Well, I don't seem to be much use here then, do I?

[He makes a move.]

LEONORA

Oh, no, Peter. Don't go.

PETER

Well, what's the use of my staying?

LEONORA

Just because I don't want you to make love to me? (*Then, in a burlesque voice.*) Oh, you men are all the same! You only want one thing from a woman!

PETER

(*taking her seriously*)

Oh, I say! That's not fair.

LEONORA

(*giggling a little*)

No?

PETER

No. But, damn it all, you know how I feel about you. It's not much fun for me to sit here while you go on thinking about somebody else.

LEONORA

I won't. I promise I won't. I'll forget all about it. Only I've got the pip. So be nice to me, Peter.

PETER

It's you that won't be nice to me.

LEONORA

I didn't mean that by "be nice."

PETER

What?

LEONORA

What you meant.

PETER

I don't know what you mean. You said . . .

LEONORA

(*with an echo in her ears*)

Look here, don't you think we'd better go back and begin all over again?

PETER

(obligingly)

All right. You said “be nice to me,” and I said . . .

LEONORA

(interrupting)

Oh, Peter, don’t!

PETER

Well, what *do* you want?

LEONORA

Just stay and talk pretty to me.

PETER

What about?

LEONORA

How should I know? Oh, tell me, Peter, do you know anything about telephoning to ships at sea?

PETER

No. Why?

LEONORA

I just wondered.

PETER

Well, I believe you can.

LEONORA

How?

PETER

I don’t know. Dial “0” and I expect they’ll tell you. I believe there are only one or two you can do it with. Atlantic liners. The *Bremen*, I should think. Perhaps the *Europa*.

LEONORA

Yes.

PETER

Why? Do you want to?

LEONORA

No, not really. I just wondered.

PETER

Pretty marvellous, isn't it?

LEONORA

These modern inventions. Wireless . . .

PETER

Television.

LEONORA

Talkies . . .

PETER

Flying the Atlantic . . . it makes you realise how small the world is.

LEONORA

No, it isn't. It's damned large.

PETER

Well, you can get around it pretty quickly nowadays, if you want to. The Transatlantic telephone is not so bad, either.

LEONORA

(suddenly)

Oh! I'd forgotten about that.

PETER

Do you know they'll track you all over England?

LEONORA

(fiercely)

Bloodhounds! That's what they are. Human bloodhounds!

PETER

Are you thinking of telephoning anyone?

LEONORA

No. No. Who should I telephone?

PETER

I don't know. I thought perhaps . . . those Americans of yours.

LEONORA

What Americans?

PETER

The ones you've been carting round.

LEONORA

Oh! Those!

PETER

Who were they?

LEONORA

Oh, I don't know. Just Americans.

PETER

Where from?

LEONORA

New York. Philadelphia. Chicago, and . . . Minneapolis.

PETER

What were their names?

LEONORA

Dear me! You do want to know a lot? One of them was called . . . let me see . . .
Houston.

PETER

I know an American called Houston. I suppose it couldn't be the same.

LEONORA

(absently)

I shouldn't think so.

PETER

What is his other name?

LEONORA

Dwight.

PETER

Dwight Houston? It must be the same.

LEONORA

(*sitting up, astonished*)

You mean you know him?

PETER

Lord, yes! Known him for years.

LEONORA

Peter, you haven't!

PETER

Yes. Why not?

LEONORA

I don't know. It's so extraordinary. Where did you meet him?

PETER

I met him first of all, about twelve years ago in Burma. He got into some scrape or other trying to photograph the Green Eye of the Little Yellow God, or something. I was staying with the Lancings. They got him out. Then I met him again in America, about six years ago, when I was with the polo team. I didn't know he'd been over here this year.

LEONORA

He was only here a day or two. Do you like him, Peter?

PETER

(*enthusiastically*)

Yes, he's a good chap. Not *like* an American. But, then, if you know America, quite a lot of them aren't.

LEONORA

What *was* he like? An Englishman?

PETER

Well, very nearly.

LEONORA

Do you know any of his people?

PETER

Yes.

LEONORA

Are they nice, too?

PETER

They're very exclusive. But they were jolly nice to us.

LEONORA

The Four Hundred, and that kind of thing?

PETER

Oh, lots better than that.

LEONORA

Do you know anything about his wife?

PETER

Yes. I was there about the time of the smash-up. Shocking little b . . . (*He checks himself.*) Shocking little beast. Pretty, of course, but no end of a tart.

LEONORA

Really?

PETER

He was a damned sight too good for her . . . and *to* her, for that matter.

LEONORA

How do you mean?

PETER

Well, she ran off with his best friend. He was in the Diplomatic—the friend, I mean. Bust *his* career and then walked out on him. Ran herself into no end of trouble. Debts and God knows what all. Houston helped her out a couple of times. She lives in Paris now. You can see her for yourself any day in the Ritz bar.

LEONORA

Was he very much in love with her?

PETER

Lord, *I* don't know! I should think he must have been.

LEONORA

Yes. (*Thoughtfully.*) How long is it since you've seen him?

PETER

Oh, a couple of years. What's he like now?

LEONORA

Oh, quite nice, I think.

PETER

Hasn't got married again, has he?

LEONORA

No. Why?

PETER

Oh, I don't know. I just wondered if he had. He was a very popular chap.

LEONORA

With the ladies?

PETER

Yes, terribly. Strong, silent stuff, you know. (*She giggles.*) What's the matter?

LEONORA

I don't know. He didn't strike me as very silent. I'd have called him chatty, myself. Tell me some more about him.

PETER

I can't. I don't know him *well*. You've seen him since I have.

LEONORA

Yes, but he was only here a day or two. I didn't see much of him, comparatively.

PETER

(*getting something from her tone*)

What do you mean, comparatively?

LEONORA

Well . . . much of him, then.

PETER

Who were the others?

LEONORA

(*not replying*)

He's an architect, isn't he? Is he good at his job?

PETER

How should I know?

LEONORA

Have you seen anything he . . . architected?

PETER

I don't know. I never look at buildings. You're a bit intrigued about him, aren't you? (*Silence. Her mind is a long way away.*) Aren't you?

LEONORA

(*coming back*)

What?

PETER

I said you're a bit intrigued about him, aren't you?

LEONORA

Who? Oh! No!

PETER

You're asking a lot of questions.

LEONORA

Oh, I'm just . . . interested! (*Brightly.*) I always think people are so interesting, don't you?

PETER

(*in the tone that means "come off it"*)

Ertcher!

LEONORA

Curiosity, you know. Just feminine curiosity.

PETER

(*after a moment*)

Rot!

LEONORA

(*indignantly*)

What do you mean, rot?

PETER

I mean rot! Feminine curiosity! I've never been asked so many questions in all my life. (*Pause.*) So it's him, is it?

LEONORA

What?

PETER

I said it's him, is it?

LEONORA

What? Who? Why? Which? What do you mean?

PETER

This chap you've fallen for. It's him.

LEONORA

Don't be a fool, Peter.

PETER

Well, what do you want to know all his family history for, then? Who are his people . . . when did he get his first tooth . . .

LEONORA

When did he?

PETER

Oh, shut up! It *is* him, isn't it?

LEONORA

Peter, don't nag. What's it matter *who* it is . . . even *if* it is . . . which I'm not admitting.

PETER

You seem to forget I'm keen on you myself.

LEONORA

Yes, but you can't be dog in the manger about it.

PETER

Dog in the manger?

LEONORA

Yes.

PETER

Well, I don't see that. Damn it all, the dog in the manger didn't want whatever it was he wouldn't let the other chap have.

LEONORA

Oh, no, that's right. No more he did. I must have been mixing my metaphors. I mean the ostrich in the sand, or the fly in the ointment, or something.

PETER

It is Dwight Houston? (*She growls with exasperation at his persistence.*)
Where did you meet him?

LEONORA

At a party at Betty Enfielden's.

PETER

What about the others?

LEONORA

What others?

PETER

The other Americans. From . . . I don't believe there *were* any others. Were there?

LEONORA

Not a great many.

PETER

Just him, eh? That's why you weren't going to have a free minute for the next three weeks? And now he's gone. And you're still keen on him . . . eh? Did he make love to you?

LEONORA

He was quite polite to me.

PETER

The swine!

LEONORA

Now, Peter, really! Why swine?

PETER

To make love to you.

LEONORA

Are *you* a swine, Peter?

PETER

That's different.

LEONORA

Why?

PETER

Because I'm in love with you.

LEONORA

Aow!

PETER

And he's just a philanderer.

LEONORA

How do you know?

PETER

Well, it stands to reason. You say he's only here a couple of days. He picks you up at a party, makes love to you, makes you fond of him. He ought to be horse-whipped.

LEONORA

And you were saying just now how nice he was.

PETER

Oh, like that, yes! But for you . . . to get fresh with you . . . a man that's been divorced . . . do you know he's got a kid?

LEONORA

Yes.

PETER

Well, then . . .

LEONORA

What difference does that make?

PETER

Well, if you can't see for yourself . . .

LEONORA

I can't.

PETER

He didn't ask you to marry him?

LEONORA

(quickly)

Yes, he did!

PETER

And you wouldn't, because you saw what he was. There you are!

LEONORA

(getting worked up)

It wasn't that at all.

PETER

What was it, then?

LEONORA

(nearly crying with exasperation)

Oh, go to hell! What's it got to do with you, anyway?

PETER

Look here, Leonora, you know I'm fond of you, and I hate the idea of your being made unhappy.

LEONORA

(nearly crying)

I'm not unhappy.

PETER

You must be.

LEONORA

You might allow me to know for myself.

PETER

You said you'd got the pip. You said you were keen on him, and that you weren't engaged to him. You can't be keen on a man and not engaged to him, and not be unhappy. Can you? Can you?

LEONORA

(bursting into tears)

I wish you'd go away.

PETER

There you are, you see. You're crying.

LEONORA

(angrily)

Well, then, I hope you're satisfied.

[She goes to telephone.]

PETER

What are you doing?

LEONORA

(taking up receiver)

Calling you a taxi. Hello, taxi?

[As she says this, her eye falls on the block by the telephone. Her eyes nearly drop out of her head at what she sees written there. With her two hands behaving like a seesaw, she picks it up with one and puts the receiver down with the other, not on its hook, but with complete absent-mindedness on the table.]

PETER

Look here, Leonora. *(He sees that she is engrossed.)* What is it? What's up?
(LEONORA takes not the slightest notice of him. With her hand to her head she stares at the block.) What you got there?

[He comes over to her. She clasps it to her breast so that he cannot read it.]

LEONORA

(abstractedly)

I must ring up.

PETER

Who? *(She does not answer, but looks at the receiver, replaces it, gets the telephone book, and hunts through it.)* What's all this about? What's happened? What are you looking for? Leonora, what's the matter?

LEONORA

Oh, shut up, Peter. I'm busy.

PETER

(as she goes on looking for the number and then dials it)

There's nothing wrong with your people, is there?

LEONORA

(impatiently)

No!

PETER

Not bad news?

LEONORA

(as before)

No!

PETER

Well, what is it then?

LEONORA

Oh! Eat your damned bun!

[She begins to dial a number.

PETER

Well . . . well . . . I'll just help myself to a deoch and doris, if I may.

[He goes over and pours himself out a drink, looking at her as he does so.

LEONORA

Hello? Is that the Ritz? I want . . . *(Looking down at the block.)* Apartment 501, please. Yes.

[Holds on.

PETER

You can't wake up people at this time of night.

LEONORA

I'm not. *(Doubtfully.)* At least, I don't think I am. *(As she answers the telephone this time her voice is nervous and frightened.)* Hello? Is that Steve? Yes. What are you doing here? . . . So I gathered. Do you want to? . . . I don't know. . . . No. I've only just found your message. . . . Are you dressed? . . . Yes, well, I suppose so, if you really want to. . . . All right, then. *(She is just about to put down the receiver when she thinks of something else.)* Oh! Wait

a minute, Steve! I don't think . . . Are you there? Are you still there? (*He has cut off. She puts down the receiver very slowly and turns back to PETER with a rather bewildered face, almost as though she had forgotten he was in the room. Then, as though just realising he is there.*) Oh, yes. (*She pulls herself together. Then, speaking for PETER, says.*) Who was that, Leonora? Very peculiar at two in the morning! (*She stretches out her hand for his glass.*) Give me some of that!

PETER

Something *is* wrong.

LEONORA

I don't know.

PETER

Are you cold?

LEONORA

No. Why?

PETER

You are. You're shaking.

LEONORA

No! (*She finishes his whiskey for him.*) I feel lovely now.

PETER

What's the matter? I wish I understood you.

LEONORA

What don't you understand?

PETER

You're so full of moods.

LEONORA

Ain't it the truth! Well, Peter dear, I was calling you a taxi, wasn't I, when that little *contretemps* occurred?

PETER

Do you want me to go?

LEONORA

Well, that was the idea.

PETER

Can't I stay a bit longer?

LEONORA

I don't think so.

[She sees her cloak and picks it up.]

PETER

You're not going out again, are you?

LEONORA

(quite absently, her eyes roaming round the room)

No.

[She sees the chesterfield looking untidy, and goes and straightens it.]

PETER

What you doing that for?

LEONORA

Just being a tidy girl.

[A long pause, while she finishes it and wanders.]

PETER

You're not expecting anyone, are you?

LEONORA

(quite vaguely, looking at him)

What?

PETER

Are you? Who? *(She "woogs" at him.)* Tell me.

LEONORA

(brightening up)

Do you really want to know?

PETER

Yes.

LEONORA

All right, then. I'll tell you. Dwight Houston.

PETER

Oh! Shut up!

LEONORA

Don't you believe me?

PETER

Of course not. Who is it?

LEONORA

I told you.

PETER

Very well . . . if you don't want to . . .

LEONORA

All right. I'm a liar. Now, Peter darling, give me a cricket-ball and go.

PETER

You *can* be aggravating, when you want to.

LEONORA

I know. Thank you for a lovely evening, Peter. I've had a beautiful time.

[She puts up her face. He kisses her.]

PETER

I'm worried about you, Leonora.

LEONORA

Not half as worried as I am. Well, Peter darling, you can see yourself out, can't you? You might leave the front door open.

[She goes with her cloak into her bedroom. PETER looks after her; goes out into the hall, comes back carrying his opera-hat, light overcoat, and scarf, and puts them on, gloomily, with one eye on her bedroom door. When he is quite ready he stands there for a minute and then says:]

PETER

Well, so long, old girl.

LEONORA

(faintly, from the bedroom)

Good-bye, Peter. Don't forget about the door.

[He shakes his head and goes. LEONORA comes back. Her mood is anxious]

and unquiet. She looks around the room, sees PETER'S glass, picks it up as though she were going to remove it, then thinks better of it and replaces it. She paces the room, goes over to the window, paces the room again, and goes back to the window, standing there watching. Then she sits in the armchair in an attitude of calm expectancy. The front door slams outside. She leaps up in a panic, retreating to the windows. DWIGHT appears in the doorway, stands there. They look at each other. There is a serious silence for a second. Then LEONORA breaks it lightly.

LEONORA

Hello!

DWIGHT

Hello.

[He comes in.

LEONORA

(as lightly as possible)

What you come back for?

DWIGHT

(equally so)

Business?

LEONORA

Business?

DWIGHT

Yes. When I got on board I found a cable from Addison telling me to stay over and see a man who's just arrived in England.

LEONORA

Oh! I see!

DWIGHT

I got back around seven.

LEONORA

Did you see your man?

DWIGHT

(nods)

We dined together. I wired him from Southampton.

LEONORA

Oh. Did you have a nice dinner?

DWIGHT

(nods)

We went to Simpson's.

LEONORA

Good meat.

DWIGHT

We had roast beef.

LEONORA

You should have had mutton. It's the speciality.

DWIGHT

Oh . . . I didn't know. What have you been doing?

LEONORA

I've been to the theatre.

DWIGHT

See anything good?

LEONORA

Yes, I think so.

DWIGHT

Well . . .

[They both move on the same instant, carefully avoiding contact with each other.]

LEONORA

Have a drink?

DWIGHT

Thanks. Can I help myself?

[Picks up PETER'S glass.]

LEONORA

That's a dirty glass.

DWIGHT

(puts it down, picks up the other)

Oh!

LEONORA

So's that. I'll get you one.

DWIGHT

Don't bother. It's not important. I've been drinking, waiting for you.

LEONORA

What time did you ring up?

DWIGHT

Around ten. You only just got in?

LEONORA

No. I've been in ages. I only just found your message.

DWIGHT

And I begged Florence to give it you the moment you arrived.

LEONORA

Florence is in bed with a tooth out. How long are you staying this time?

DWIGHT

Till Saturday. The *Aquitania*. *(She laughs.)* What is it?

LEONORA

Another three days. It's . . . teasing.

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

(suddenly serious—almost hostile)

What did you have to come back for?

DWIGHT

Do you mind?

LEONORA

I think I mind.

DWIGHT

Why?

LEONORA

Why? Because I hate anti-climax!

DWIGHT

(gently, after a pause, away from her)

Steve, do you remember something you said to me the very first time I came here . . . before you'd made up your mind to dine with me, even?

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

You were explaining your friendship with Tom and Catherine. You said you played with them in the hope of finding some excitement that you knew you'd be too scared to take hold of if it offered.

LEONORA

Well?

DWIGHT

I gathered you didn't altogether like that side of yourself.

LEONORA

Well?

DWIGHT

Well . . .

LEONORA

You mean . . . you're the excitement?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

I see.

DWIGHT

It doesn't do to be too sensible. It's a reaction against Victorianism. Reaction in the English sense, not the American. If you'd been a Victorian we'd have been off to . . . what's the name of the place . . . Gretna Green . . . the minute you let me kiss you. Victorian girls were always marrying men they didn't know a thing

about. They called it romance. I'm all for romance myself.

LEONORA

(reflectively)

Yes. Yes. Only I know a lot more about you than I did.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

There was a lot you didn't tell me about your marriage, wasn't there? Bless you.

DWIGHT

What are you getting at?

LEONORA

Do you know a man called Peter Walmsley?

DWIGHT

No.

LEONORA

Don't you?

DWIGHT

I don't think so.

LEONORA

India.

DWIGHT

India? Oh, I think I know. Blond . . . with a very nice wife?

LEONORA

(with a smile to herself)

No. She wouldn't have him. Then he went over to America with the polo team . . . six years ago.

DWIGHT

Polo team? Walmsley? Oh . . . not *Porky* Walmsley?

LEONORA

Porky! Oh! How nice. . . .

DWIGHT

Oh, of course. Porky Walmsley. What about him?

LEONORA

Well, I've been spending the evening with him. He told me quite a lot about you.

DWIGHT

I hope he gave me a good character.

LEONORA

Terribly . . . until he found I was interested. It was too late then. You seem to be rather a grand person, Steve.

DWIGHT

I guess, maybe, you're prejudiced.

LEONORA

Peter wasn't.

DWIGHT

Well, I'm certainly grateful to him.

LEONORA

It wasn't only him.

DWIGHT

What else?

LEONORA

I've had a frightful day!

DWIGHT

Mine wasn't so good, either. (*Pause.*) You look like a million dollars in that dress.

LEONORA

Do I? I put it on because I wanted to look pale and interesting. I hoped that everyone at the Berkeley to-night was wondering who was the girl with the secret sorrow. (*DWIGHT smiles.*) I told you I can't help dramatising myself, even if it's serious. And it was, you know. I lay awake all last night wondering whether I hadn't been the world's biggest fool. I read Bertrand Russell to console me.

DWIGHT

And did he?

LEONORA

I found something that went right home to my midriff.

DWIGHT

Your . . . ?

LEONORA

Midriff. He said: "Of all forms of caution, caution in love is perhaps the most fatal to true happiness." I howled when I read that.

DWIGHT

I wrote you the same thing last night.

LEONORA

You did?

DWIGHT

I was going to mail it from Cherbourg. (*With a smile.*) You thought you knew so much; that so long as you were in love with me, you couldn't know whether you liked me or not. I knew then that you'd never really been in love before. But I believed you'd come and find out if you liked me . . . later. Not so much later, either. When this cable came, I debated whether to see you or not.

LEONORA

You didn't!

DWIGHT

I thought it might be better for you to find out by yourself. Only . . . when life deliberately offers you a second chance, it seems ungrateful not to take it. It doesn't do it very often.

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

I hadn't reckoned on Porky! I think we're being rather spoiled.

LEONORA

So do I. (*She goes to him.*) I adore being spoiled. (*They start an embrace, and the telephone rings. They jump apart.*) At this time of night! (*She goes over to it.*) Hello? Hello? . . . Regent 3684. . . *Who* wants me? . . . Vichy? (*Holds on.*) Good Lord! Mother and father. I hope there's nothing wrong. I'm afraid I'd forgotten all about them. (*Into phone.*) Hello! . . . Yes . . . Yes. . . All right. (*Holds on again.*) Hello! Hello, mother. . . . Yes. . . . (*DWIGHT seats himself*

just behind her.) No, darling. It's all right. I hadn't gone to bed. . . . No. . . . I'm all right, mother. . . . Why? Who told you? . . . Aunt Emily? . . . Oh, did she write to you? . . . Oh! I'm sorry you've been worried, darling. But it wasn't anything—really it wasn't. I was just putting her off. . . . Yes, I know. It was naughty of me. And making you ring up like this in the middle of the night. . . . You only just got her letter? . . . I *am* sorry! Oh, I've been to the theatre, darling. . . . Peter. . . . No, he's gone. . . . Yes, darling. . . . Yes, darling. (*She listens as though to a long speech, and sits on DWIGHT'S knee.*) Oh, darling, I *am* sorry. . . . But you needn't do that. I'm quite all right . . . really I am. . . . Oh, well, in that case . . . When will you be back? Friday? The 15th? That's *this* Friday!

DWIGHT

(*sharply*)

You've got to sail Saturday!

LENORA

Shut up. (*Into telephone.*) Well, darling, I've rather a surprise for you. I think I'm going to be married . . . no, darling . . . married . . . *married*. . . . No, of course it's not Peter. . . . It's an American . . . it's rather nice, really. . . . (*DWIGHT kisses the back of her neck.*) Don't do that! (*Back to telephone.*) Nothing, mother . . . only, it's here now, I . . . I . . . (*She begins to giggle.*) I think you'd better speak to it! Wait a minute. (*She hands the telephone to DWIGHT.*) Here!

DWIGHT

No!

LEONORA

Go on.

DWIGHT

Oh, well. . . . (*Taking telephone: tentatively speaking.*) Hello. . . . Mother? . . .

[LEONORA *lets out a peal of laughter.*

CURTAIN

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *There's Always Juliet* by John van Druten]