THE DEVIL WE KNOW

PAMELA FRANKAU

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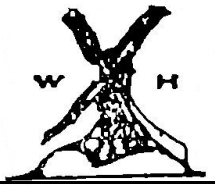
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ALSO BY PAMELA FRANKAU

MARRIAGE OF HARLEQUIN
THE FIG TREE
THREE
THE BLACK MINUTE
SHE AND I
BORN AT SEA
WOMEN ARE SO SERIOUS
LETTERS OF A MODERN DAUGHTER TO HER MOTHER
I WAS THE MAN
THE FOOLISH APPRENTICES
A MANUAL OF MODERN MANNERS
TASSELL-GENTLE
VILLA ANODYNE
JEZEBEL
SOME NEW PLANET
FIFTY-FIFTY
I FIND FOUR PEOPLE
NO NEWS

THE DEVIL WE KNOW

By PAMELA FRANKAU



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DEDICATION

To my mother Dorothea Frankau
and my sister Ursula d'Arch Smith

Better the Devil we Know, the proverb says, than the Devil we Don't Know.

But can the devil whom you and I unwillingly know, the devil of cruelty, bondage and persecution alive in the minds of men today, have any more loathsome rival waiting for him in obscurity? I do not think so. Here at least I try to shame him. The endeavour I dedicate to you because with you are my earliest memories of peace, kindliness and freedom. This, then, is your book.

P. F.

BOOK I

"*That Which I Want, I Cannot Have*"

January, 1931

CHAPTER ONE

I

PHILIP stood still and pointed. His own appearance, his own attitude, these were obvious to him as though he watched himself with the eyes of the man who stood at his side. Without lifting a hand to investigate, he knew that his hair no longer lay flat upon his head. The wind raised it in little Assyrian curls. He could see his own profile, with the bird-like nose and the large luminous eye; the corner of his mouth where the lips parted and the teeth shone; his neck, thick and well-shaped as the neck of a statue; the eager shoulders moving up toward his ears; his slight body in its carefully casual clothes; tweed jacket; grey flannels; suède shoes.

He knew that French was looking at him; not in the direction of his pointing finger, toward the frieze of roofs and tall chimneys in their smoke beyond the brown moorland. He did not know whether French's amusement were malicious. He did not care. His own self-consciousness was familiar company.

He said: "That's where you fade in. Then follow the way we go home; across the moor with the camera mounted on a car, so that you see only the road. The first sequence will take us right through the town; past the mills and the factories. Stop on the warehouse door. Wipe-over to the inside of the warehouse."

French, as broad as he was long, with a fleshy face and bright eyes like raisins, said: "That was indicated in your script."

"Well, now you see for yourself the quality of the exteriors. I couldn't describe it. The thrust that the city makes upon the moor; the blasting of the green into brown. The illogical beauty of those chimneys; even of the smoke." He knew that he was talking too floridly for French. He was silent.

"I see what you mean. But they aren't altogether easy exteriors. And the idea isn't so new as you make out. There was 'Hindle Wakes' in 1926; that's only five years ago."

" 'Hindle Wakes' was Lancashire; not Bradford."

"It was factory stuff."

"You're talking like one of the saps from the studio."

"I am one of the saps from the studio."

"French," said Philip, trying to control the gestures of his hands, "I don't mind your thinking I am an idiot. I do mind your thinking the idea's no good. I know it is good."

"You aren't directing this picture."

"But you were all for it in London. It was you who made me start on the script."

"We'll be walking back to the car," said French. He rolled his bulk on the short pillars of his legs. He was enormous without being repulsive. His flapping tweeds were exuberant in design. It seemed unlikely that he would fit himself into the bucket-seat of his small, perilous car.

"Get in, Meyer. I've seen enough of Yorkshire for this afternoon. It's cold and I want a drink."

"Wait for me one minute." Philip said. He went to the side of the road.

"Have you got a chill?"

"I might have," said Philip. He could not explain that French's erratic driving urged him to take the precaution. Ten years ago, a medical student had described the victim of a motor accident, with the pelvis crushed and the internal leakage. He could laugh at himself for remembering. He could not lose the habit.

He climbed into the seat beside French. With his nails in the palms of his hands, he endured the pace of the frail roaring torpedo; the risks of cornering and cutting in; the violent braking and presently the skid on the tramlines. French was talking all the time.

"I am frightened of the expense, for one thing. You know as well as I do that I've got the name for extravagance in pictures. And it looks to me as though the weather here might run us into thousands on the exteriors alone. I'll take any risk when I think the results will justify it. I'm not sure enough of this story of yours."

"The story doesn't matter," said Philip, watching the road. "I only advised on buying it because it could be adapted to the background. If you don't like it, we can throw it away."

"And what did we pay for it?"

"God knows," said Philip, "I'm not the finance department."

"Fortunately not."

"Oh, I dare say I can think you up as competent a story as any hack fiction-writer; and save the timid company its five hundred pounds."

"You were made for Hollywood, Meyer. So was I. But we aren't in Hollywood. We're in Wardour Street with the Jews; begging your pardon."

"Then," said Philip as they drove down Manningham Lane, "You want to give up the whole idea."

"Don't go so fast in so many different directions. I want time to think. Of one thing I am certain; that we couldn't touch these exteriors till the summer; and we ought to be on the floor by the end of February at the latest."

They went in to the lounge of the Midland Hotel. French ordered whisky and soda. Philip drank tea with lemon.

"I'd like you," said French, "to change your mind about going home to-night. I've an idea hatching and I want your verdict."

Philip heard himself saying too urgently: "Sorry. I must get the five-ten." He lightened his tone. "Forgive my being tiresome. It isn't entirely a matter of choice."

French sank his three chins on his collar; his eyes gleamed. "You are so pompous about this appointment of yours that I am beginning to think it's just a rendezvous with a girl."

Philip laughed and shook his head. "Don't let me forget my rendezvous with a girl at four o'clock. The aunt would never forgive me if I went without saying good-bye to her."

"Is she the last of your family?"

"Almost. She brought me up," said Philip. "Not entirely of her own free will, poor sweet. The war arranged that."

"How?"

"My family being in the wool trade had a good many connections in Bradford. This aunt married an Englishman and settled here. She had no children of her own and my mother unreasonably had five. I was sent over from Hamburg in 1913. I was six; a nasty yellow little boy. The idea was that I should live half the year with my aunt, learn English and eventually I suppose handle the English end of the business. But the war bankrupted the firm, I had to stay here. By 1918 my father was dead; my mother was in a hospital for incurables; three of my brothers killed; one crippled; I never went home."

"You're a naturalised subject?"

"Yes."

"Ever go back to Germany?"

"Not if I can help it."

"Did your aunt send you to Oxford?" French respected the Universities.

"She helped. There wasn't much difficulty. I won scholarships and exhibitions all round the clock," said Philip; "I ought to have gone into the civil service or the law. But I was so besotted with the idea of independence and of getting away from here that I swallowed the first job offered me; which happened to turn up during my second year. So I never took a degree and four years in the advertising business cured me of scholarly pretensions. I went in on the ground floor of this company because I had ideas about British pictures."

"You haven't lost those," said French.

"I am beginning to think there isn't much room for them all the same."

"Is that a cut at me?"

"No, of course not." Philip rose. "I'll be at the station by five, if you could bear to take my suitcase along."

The eyebrow-lift warned him that he was presuming; he went on deliberately—"You did say you wanted to see me off, and it is a heavy thing to drag about. And I know you never stir a step without the car."

"All right; all right," said French, not disguising his amusement. "Don't keep your aunt waiting."

Philip took a taxi and was driven to the corner of Emm Lane. The small double-fronted house with the Nottingham lace curtains made no sentimental appeal to memory because he had never forgotten it.

The years of youthful habit had stamped the image endurably. It might have been yesterday when he last walked the grey paved path between the laurels and slammed the squeaking iron gate behind him.

His Aunt Frieda glistened in the dusky room. She was a neatly-shaped little Jewess; the grey hair was no less positive than the black hair had been; shining and lively with her eyes, her Victorian jewellery; the dark red of her dress. She spoke English with a fanciful accent. Philip was reminded again that he would always be romantic for her, if for nobody else.

After she had kissed him on both cheeks, leaving with him the familiar smell of powder and mignonette, she said:

"Where have you been to, Lord Rendel, my son?"

"Over Ilkley moor," said Philip, spreading butter on the motza and inevitably breaking it. "As far as Bolton Abbey."

"For the picture? It will be stimulating for Bradford to be the subject of a picture. How does your director think about the idea?"

"He isn't as enthusiastic as I would like."

"What is with him?"

Philip said: “Expense, chiefly.”

“They will never make films in England. You had better be getting back to Germany.”

“Do you really think so?”

“I only judge by what I see on the screen; the German films make room for the imagination; plenty of room.”

Philip drank his tea and searched for a change of subject. It astonished him always that his aunt, exiled here for more than forty years, should take so vivid an interest in her own country. Her day was a day in the life of any provincial matron. Shopping, the library, bridge, the local activities, the local friends furnished it. He doubted whether she had left Bradford more than twice since the war. Yet her eyes were brightly attentive to the changes in post-war Germany; the relatives in Hamburg were instructed to keep her supplied with newspapers. No achievement in art, no fluctuation of currency, no state affair and no political movement escaped her study. It was a severely critical study; not a sentimental preoccupation with her origins. As though, Philip thought, she were for ever calculating the advantages of her exile; making the entries on the debit side with scrupulous honesty and still triumphing at the credit balance.

He knew why her talk of Germany made him uncomfortable; why he sought, whenever they met, to chase her off the awkward ground. However greatly he disliked being a Jew, and he disliked it heartily, he hated his German birth still more. And this was a secret that he must keep from Aunt Frieda; from the poor brother in Hamburg, who stumped about on crutches. Not only from these. From the population of his small world in London. He, who did not spare himself the sight of his own weakness, who was familiar with the very sediment of his soul, confided in nobody else. He constructed a number of façades and saw them betray him into arrogance; into a successful remoteness; into cruelty when he wished only to be kind.

He avoided comment on her outpourings.

“Was denkst Du, Philip?”

“Ich muss gehen,” he said, having meant to speak in English.

“You will drive to London in the dark, then?”

“No. I am leaving by train. French is staying till to-morrow. I must get back to-night. I have an appointment in London at ten o’clock.”

“Business at ten o’clock?”

“Nothing unusual for Wardour Street, I assure you.”

“Another cup before you go? It is nice, the tea.”

He drank the other cup lest he should remember afterwards that he had refused and so invest the tea with pathos. He burned his tongue.

"I might make a little visit to London before Easter. Can you get me seats for the trade-shows?"

"Of course; if you will let me know when you are coming."

She kissed him and said: "Do not catch cold," an instruction which she issued severely as though forbidding him a contemplated self-indulgence.

He heard her calling to him before he reached the front door. "Philip, you have not seen Joseph's letter!"

He had hoped that she would forget it. His brother's letters depressed him profoundly. Joseph wrote at regular fortnightly intervals. The long paragraphs in German script, the heavy references to the past, the occasional self-pity and the eternal talk of politics should, Philip thought, have claimed his sympathies. He could find very little affection for Joseph, the eldest brother, separated from him by fifteen years. Five years ago, when he had last visited Hamburg, he had vowed not to go back.

The flat in Harvesterhude seemed to hold all the sad horror of his family history within its two rooms. Joseph had become fat because he could move so little. He was middle-aged at thirty-five; with his paunch, his thin hair and his hobbling walk. He kept his war-medals in a glass case. He talked continually of the days before the war and the family before the war. The woman who looked after him was his closest companion; a mixture of nurse and housekeeper. Joseph was devoted to all things that were English, despite her hatred of them. She had disliked Philip acutely and jealously. Because of her, Joseph would not come to Bradford as Aunt Frieda wished him to do. He lived on the small income which she allowed him.

Philip stood reading the letter; it was no different from the other letters. Probably there would be one waiting for him when he got home.

Aunt Frieda said: "He keeps very cheerful. Is wonderful," and let him go.

The sky was already dark. He saw the chimneys mouthing reddened plumes of smoke; the lights renewing their old task of beauty; the lamps tilted by the steep hillside. On the London platform he found a messenger from the hotel at the doorway of a third-class carriage watching his suitcase.

"First," Philip corrected him. "Where's Mr. French?"

"The gentleman said to tell you he was going to sleep, sir, and he'll see you on Tuesday."

Philip interpreted the message. He had annoyed French. So much the worse. He wished that he need not feel guilty. The little taste of the error

went with him and soured the moment to which he had strained forward hopefully, the moment when the train moved.

"Damn his eyes. I won't think about him. I have done it. I have got away."

It had not been easy. It had involved him in the type of verbal complication which he dreaded. He had urged the Bradford week-end upon French a fortnight ago. Then the film-script, growing under his hand, had been the most lively of his preoccupations. When French yielded, he had walked home from the studio in Putney to his rooms in Bayswater, unconscious of wasting a Saturday afternoon, rejoicing because he thought that it needed only this voyage of exploration to push French head-first into enthusiasm. "He thinks with his eyes; like all of them," Philip had argued. "He can't see the story now because he doesn't know the background." He had spent the rest of his Saturday sketching the opening scenes, elaborating them into dialogue; one idea leading from another without effort until his stomach rebelled at the last cigarette and he saw that the time was nine o'clock.

He paused now upon this memory. From the railway-carriage he could see his own room, with the one lamp on the desk blanching the leaves of manuscript paper; beyond the circle of the lamp the smoky shadows; the dulled coals in the grate. He could see the haphazard mahogany furniture, the strip of dim brocade nailed to the wall above the divan that was covered in slippery chintz; the green china in the glass-fronted cupboard; the four water-colours and, from his desk to the folding table pushed against the wall, the long stretch of empty floor. A room assembled without taste and somehow contriving unity; unlike the furnished rooms chosen by his friends, with their pickled wood and rough fabrics. He had never wished to furnish a room of his own.

There was nothing strange about the room on that evening. Nor could this after knowledge observe his departing shape to be glancing backward from the door, as though guessing that it would look differently when he entered it again.

There was nothing divinely appointed in the decision to eat his late dinner at the Café Royal; no warning of adventure in the cold airs of the January night; no chariot but the omnibus.

He failed in his attempt to establish the conviction that he had seen a premonitory light dancing ahead.

Yet, now, the earlier evening became essentially a part of the story; the prologue; he lingered upon it with an appetite.

There, past the potted palms and the bookstall, into the heat, the crowd, the level uproar of the downstairs room, went the ignorant Philip Meyer, still absorbed with the script. He found no place on any of the red sofas. Somebody moved an overcoat from a chair and he sat down. Before him, the marble-topped table carried two gold glasses of beer, two ham sandwiches. Behind these, the couple on the red sofa continued their talk, untroubled by his arrival.

For several minutes his self-consciousness restricted his view. He was like a horse wearing blinkers. A cigarette and a deep breath gave him courage. He looked about him.

Uncomfortable as passengers in a tube train, they sat; the hearty young men and the pallid inexplicable dregs of Bloomsbury; the shock-headed strangers and the stout women; the girls and the boys; the girls who would be boys and the boys who would be girls. The noise that they made drifted above them with the smoke from their cigarettes. Beyond the gangway the more comfortably spaced diners experienced the white table-cloths and the five-course menu. A runnel of persons flowed continuously between the tables; the atmosphere of the place was that of a station waiting-room.

Philip's glance circled from the walls to his immediate neighbours. He looked last at the two facing him. He did not recognise the little dressmaker until he had stared at her cautiously over his glass. Then he was embarrassed, not knowing whether to salute her. Her profile was turned away from him. She listened devoutly to her companion.

He called her the little dressmaker not only because this was her trade. She had a humble quality, being colourless and quiet. She came to the studio at intervals with her designs for costumes. They treated her kindly. It was understood that she was niece or cousin of the chairman; that she must meet with charity. Philip thought more of her work than this. He prophesied a future for her and remained undismayed even when observing that she owned a small window in Orchard Street with the name "Victoria Lloyd" painted above.

Now while he waited for his cue he could not be surprised that long minutes had passed before he became aware of her. Hers was not a noticeable shape. He forced himself to notice her. Her smooth light brown head wore a centre parting, a knot at the nape of the neck. Her face, a little old-fashioned in its oval, was untouched by colour and her lips were pale. The eyes were large, grey and alarmed, the lashes curved, the straight nose was neatly finished with rounded nostrils; the pointed chin shone for lack of

powder; as usually, her narrow neck emerged from the collar of a white silk shirt; the cuffs of her black suit were worn and the points of the lapels dusty. At her present three-quarter view a muscle of the neck was tightly drawn, giving her a starved look. If she remained unaware of his presence and scrutiny, her companion did not. He had lowered his voice until he spoke almost in a whisper. His eyes stared deliberately over Philip's head. This was not difficult for him. He was a large person; blond and smoothly brushed; his regular features and his bright blue eyes, his tooth-paste grin must, Philip thought, have been attractive in youth. Now they were all involved in the strenuous effect; his large bulk was the bulk of the athlete threatening fat. Philip took in every detail. His school tie, blue shirt and grey suit, his short dry finger-nails. Where he had been obliged to stare at Victoria Lloyd, he found that this man imposed himself. Philip resented him without knowing why.

The man ceased his monologue, took a gold cigarette-case from his pocket and offered it to the little dressmaker. She shook her head, smiling faintly. While he was lighting his own cigarette she escaped from her attentive position. She lifted her glass. Her eyes found Philip. She smiled again, uncertainly, and he saw that the shadows on her skin were blue, that the whites of her eyes had a blue tinge. He had been watching her for too long to be startled out of his observation when she spoke to him. He said: "Good evening."

"How long have you been here, Mr. Meyer?"

"About ten minutes."

"I didn't notice," she said, apologetically, as though she had kept him waiting for an appointment. Her companion poised himself for the introduction. Still she looked steadily at Philip.

"Have you been at the studio all day? You look as though you have." Her soft, shy voice suited her face.

"No. I have been working at home." The presence of the large man drew Philip's eyes away from her. She followed the slant of his look and said formally: "May I introduce Mr. John Harrison to you? Mr. Philip Meyer."

"How do you do," said Mr. John Harrison in a wide, decent English voice. "Are you in this film racket?"

"I work in the scenario department."

"Is that amusing?" His smile pulled the corners of his mouth unexpectedly downward.

"Amusing?" Philip lifted his eyebrows; he was deliberate in his uncompromising attitude. The sunny, superior face remained sunny and

superior. Victoria Lloyd murmured: “It must be rather like having tea in the nursery all the time.”

“Yes. Enthusiastic and disorganised,” he said to her, ignoring John Harrison.

“I should say demented. You,” she began, hesitated gracefully and amended the sentence with apparent surprise at her own boldness. “When I see you sitting in the middle of them you remind me of a wounded faun—I’m sorry.” She tacked the last two words on to the earlier phrase with comic effect. Her speech and animation provoked in his mind the idea that he saw a two-dimensional picture raised into sculptural relief. She turned her head. The skin with the blue shadows became positive in its pallor; the muscle of the long neck drew tightly once more and the shoulder was tense as an arched wing. The lift of her breast, with the white silk stretched under, carried on the taut line and after the black sleeve broke it the pointed hand upon the marble took it up again. The finger-tips quivered.

III

Attacked by common sense, Philip lost the vivid thread. He stretched out upon the cushions of the railway-carriage, seeing his sudden love in meaner shape; the shape of lust.

He had ceased to be surprised that the small, pale woman could inspire it. Her company was familiar in his mind by two weeks of obsession. This had lasted from the moment when he stood again in his room that was changed. He had halted in the doorway, looking at the circle of the lamp upon the disordered table, thinking: “That was before I met her.”

Now the triangular conversation at the table in the Café Royal became a dialogue in memory. John Harrison, the ponderous circumstance, did not exist. He was alone on a voyage of discovery with Victoria. He had invited her to lunch. With her refusal she enclosed a prim card.

Victoria Lloyd
At Home
Sunday. January 18th
9.30 p.m.
11, Montpelier Row,
S.W.

At once the journey to Bradford was an obstacle. He dreaded explanations at all times and was heavy for a week with the necessity to say

casually: “I must go back on Sunday night.” He had postponed the news until the northward drive and broke it while they were lunching at Baldock. French was not pleased. For this reason, perhaps, he had been more than usually derisive during their week-end; more than usually inclined to float out of Philip’s mental reach, like a gigantic soap-bubble.

Philip glanced uneasily toward the rack as though French might be bobbing against it now. He made a friendly grimace. The globular ghost vanished and the woman Victoria Lloyd reclaimed his thoughts, still with the abrupt magic that had changed her flesh. He let the train’s speed dictate the rhythm of the dream.

He did not dare to ask: “What have I for her?” When he went on his way to the dining-car he glanced once into the mirror on the carriage wall; the lighted version of his face looked back at him. He saw such beauty as it owed to the East, the liveliness contradicting the heavy bones; the fluted hair and the forehead jutting above the excitable eyes; the nose’s shadow divided the short upper lip; he thrust his chin and straightened his tie. The echo of a tune from a Cochran revue returned in the parody which studio wits had sung to him:

“Oh I’m the Jewboy
The beautiful Jewboy.”

His merciless companions amused him. He knew that he would have found them on the Stock Exchange setting fire to his newspaper; pinning ribald notices on his back. Since the grammar-school there had been these things, at Oxford and after Oxford. It did not surprise him that the adult should enjoy such diversion. It did not cause him pain. Outward persecution was less always than the persecution in his own mind, the fear of giving offence, the fear of losing money, the fear of failure.

At this moment, looking forward to her, with all his dream in movement, he feared nothing. He walked down the shaking corridor as though to meet her at the end of it.

CHAPTER TWO

HE walked between the tables of the third-class dining-car, disliking his sense of superiority over those persons who must linger there. Philip had never been able to stomach third-class travel nor his own extravagance in avoiding it. He found the first-class car unpromisingly full.

"One, sir? This way."

The steward placed him at a table laid for two. Already seated, his companion was reading the menu. Philip looked at him. He was a small boy, with neatly brushed blond hair and the face of a plump elf. His grey flannel suit augured a school tie. Nothing about him explained the scarlet bow under his chin. His complexion was pink and white. He had, Philip thought, the extreme cleanliness and neatness of a schoolboy portrayed on the cinema screen. His nails were trimmed; his shirt-cuffs flawless.

Having studied the menu, the boy turned it politely towards Philip and opened the book that lay in front of him. The book was covered in dark green cloth; a library binding, with the title in gold letters: *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*.

Unself-conscious and absorbed, the boy kept his head bent, exposing the cherubic brow, the neat arches of two eyebrows darker than his hair. When the waiter said: "Anything to drink, sir?" he replied: "Lemonade, please," in a voice that was breaking. The soup was set before him. He laid down his book, grinned at Philip and said: "I can't read and eat at the same time. Other people can, but I simply can't."

"Good book," said Philip.

"Well, it is a good book. But I think Shaw is too plausible."

"Plausible?"

"Yes. Like a barrister making such a frightfully good case for his client that you stop to think how well he's doing it, and that makes you suspicious of the arguments right away."

"You don't agree with his views?"

"Oh, I'm a Communist," the boy said.

"Are you? Why?"

"If you don't mind, I think I had better not talk about it because I am inclined to become awfully boring."

Philip felt snubbed. The child ate his soup and wiped his mouth. "I used to talk about it a lot," he said apologetically, "but now I have stopped."

"Doesn't it go down at school?"

All the lines of the friendly, babyish face ran upward. He looked like Puck of Pook's Hill.

"Actually I am not at school just now."

"I thought it might be half-term or something."

The slivers of fish with the pink sauce demanded their attention. The boy ate a mouthful and then glanced at Philip. He was grinning more widely than ever. He said: "I left my school this afternoon," and giggled.

"For good?"

"Yes. It was quite easy. I got a bus into Bradford and sat in the waiting-room for an hour. They won't miss me before prayers."

"Do you mean," said Philip, "that you are running away?"

"Well, not exactly. I mean I wouldn't have run away if I'd thought they would let me go before the end of term. I left a letter explaining that. I am sure it will be quite all right."

"I hope it will. Were you unhappy?"

"No, thank you very much. I was just bored. My mother thought I would be. She wasn't keen to send me, but I wanted to see what it was like."

Philip blinked. He drank from his glass of beer. The uncertain voice went on: "Of course it was silly to go back at all this term. I ought to have had the guts to say I wouldn't. But a person I know at Rugby said that in his experience the third term was usually not so bad. So I thought I would try it. I say, I am sorry to load you with all this. It is just that I haven't talked to anybody for about six hours and I do rather a lot of talking as a rule."

Philip let his voluble hand make a gesture of reassurance.

"Are you going home to your family?"

"Oh, yes."

"Will they mind?"

"My mother won't. And my stepfather can't exactly, being a stepfather, can he?"

"I don't know. If it isn't impertinent, how old are you?"

"Just on fifteen. I know I don't look it. I'm so small for my age."

"And what are you intending to do next?"

"Have a tutor. It will be beastly, but I should think, better. I honestly couldn't work at school. Nobody could. Could you?"

"I went to a grammar-school."

"I believe they teach you more and don't knock you about so much." He sighed. "I could have put up with the knocking about if it hadn't been for the futile things one got knocked about for. Tying one's tie in the wrong sort of knot. Putting on one's cap in school field or walking with one's hands in one's pockets."

"All public schools are like that."

"My mother told me to remember that if I were on an island with a lot of savages I should have to conform to their savage customs for my own convenience."

"Which sounds sensible."

"I expect you have heard of my mother. Jennifer Nash. Her name isn't really that now, of course, because of having married again. But she doesn't use her new surname much. It's Flood. She married a person called Simon Flood."

"You're Jennifer Nash's son," said Philip slowly.

He knew as much of her, he thought, as any of his generation would know. It was patchy knowledge. Her name carried a backward echo rather than a current significance. While he watched the pompous, disarming boy help himself to three roast potatoes, two boiled potatoes, Brussels sprouts and cabbage, he assembled his facts.

Jennifer Nash had been a noisy beauty, of the year 1912. Fabian, suffragette, educationalist, "Stop the War!" agitator, she had provided newspaper headlines which Philip could still remember. He knew that she had married an earnest University youth. He remembered her divorce. He had the impression that the young man was now a dignified luminary. Somebody had told him the story; the details were gone from his mind.

Her name still appeared, under the titles of *Wisdom and The Child*, *Teaching with Common Sense*, and *The Worker's Problem*. The thought of her was faintly uncomfortable as though she wore sandals and ate nuts; he could not recall whether these idiosyncrasies were actually hers. He went on searching.

She spoke in public. She founded funds. She contributed first-hand impressions of the Unemployed to the evening papers.

This boy, unless her enthusiasms had taken a more concrete form than those advertised in the newspapers, was the son of the earnest youth, her first husband. He was exactly the type of child whom Jennifer Nash might be expected to produce. The phrases "a chip of the old block" and "the

wheel has come full circle" recurred irritatingly. Philip was not fond of clichés.

"Of course I have heard of her," he said. "I didn't know she married a second time."

"Only two years ago. He's not bad. He's very rich."

"And your name is Nash?"

"Yes." He spoke in jerks; communication being cut off while his mouth was full. "My father's a don at Oxford. As a matter of fact he's a Fellow of All Soul's. I don't see him very often. He's extremely nice. Split families are uncomfortable, I think, don't you? Crumbs! I don't believe I've ever been so hungry. Can one have second helpings on a train?"

After the second helping he ate apple-tart and custard. When the cheese appeared, he said: "I think I just about could." Having eaten it, he drank two glasses of water, sighed deeply, and began to count money in the palm of his hand.

The steward halted by their table with the bill. "Both together, sir?"

"Yes," said Philip.

"No," said the boy. "Please. I insist. Mine won't be more than six shillings, will it?"

"Five and threepence, sir."

"Don't be an ass," said Philip. One small neat hand pushed the hot coins on to the bill; another fended him off. "Please. Really. Honestly. They'll pay my taxi at Kensington Square."

He returned to Philip's compartment, carrying a blue overcoat and a small parcel. "I couldn't manage luggage, you see. It would have been spotted." He arranged himself in the corner facing Philip, crossing one leg over the other. "I suppose it was awfully extravagant to come first-class, but I wanted to be alone as much as I could in case somebody who knew the school saw me."

Philip nodded, wondering whether the matter of fact exodus would be appreciated as the boy assumed.

"Have you by any chance let your mother know that you are coming?"

"No."

"In that case perhaps we had better telephone her from the station."

"But please, you really needn't bother about me. I shall be perfectly all right. What time do we get in?"

"Ten minutes past nine. It's only eight now."

"Then will you excuse me if I go to sleep? I think it's all that food."

He subsided. Philip watched him for a time until his own thoughts, ceasing to be diverted, presented him again with the little dressmaker. He hoped that the care of young Mr. Nash would not obstruct him upon his way to her. The obscure reasoning by which he expected heaven to punish him for his smallest sin suggested that this would be so; that the boy had been set in his path to account for his desertion of French. In his philosophy, not only sins invited thunder-bolts. He could not pass an hour of selfish enjoyment without a sense of guilt; until he took his happiness as a man with a weak digestion might take a good dinner, saying: "I shall pay for this."

The boy slept until the train ran in beside the platform at King's Cross. Philip shook him awake. Dazed and still polite, he collected his possessions.

"Have you a hat?"

"No. I couldn't risk it. It was my school cap, you see."

He stood at the door of the telephone-box while Philip dialled the number.

"I'll speak to her. Honestly. You needn't bother."

"Mr. and Mrs. Flood are out, sir. They went to an early cinema and they are coming home for supper. Can I give a message, sir?"

Philip handed the receiver to the dancing boy.

"Hullo, Mason. This is Mr. Lawrence speaking. I am in London and I haven't the money for a taxi so could you pay it, please, when I arrive? Thank you."

He held out his hand to Philip. "Well, good-bye and thank you most awfully."

"I think I had better drop you," Philip said in spite of himself. He wanted to leave his suitcase and change his clothes before the party. He thought that he might still have time. Lawrence Nash went on protesting. They walked out of the station into a lively rain. In the taxi the boy said: "You must come up and Mason will get you a drink. I am not very good at drinks. My mother is a teetotaller. I always mean to be a vegetarian, but it is extremely difficult. I managed it once for a week."

As they approached Kensington he was silent, staring out of the window and rubbing it with his finger-tips when the glass became clouded. The taxi turned from the High Street into the square.

"There's our house on the corner." His voice growled.

"Worried?" Philip asked him.

"Not exactly. *You* know," said Lawrence and breathed outwards, "one just hopes there won't be a great deal of talk."

The front door was opened as the taxi stopped. "Please let Mason pay," Lawrence said, standing perplexed, with the rain splashing his hair. "And he'll carry your suitcase in. You can leave it in the hall."

"I ought to go, really."

The boy looked at him as a puppy might have looked.

"All right. I'll stay for a few minutes."

"Thank you most awfully. Have they rung up from school, Mason?"

"Yes, sir. About an hour ago."

"Is my mother back yet?"

"I think that's the car just coming now, sir."

"Oh, crackers!" said Lawrence. He stood beside Philip in the hall, digging his hands deeply into his pockets.

The nose of a car moved slowly beside the pavement while the butler held open the front door. A chauffeur descended. Philip had time to wink encouragement at the boy before a high voice clattered and the shape of Jennifer Nash arrived under the slanting rain. He saw red, vivacious hair, cut short and curling; eyes screwed up against the rain; a broad forehead; a square mouth painted scarlet. She was small and neatly built. This was a snapshot view for him before she cried "Lawrence!" and stood still just inside the front door, her face expressionless with surprise. Behind her shoulder a broad, bulky man said sharply: "My dear boy, what are you doing here."

"I just came. I mean I left. There is nothing wrong," said Lawrence. "This is Mr. Meyer. We met on the train. Might he have something to drink, please?"

Jennifer Nash whirled upon Philip. "How do you do. How kind of you. Forgive my momentarily scattered wits." Her hand was soft and small, lingering in his. "Have you run away, Lawrence?"

"Yes."

"Oh. Well, we had better get on to the school and tell them you are here. Get through, Mason, will you? I *am* sorry, Mr. Meyer. Thank you so much. Please come up. Lawrence, you look very tired. You had better go to bed." She marched ahead of them on the staircase. There was about her, Philip thought, the double effect of vagueness and practical efficiency. "Mason!" she screamed suddenly from the landing. "Tell Hopkins to make up Mr.

Lawrence's bed and put in the hot-water-bottle. Milk?" she snapped at Lawrence.

"No, thank you very much."

"No milk!" she screamed over the stairs.

She led the way into a room that was panelled and agreeably furnished. Philip observed a collection of jade in four glass cases; long, tapestried curtains; a modern flower picture. There was a table laid before the fire, with covered dishes and a bottle of hock.

"I never know why one should apologise for the presence of food," said Jennifer. "We are going to have our supper. Will you join us? No? Sure?" "What would you like to drink?" Simon Flood was asking. Lawrence tilted from one foot to the other. Jennifer kissed him suddenly and then turned again to Philip: "Well, if you really must go on to a party, let us all be comfortable for half an hour and I will beat my little son afterwards." She threw herself violently on to a sofa, exposing neat legs.

As Simon Flood handed him the whisky and soda, Philip thought that he, the host, was the least assured person in the room. It was he whom Lawrence watched from the low stool where he sat hugging his knees. There was a silence while Flood gave Jennifer a glass of barley-water and bestowed himself primly in a chair with a stiff back. He appeared to make himself deliberately uncomfortable.

"That is a very good train indeed," Lawrence remarked. His mother glanced at him ironically before she drove her ship's-figure-head profile in Philip's direction.

"Where," she asked, "have I seen you before?"

Remembering that he was now among the eternally hostile tribes of unknown and intelligent persons, Philip said: "My type is frequently duplicated. More frequently, I think, than the original warrants."

Jennifer cackled. In ten minutes she had extracted from him as many of his circumstances as he wished to furnish, then swung him into a muscular commentary on British films. At any other time he would have enjoyed it. He tried to direct his eyes unobtrusively toward his wrist-watch. The watch was hidden by his shirt-sleeve and he attempted to urge the sleeve backward with the friction of his wrist against the arm of his chair.

"You are on to the headmaster's house, madam."

"Oh. Put it through to my bedroom, will you, Mason? Excuse me. I shan't be a moment."

"I *must* go: I am so sorry," Philip said.

"Must you? All right. Come and have lunch here on Thursday. Do that. I am infinitely obliged. Good-bye." She flurried away. Lawrence, writhing at his collar with one hand, said in a low voice: "Thanks awfully. It helped a lot, you being here. May I really come to the studio some time?"

"Yes, of course you can."

"Oh, good. I shall see you on Thursday, anyway. Good-bye, Mr. Meyer."

Simon Flood accompanied Philip down the stairs. "I must apologise," he said in his uncompromising voice. "The boy doesn't realise that he's a nuisance. He hasn't learnt manners. When I was his age my mother taught me to do what I was told and shut up." His smile was suddenly sweet, changing his undistinguished face. "The man will get you a taxi. Now what I mean to say is——"

"I assure you," Philip interrupted him. "It was no trouble at all. I enjoyed his company." He glanced again at his watch.

"Where's Mason got to? These servants are never there when they are wanted. Oh, there's no doubt about it," he added, square as a parcel and bulking in Philip's path. "That's a bright boy, but my wife and I have different views about him." He shook his head fiercely.

Ten minutes past ten. Philip hovered, undecided. He might still have time to go home and change before the party ended. He decided not to risk it. The sharp syllables barked relentlessly past his ears.

"He's going to do something, that child. If he's treated sensibly now. If he were my son I'd—— Oh, Mason, a taxi for Mr. Meyer. Where was I? Yes, Lawrence. Children are just like dogs, really. Got to handle them the same way. Now I remember——" "Good night," Philip said, as the taxi drew to the door. "I am afraid I must really go."

"Good night. See you Thursday, then. Glad to have met you. Actually I may not get away in time for lunch. Lunch-parties aren't much in my line. I do a ten-hour day as a rule, and like it."

"Crackers!" Philip said in echo of Lawrence, as he sank into the corner of the taxi. "What an exhausting family."

The taxi turned out of the square.

He was on his way to Victoria Lloyd. This would be unlike the arrival which he had planned. Already he felt at a disadvantage. His hands were dirty and he was encumbered by a suitcase. The last encounter had succeeded in detaching his attention from the next, so that now he strove to impose some order upon his mind, to achieve some outward state; of calm; of impending wit; of mystery. He needed an aura. As always, when

approaching a front door that would open and admit him into unfamiliar company, he attempted to decide upon his rôle.

The scope was limited to-night. Three disguises only occurred to him. There was the happily exhausted traveller, telling of the distance that he had covered to come to this party, hinting to a possibly jealous woman that his journey had concerned itself with another woman. In further development of this character, there was the romantic and taciturn late arrival, refusing to explain his lateness. He was not, he thought, late enough for that. There was the *raconteur* who would make from Lawrence Nash's story a whimsical, epigrammatic romance. Philip was at a loss to choose between these three.

Smoothing his hair, pulling at his tie, choosing his first sentence, he found little time to wonder what company he would find. The taxi cruised along Montpelier Row. He saw the small garden; the lighted door; two cars standing outside the gate. He was appalled with shyness. He was reminded of every time since childhood that he had reached the door of a friend and hesitated before he knocked because it looked to his fearful mind like the door of an enemy.

No sound came from within the walls. He stood in the rain, looking upward. He was too much dazed to realise that he had found his way to the place where he longed to be. He saw only a house with darkened windows.

CHAPTER THREE

I

IN the hall Philip pushed his way past a group who paused to turn inquisitive heads before they went back to their conversation. One, a boy wearing a dinner-jacket, had opened the front door and murmured at sight of him: "I'll go and get Victoria." He did not come back. Philip carried his suitcase to the end of the hall and left it there. This was a small house. There was only one room on the ground floor, opening off the left side of the hall. He entered and surveyed the crowd from the doorway. For a few moments he found himself too shy to scan the faces and identify the members of his own race, a practice which he indulged punctually and instinctively.

He would, he thought, have been easier in the usual clamour. This appeared to be a quiet party. He glanced at the nearest couple. He recognised Lowenstal, the chairman of his company who was rumoured to be Victoria's uncle. Lowenstal leaned one arm on the mantelpiece and hung his heavy profile toward a woman who sat concealed in an arm-chair. He could see only her long skirt and her shoes. He thought for the first time: "If Lowenstal is Victoria's uncle she must have Jewish blood in her," and wondered why he had not observed it.

His searching eyes left the nearer scene; he saw nobody whom he knew. The farthest figures in the room were backed against a table and an elderly woman, featureless, amiable, dressed in brown lace, offered them drinks from the table. He was about to turn away when she saw him and came to him.

"How do you do. I am Victoria's mother. Have you just arrived?"

"This minute," Philip said, shaking hands. "I stepped off a train. I am afraid I had to leave a suitcase in the hall."

"And you haven't seen Victoria? Wait one minute. Teddy dear, go and find Victoria, will you?"

"He won't come back, either," Philip judged. In his predicament he reminded himself of somebody who had been taken ill or run over, recognised by the witnesses to be in need of his nearest relative.

"She won't be a moment," said Mrs. Lloyd consolingly. "Let me give you a drink. Beer or whisky?"

He drank whisky and talked in spasms with the group by the table who had nothing to say to him. He was relieved when Lowenstal approached the table, two empty glasses in his hand.

"Good evening, sir."

"There you are," said Lowenstal, as though a search of many hours had ended. "I've just been telling a friend of yours that you were somewhere around." Lowenstal towered over Philip; large as a tree; his thick white hair looked as though it were powdered; his thick black eyebrows looked as though they were painted. Philip found him physically disagreeable and did not cease to be surprised when others called him good-looking. He had a high colour and prominent lips.

"A friend of mine?" Philip echoed him.

"Says she's been a friend of yours since childhood. Began talking about you as soon as I told her who I was." He filled the two glasses and steered Philip towards the fireplace. Philip had time to recognise Sally Fisher in the chair, before a hand impeded him. He turned and forgot Sally Fisher who had, as Lowenstal observed, been a friend since childhood. Victoria Lloyd continued to hold his hand.

He could not decide whether his memory had fallen short of the reality or whether the reality betrayed the extravagant picture in his mind. He knew that there was a difference and amended his souvenirs while she said that she was sorry; that she was glad; that she had thought he might not come.

She wore a long grey frock that kept intact the simile of the little dressmaker. There was the white collar and two white cuffs; there was the sleek hair parted and bound at the back of her neck; there was the face whose lack of colour to-night endured only as far as the lips where light red paint emphasised the shape of the mouth. The blue shades were still on her skin.

Restoring the image of her he forgot to act a part.

"It is so lovely to see you," he said. "No, I don't want a drink. I am sorry I am so dirty. I came off a train and then I had to conduct a boy who had run away from school and talk to his parents." He was throwing away his good story. He could not arrest the flight of the commonplace words. He might have been certain that she wished to hear, as though they were already married, and he were telling her the dull detail of the day that was only important because it had separated them.

"Come upstairs," she said. "There are fewer people."

He followed; gramophone music sounded: "*My friend Elizabeth; out of temper—out of breath*." When she saw that the upper room was full she

halted outside the door, turning back to face him. The landing was in darkness; the light falling through the open door of the room polished her head and rounded her body in the grey frock.

"There is never any time or any place to talk at parties," she said.

"Most of the people here seem to be managing it fairly adequately."

"I am glad to see you."

"Why wouldn't you have lunch with me?"

"I don't know. Did you think it silly of me not to?" She kept her eyes lowered.

"Not silly. I wondered why."

She said: "I am not very good at explaining. Perhaps I was frightened."

"Of me?"

"In a way. Your eyes are so very talkative, aren't they?" She was drawing a design with her finger on the banister-rail.

"Where did they talk?"

"At the Café Royal."

"Then you knew?"

"Knew what?"

"That I fell in love with you."

"Did you?" she said.

"Yes, of course."

She took her hand from the rail and lifted her head. The movement brought her face completely into the shadow and he could not guess what look was there. Before she spoke, three people came from the room on to the landing. They halted. One was John Harrison.

"You remember Philip Meyer," Victoria was saying. Philip felt the large dry hand closing upon his. Now they were all four going down the stairs; now Victoria stopped in the hall to welcome a guest. Now he was beside the table with John Harrison.

"Whisky?"

"I won't have a drink, thank you."

The toothe-paste smile gleamed. "Well, I will."

He took no more notice of Philip. His attitude was that of massive self-satisfaction. He talked to a girl at his side. While Philip tried to look preoccupied, to assure himself that he was busy with his own thoughts, the loud governing voice of Mr. Harrison demanded his attention. Mr. Harrison was talking of polo; of his club; of Lord Somebody who was a great friend

and of his wife Lady Somebody who was a dear; he referred to a bunch of good fellows who had been through the War with him; he expressed a hope that in the next war Germany and Britain would be allied. The girl presently drew his attention to Lowenstal, asking: "Who is the huge man with white hair?"

"One of Victoria's Jew friends from the cinema world," John Harrison said.

Then Lowenstal was not Victoria's uncle, as the studio believed. Philip noted this fact without lingering upon it. He was impatient for Victoria and his hurrying thoughts could reach no conclusion until he should be alone with her again.

A flutter beside his elbow announced her mother. He studied her face for a resemblance and found little.

"I shall creep away to bed in a moment or two," she told him.

"Can I get you a taxi?"

"Oh, no, thank you. I live here," she said; "but the party won't disturb me a bit. My room is at the top of the house. Please don't apologise. Why should you know? So many girls live on their own now. I think I am a very lucky mother, don't you, to have Victoria staying with me instead of taking a flat?"

"I think she is lucky, too," said Philip fatuously.

"Of course, I can do little things for her. I don't believe she would bother to get a proper breakfast if she were by herself. She has to be off so early. And I know what a difference it makes when one has a busy office-day, not to have the responsibility of a home. Of course, some day she'll be going off and getting married."

Philip agreed moodily while further clichés flew.

"Are you all on your own?" she asked him.

"Oh, yes. But I have been for years."

"Years?"

"I am twenty-five."

"That is a great age," said Mrs. Lloyd archly. "But I believe all you young people grow up quicker than we did. Now Victoria is twenty-six she talks as though she were an old woman. And yet she's very childish in some ways."

"She has done extremely well, to have a business of her own already," Philip said.

He observed that this remark had changed her thoughts. The fixed smile went and the slate-grey eyes were puzzled for a moment. "Extremely well," she repeated after a short silence and added, as though she had said the words many times: "There was a little money to start it, you know; just a little after my husband died."

He grunted sympathy.

"She works tremendously hard. And she has a real flair for clothes. I know one shouldn't praise one's own child, but everybody says the same thing. Now only the other day——"

"Hullo, Philip," said Sally Fisher. She took a cigarette from the box on the table. He greeted her and struck a match for her, with Mrs. Lloyd murmuring: "Good night. I am just going to creep away. Good night." She nodded three times, the smile once more fixed, and fluttered her way to the door.

"I thought you were in Yorkshire," said Sally.

"I cut back for this party."

"Why?"

He did not resent the question. He resented nothing about Sally whom he regarded as a relation. Her father was a second cousin of Aunt Frieda; her mother had been obliged to work during the War-years and after. His aunt had taken care of Sally during school holidays. He and she had played together in Lister Park; walked on the moors; had quarrelled and argued and over-eaten together. She was four years younger than he.

Since she did not go to the University their London life had begun at the same time. Sally shared a flat in Bayswater with another young woman. Philip never lost sight of her. They met on occasion in the house of Sally's wealthiest relatives and she was more tolerant of them than he.

It was difficult for him to comment upon Sally. He thought her so near that his view lacked focus. He knew that she was fearless as a fox-terrier. She did not often voice an opinion and when the opinion came it showed a strength of mind as unsuspected as was the breadth of her shoulders when he saw her in profile. She made a narrow silhouette standing beside him now. She had a small dark head; the strands of her hair were fine and the grain of her skin was fine. The face itself was oval, distinguished by the very large brown eyes and thick lashes; not pretty; not plain; a delicate, honourable and pleasing face. He admired her because she could look as the hour or the fashion demanded that she should look; diaphanous, elaborate, ugly-smart; none of the up-to-date disguises caught her unawares. For this, among many

reasons, he liked to be with her. She was unsentimental, save where animals were concerned. She was neither extravagant nor mean.

She lived the life of all the straitened, practical young women in London, with meals at Lyons, omnibuses, cheap seats at the cinema, with "bargain" dresses and shampooing her hair at home on Saturday nights; with severe economy on Thursdays and two weeks' holiday every year.

For five pounds a week, she worked as secretary and right-hand woman to the editress of a monthly magazine. The faintly literary flavour of this occupation, wrung from its references to press-day, galleys and contributors, went a little way with her into her private life; so that people would talk deferentially to her about books, the author of a creamy serial would invite her to dinner and the glow refracted from Fleet Street would halo her head illogically.

"Why did you cut back for this party?" she repeated while he grinned at her.

"Aren't you enjoying yourself?" he retorted.

"Very much. But I didn't know you knew Victoria Lloyd until your chairman told me."

"And I didn't know that you knew her."

"She writes articles for us sometimes. I met her at the office. They are good articles."

"About what?"

"About dressing on fifty pounds a year and what to take away for a week-end."

"How can things like that be good?"

"You are highbrow. I thought it was kind of her to ask me," said Sally and added: "I wish I hadn't put on evening dress."

"Quite a lot of people have," he said, instantly sympathetic.

"I can only count four. It happened because I had dinner at Bryanston Square." The Davies family, her relatives, lived in Bryanston Square.

"I thought they called it supper on Sundays," said Philip, "and always made a point of avoiding cold fried fish."

"Don't be mean."

"How was Michael? Very incestuous?"

She looked as though she knew what he meant. In her childhood her cousin Michael Davies had ranged with uncles. Philip knew that she had been surprised to grow up and find him undergoing the kind of middle-age that made frantic and partially successful rapport with youth; a relation

suddenly obvious as a handsome, heavy man who might have lain in wait for her, impatient throughout her schooldays, ready as though at the door of a prison when, with her child's sentence served, she emerged into the adult world. Always, he had been there, for Philip to envy greatly and dislike a little.

Michael Davies had shepherded Sally through juvenile entertainments, Philip sometimes accompanying them. He had dispensed matinées, ices, ten-shilling notes. It was, Philip thought, a little indecent for Sally to know him now so differently; to see the matinées become evenings at the theatre with supper and dancing afterwards; the ices substituted by champagne; the ten-shilling notes paid for bottles of scent or flowers.

Philip seldom went with them. Michael's playground, the Jewishly-owned Mayfair, abashed him. Michael was pompous. He wondered why Sally kept so dutifully in touch with Bryanston Square.

"I was depressed there to-night," she admitted.

She glanced about her and he followed the glance. John Harrison and the girl with him had moved to another part of the room, that had now an emptier look; discovering to the eye the litter that was made of empty glasses, ash-trays overloaded, flattened cushions, chairs left at unsuitable angles. "People seem to be going," said Sally.

"I don't mind. What's depressing you, Sally?"

"All that money."

"What money?"

"In Bryanston Square."

"Were they being very opulent to-night?"

"No, not at all. It was only that I saw it suddenly."

"And wanted it?"

"About a twentieth part of it," she said, "would do for my purposes."

"But they aren't really rich, you know. Michael and Clare together can't be worth more than five thousand a year. I don't call that rich."

He saw on Sally's face an expression as though he had told an offensive story in her hearing. She said a little wearily: "You don't understand." She moved away from him and was absorbed into another group; the last group left in the room. He could hear the intermittent slam of the front door; the jarring taxi-noises outside; voices calling: "Good night, Victoria!" The gramophone was now audible overhead.

"*Living in the sunlight,*
Loving in the moonlight,
Having a wonderful time."

He postponed the moment when he should go in search of Victoria. He had time to notice the shape and furnishings of the room. It was a double room, divided by an archway. This, the farther half, in which he stood, must be used as a dining-room whose table now was pushed back against the wall. He looked at the modern chairs, the curtains and covers in duck's-egg blue, the pale flower-pictures on the walls; he was glad to learn something of Victoria's background by heart.

Presently he went out and climbed the stairs. There was a lull in the departure of the guests. He stood on the step below the landing; where he had stood with her. The landing was still in darkness. The door of the upper room was shut. Somebody had changed the tune:

"*Each night I sing you a lover's song.*
It's incomplete,
My sweet."

He hesitated, still standing on the last stair. He was no longer shy nor uncertain of himself. He saw in a prophetic glimpse, the whittling down of all his loneliness, his shields and prejudices. With her, he must leave these spiritual companions behind. He had never known so comforting a sense of adventure. There was nothing here to alarm or dismay.

He might have been waiting in the cold dark of his own youth for the last time. He postponed for a little longer the minute that should end it, the minute that would let him go in, to the light. Then he opened the door.

II

There were three people in the room, Lowenstal, John Harrison and Victoria. This was a small room, that looked like the feminine variant of a study. Its desk, divan and solitary standard lamp furnished the space intimately. There were bookshelves to the ceiling. Lowenstal stood as Philip had seen him earlier, with one arm along the mantelpiece, his head hung forward, leaning over Victoria. She sat on the settle before the open fireplace, the hem of her long grey skirt like a large bell flower about her feet; one arm carrying her weight as she leaned it behind her, the other arm

outstretched upon her knee with the hand limply fallen. Her profile in the firelight was lifted to the man's face.

It was John Harrison who ministered to the gramophone, stretching an arm from the divan where he lay with his feet drawn up, his back supported by a heap of cushions. His hair had ruffled into a wave upon his forehead; he was benign and luminous; his unmistakable condition emphasised his good looks. He glanced at Philip beneath half-lowered eyelids. Lowenstal broke off his sentence and Victoria turned her head.

He did not know what they might have been discussing. He had the sense of breaking in upon a situation that should have remained private from him. On Lowenstal's face there was a look of grim irritation; Harrison bent over the gramophone. Victoria's smile became protective and welcoming; she stretched a hand towards him.

"I was just coming to look for you. Has everybody else gone?"

"Nearly," Philip said. "I think Sally Fisher and two or three people are still downstairs."

"Then come and be peaceful with us. John, give him a drink."

Harrison rose obediently. "Say when, there's a good boy."

Philip joined Victoria on the settle. Lowenstal stamped like a bull and declared above their heads: "Well, I shall be getting along." Philip thought that he sounded angry. "But I want to talk to you to-morrow. These things can't be decided at parties. Will you come into the office or what?"

"I will telephone," Victoria said meekly.

"You're wrong, you know," he flung at her and halted in the middle of the room as though he would continue the mysterious argument.

"When one comes to think of it everybody who doesn't agree with one is always wrong," said Harrison. He spoke with drunken good humour; it surprised Philip that Lowenstal should turn sharply, his face red and appearing to thicken. Then he glanced downward at Philip, bit off a word and substituted "Good night." He shut the door carefully.

"Your friends," said Harrison.

Philip looked at Victoria over the edge of his glass. She smiled and wrinkled her nose at him. He pushed one hand nearer to hers upon the settle. He did not dare to ask what had been happening in the room, nor was he urgently curious. He was content. Harrison's drunkenness disarmed him and he could sit here without feeling the first instinct of resentment revive.

Victoria said: "Do I apologise to you for your chairman; or do you apologise to me?"

"He can shout when he likes," Philip ruminated. "I think that such a large person should never be allowed to shout."

"I'll bear that in mind, little man," said Harrison.

Philip thought: "Which was meant to annoy; and doesn't."

"I have decided," Victoria said, "that I shall cease to suggest any new ideas to the firm of Jupiter Pictures. Jacob takes them as personal insults."

"Eh?" said Harrison, sitting up.

She gave him one swift glance as though, Philip thought, she would have kicked him on the ankle had she been near enough. He continued to look tousled and aggressive, like a baby suddenly woken from sleep.

"Who was suggesting new ideas to that bloody old Hebrew?"

"I was. You heard me. That was why he got so angry. Don't be silly, John." Her voice held a shrill and anxious note.

"Nothing of the sort," said Harrison with his face in his glass. "You know perfectly well . . . nothing of the sort."

Philip looked curiously from one to the other. Victoria's lips formed the word "tight" for him to read and she grimaced comically. He hoped as he sat there that John Harrison would soon go. He hoped that John Harrison would not achieve the stage of intoxication wherein he would require assistance. Philip detested this obligation and was accustomed to dodge it at all times. He examined John Harrison's face for signs of green. John Harrison's complexion remained healthy. He yawned and stretched, lying back while Victoria's hand approached Philip's hand until she covered it. He grasped at her fingers. Her voice went on, faltering a little; and the words trailed at last into silence. Like a guilty child, she turned to see whether they were observed. John Harrison's eyes were shut.

"Will he go?" Philip whispered.

She shook her head. This dismayed him so much that he let her hand fall. She darted it back to hold his wrist.

"Never does when he is like this."

"Shall I wait?"

"It will be easier if you don't."

"You aren't engaged to him, are you?"

He saw that she began to laugh. "No, no. Of course not."

"Couldn't you tell him to go?"

"Difficult." She looked as though she were searching for the answer to a riddle. "My mother will come down and make tea in a minute. *Then* he'll

go," she murmured triumphantly.

"Can't I stay till then?"

"No." She touched his cheek with her finger.

"When can I see you?"

"Not to-morrow." She frowned and the frown suited her forehead very ill; she looked peevish as an invalid. "Thursday is the best day." Again she glanced over her shoulder. "Could we have lunch on Thursday?"

"Yes. No. I said I would lunch at Jennifer Nash's house. But I could put it off."

"Don't. We will do something. Not dinner. After dinner on Thursday?"

"I don't think I can bear to wait till then."

"Nor can I," she said. She rose in one movement that let her skirt fall, leaning her body back and away from him so that he remained on his toes, leaning foolishly toward her. John Harrison woke up, saying: "Hullo. What. Good night. Sorry" He slumped off the divan. His clothes were wrinkled on his thick body. He held out a hand whose touch was unpleasantly warm.

"Good night," he repeated with an imbecile grin. "Shall I show you out?"

"No." Victoria fended him off. "Give yourself a drink." She shut the door. Philip would have caught her and she swerved out of his arms' reach, running down the stairs with her skirt gathered in her hand.

"Here. Wait. Victoria."

She looked back, her face bewildered.

"It will be all right, won't it?" he said.

She looked wise. From the ground-floor room Sally Fisher emerged with two young men.

"We must go, Victoria," they all said. "Lovely party."

She said: "Bless you for coming. Does anybody want a taxi?"

"We have got a car. Can we give you a lift?" said one of the young men to Sally.

Sally said: "Philip goes my way."

Philip picked up his suitcase. Victoria telephoned for a taxi, stooping above the instrument that stood on a small table in the hall. They waited. Sally said: "It was sweet of you to ask me." Victoria said: "I am afraid it was rather a silly party." Although Philip kept his eyes directed to her face, he could not employ these last seconds usefully because he would so soon be gone. He felt that he had left her already. The gentle stutter of the taxi's

engine became audible in the street. Then he had said good-bye to her, pressing her hand and looking back, with the weight of the suitcase dragging his shoulder. She remained in the doorway, silhouetted until they reached the gate. She called “Good night!” faintly and shut the door. He followed Sally. He said: “I’ll take you home.” He had thought that he would wish to be alone and remembering her; he was surprised that he should still want company as though the evening had ceased to reassure him.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN the taxi Sally said: "I think we outstayed our welcome at that party," and he snapped at her.

"Why are you cross?" she asked.

"I am sorry. I didn't mean to be. I have had rather a protracted day."

He told her about Lawrence Nash and about Jennifer, making the story as amusing as he had made it dull for Victoria. Sally said: "He sounds a loathsome little boy."

"He wasn't, oddly enough."

The taxi negotiated the wet gleaming emptiness of Westbourne Terrace and found a short avenue of stucco houses. The scaling pillars, the boards optimistically announcing attractive flats, were more than ever melancholy in the rain. The lamps threw their poor yellow light. Two dustmen pushed a barrow with a skeleton sound of wheels. Sally said: "You don't want to come up and have a drink, do you?"

"What is the time?"

"One o'clock."

"I would like to, Sally, if you aren't too tired. I can leave my suitcase in the hall. I have been doing that all night. I don't know," he said, "why I should be so wide awake."

She pushed three shillings into his hand. He paid the taxi. They mounted the dusky stairs, which ceased, beyond the third floor, to be wide and carpeted. After two narrow flights covered in oilcloth the front door of Sally's flat abutted with the highest stair acting doorstep. She led the way.

The sitting-room with cheap bright paint and cheap bright curtains, blue cushions, framed railway posters, made the first impression that any blonde young woman might have made before it could be observed that she was not pretty at all, merely coloured and dressed to advantage. After saying: "How nice it is in here," the visitor would notice small sash-windows, the ugly gas-meter and the marks on the ceiling where old electric light fittings had been removed. Philip was used to the room. Sally lit the gas, saying doubtfully: "I think it wants another shilling," and looking at it as though it were a baby whose inconvenient needs were not always obvious. Philip fetched beer from the cupboard and a tankard from the mantelpiece. He seated himself opposite her in the second of the blue arm-chairs. She opened an inlaid cigarette-box and shut it again. He handed her his case.

"Fortunately I filled it at Victoria's house," he said.

"Oh, Philip."

"Don't 'oh' at me. You've done something different to the room. Turned the desk. Who is the military young man on the desk?"

"Ronald," she said.

"You didn't tell me he had grown a moustache."

"He has always had a moustache."

"Oh. Well. I have never come in contact with it," said Philip, giggling foolishly.

Sally blew a cloud of smoke. She looked so dejected that he leaned towards her, holding out a hand.

"What is it, love? Did the Davies' treat you rough?"

"No. You don't want any more life stories to-night," she said. "Little Socialist schoolboys and Victoria Lloyd are quite enough."

"*She* didn't tell me a life-story."

"Oh. Wasn't that what you were doing upstairs?"

"So you don't like Victoria," he said.

"Does it matter if I do or not?"

"No."

She looked at him for a moment without speaking. He met her eyes and thought that his own might be denying interest too stubbornly. ("Your eyes are so talkative, aren't they?")

"Philip," said Sally, "if you wanted to marry somebody and couldn't, what would you do about it?"

He allowed himself a swallow of beer before replying. "I should consider myself the most ordinary of persons in the most banal of situations."

"And would that help?" she asked, with her eyes like the eyes of a dog.

He laughed. "No, naturally not. I don't know why I am being grown-up. Why can't you marry Ronald?"

"How can I? Air Force pay isn't enough. I can't keep my job if I marry him because I shall have to live at Portsmouth or wherever the squadron happens to be. And even if we could live on the pay, regulations won't allow him to marry for another five years."

"What about his family?"

Sally said: "They haven't got any money at all."

"Do they know that you are engaged to him?"

"Yes."

"And what do they say?"

"That it is very good for us to wait because it will give us a chance of changing our minds or alternatively that five years will go like a flash."

"Poor Sally. But there is nothing new about this, is there?"

"I wish there were," she said sadly.

"You aren't happy, being on your own, doing as you like? No, you can't be, with this." He saw suddenly that he might not again be happy doing as he liked; that to-night he had shut a gate upon his own freedom. He looked at Sally with stronger sympathy. She let the ash lengthen on her cigarette. "If I can do something about a situation," she said, "I can stand it, however bad it is. But here there is nothing I can do. Except wait for his letters and his leave and then wait again afterwards."

"Are you living with him?"

"No," she said. "He wants that and I don't."

Philip nodded.

"I would if I thought it was sense. Sorry, Philip, nothing could be duller than this problem, could it?"

"Dull," he repeated. "I don't see how it could be dull." He was remembering the young women whom he had met between the year 1926 and this year 1931. He thought it odd that a social system allowing these young women their whims should refuse the single wish of Sally. He said: "Not dull. The only people who find love dull are perverts. There is a sameness about all love, as there is a sameness about all religion. And bed for bed's sake is dull, being described. I am not sure that even that is dull when one is doing it. Silly or embarrassing afterwards, perhaps. And certainly a poor subject for conversation. But your thing—" he looked at her again compassionately—"your species of spiritual tooth-ache is what the heart is made of. A much truer ordeal than this so-called slump; than the comic mistakes of the Labour Government." He found that his hands were moving and folded them.

"So?" Her eyebrows lifted.

"So nothing, my dear."

"What shall I do, Philip?"

"Console yourself that you have company."

"What do you mean? The fire's going out. Are you in love?"

He fumbled for a shilling.

"No. I didn't mean that," he said. "I meant that a great many solitary young women with all their lives before them and latch-keys in their pockets are hankering quietly after the one thing which their parents did not provide when they gave them their freedom."

She snapped the shilling into the slot of the meter and turned the key until a toothy noise, followed by a clang, encouraged the separate flames to rise.

"What happened to you in Bradford?" she asked.

"I walked and drove miles with French. He won't make the picture." He paused to reflect that this, a threatening sorrow, no longer mattered to him. "Nothing else much. I saw Aunt Frieda. Why?"

"Something else did," said Sally.

"Am I different?"

"You are kinder."

"That might be the lateness of the hour; and three whiskies chez Victoria."

"You aren't in the least—racial to-night," said Sally with a grin.

"From one with at least a quarter of the blood in her, I consider that a clumsy gibe."

"Sorry."

"All right," he said, "I must go. Why don't you like Jews, Sally?"

"I do really. I couldn't stand your Mr. Lowenstal."

"The rich ones are the worst. If I am ever a rich one I promise you that the first thing I finance will be a pogrom." He stooped over her. "Don't be miserable, Sally."

"Because you are happy?"

"I wouldn't know what I was," he said.

"How would it be to have a child?" she asked; "a baby?"

"You? Me? Us?"

"Me."

"Without being married? Would you want that?"

"No, not really." Her lashes covered her eyes. "Forget it. Good night, Philip."

"Do you want some money till Friday?"

"No, thank you, darling. I have a lot. I sold all my clothes. Are you doing anything at the week-end?"

He hesitated. "I am not sure. Why?"

"Meriel says I can have her car. I thought I might go down and see the parents. But I don't want to go by myself."

"Whose parents?"

"Ronald's."

"They wouldn't like me much, would they? I mean aren't they old Army corpses?"

"No," she said. "They are nice."

"I might come. I'll ring you."

"Do. Please. Good night, Philip. Thank you for taking me home. I hope nobody has stolen your suitcase."

He went down the tall stairs. He walked for some time, carrying the suitcase, before he found a taxi. He was driven the short distance to his own flat, through streets that seemed emptier, lighter and wetter than they had seemed half an hour ago. As he drove, he remembered that he was returning home after an absence of several days; that it was his habit on such occasions to expect miracles of good fortune awaiting him. This evening he would expect nothing.

He went up, and found the room, with the manuscript paper lying orderly beneath the lamp; the thin pile of letters; *The Times* and the *Observer* of the week-end, neatly folded on a chair; a brown-paper parcel from the laundry. He stood smiling upon these ordinary things. He glanced back along the day that had begun in Bradford. For a moment, he had no fears in love. He remembered Sally pityingly; pity faded from his mind. He undressed and stood before the window, watching the rain. He was patient with the days that withheld her from him. When he knelt beside his bed he said nothing of her in his prayers. He made a compromise of prayers, having long deserted his own religion. Since he did not serve God in any church he refused to ask a benefit from Him. He would kneel a long time, thinking confused thoughts, fingering the crucifix which he had bought in France. At this moment he would search for words as though an immortal phrase, now denied, must some day be spoken for his consolation.

CHAPTER FIVE

STILL resentfully imitating sleep, Philip heard the rattle of the tray set down on the table beside his bed. The small, dull voice said: "Half-past seven, sir," the padded feet withdrew. While he enjoyed the last moments of warmth and ease, he wondered again at his liking for late hours; his inability to retire before midnight; his preference for bed at two a.m. This should, he thought, be the habit of persons who could dispense with sleep. He could not. He needed a minimum of nine hours; on solitary Sundays he would sleep until after midday, wake for lunch and sleep again in the afternoon.

Sulking at his mistaken time-table, he sat up; he encountered the cold air beyond the blankets; he was already promising his weary and offended body an early night. He thought: "I could dine at home. I shall have dinner in bed." From here no future looked more desirable. He drank his tea. By the time he had crawled out into the cold, he was arguing: "Except that I shall have to order it this morning and something might happen before to-night. Nothing will happen. I didn't mean *that*, anyway. I know perfectly well that I must wait until Thursday. I meant an ordinary invitation." He was reminded of his vulnerable state too soon. The reminder persisted through the insertion of pennies for his bath; the waiting for the thin jet of water; the uncomfortable shave, leaning over the bath toward the looking-glass veiled by steam. Once he had begun to be warm again, he could forgive and salute his own disorganisation. His world was crooked and sweet; every thought made a bruise.

He went down the draughty stairs and crouched beside the gas-fire to pull on his underclothes. He envied those who were not ashamed to wear long tubular garments of wool. He saw a mauve nose in the mirror when he parted his hair. He upbraided the weather because it involved a waste of time. Time was wasted in moving nearer to the fire; in dodging draughts, shutting doors, winding woollen mufflers and not losing gloves. His hell would be of Dante's frozen variety. Burrowing against the wind on his way to Lancaster Gate Tube Station, he could not believe that he would ever be warm again. He saw the reddish sky, the black branches over the park railings, the white frill of frost on the pavement edge, as lively and inimical forces directed especially against Philip Meyer.

It was warm in the train. His feet thawed while he stood in the crowd, reading a distorted newspaper at close range. He fought his way out at Putney. He dodged across the road under the bridge, and hastened up a side

street towards the lean brick buildings of the Studio. Despite the early hour, the children who lingered to collect autographs were already entrenched. They were accustomed to barrack him. He hustled through them with averted head and passed in the swing-doors with a cry of "Coo, it's Ronald Colman!" reaching his ears.

The entrance-hall of the Jupiter Film Studio contrived to illustrate all the functions of the industry, with the lime-green walls, the posters of huge favoured faces, the vigilant porter; the notices informing the entrant that he was not to smoke, that he was to state his business at the door, that he was not admitted to the studio, that he must turn left for the studio, that he must keep silence, that he must keep out. Two wide corridors led off the entrance-hall and there were two lifts. Above the waiting-room door a case of small glass numerals was explained by a label reading: "You Are Wanted In Your Room." At intervals a selection from the figures became charged with red light. Sometimes all the figures were lit at once and there was always at least one winking madly. Room Number 321 had been illuminated, Philip reckoned, for a week. He wondered whether anybody except the bewildered visitors ever consulted the information.

He took the lift to the fourth floor and entered room Number 326 which he shared with Montagu Rivers, who was entitled, variously, head of the scenario department, chief contact man and director of accounts. Montagu Rivers had the large desk beside the window and three telephones. Philip had the small desk in the way of the draught from the door and one telephone. There was just enough space for the chairs of the two shorthand-writers, Montagu's being called a secretary and remaining constant, Philip's being called a girl and changing hourly with the needs of the copying-room. Number 326 was central-heated. During the morning the pipes would be recovering from their nightly cessation of activity; by late afternoon the walls would be warm to the touch and the room completely airless.

Philip slid through the door which hit his desk if opened too widely; he hung his hat on the hat-stand whose antlers leaned out over Rivers's blotter. Rivers was already in his chair. He was a thin little man, fluffy-haired, pink-nosed and wearing horn-rimmed glasses. He had a Cockney accent; his vitality was excessive; he called the entire staff and all the stars by their Christian names. At this moment he was cleaning his nails with a pocket-knife.

"Hullo, Philip. I wasn't expecting you so bright and early. Thought Jeremy was driving you back to-day."

"He's driving himself back to-day and I don't envy him," Philip said.

"Have a row with Jeremy?"

"No, of course not. I had to get home last night."

"And how did his lordship like Bradford?"

"He wasn't much impressed."

Philip had removed his jacket, substituting a dark blue sweater from the hat-stand. Before the small looking-glass on the wall he smoothed his hair, correcting its threatened escape from the flatness induced by brilliantine to the likeness of astrakhan. During this, he was aware, as ever, of Montagu's unspoken derision.

He edged in behind his own desk, discovering and avoiding a wire-basket whose burden of typescript was topped with a blue-pencilled note: "Mr. Meyer, for your urgent attention and report, please." He identified a number of publicity communications, destroying them unread. After he had opened the letters he took a duster from the top drawer of the desk. Montagu's silence still derided him while he polished the top of his inkpot and the silver ash-tray. He tore the top sheet of soiled paper off the blotter. He set the blotter exactly in the middle of the desk. He lit a cigarette.

"And now that the ritual is concluded," said Montagu, "Is there anything we ought to get down to before these bloody telephones start?"

"Nothing much from my end. Who's Ralph Broughton?"

"I thought he might be able to write us a story for little Mimi. He's coming down this afternoon to see her tests. I shan't be here so you must do the honours."

"I think this letter's meant for you. His agent has written to say that his play comes off this week. What's that to do with us?"

"Jacob wanted one of us to see it. He likes it; Jeremy hates it. We might take an option. Like to go and add your view?"

"Have you seen it?"

"No. It isn't in my line. Some kind of a mediæval drama. Not surprised it hasn't caught on. I can't stay awake through those things. Still, you might give it a push. I pressed for the option."

"Why?"

"On the title, 'Savage Saint.' Damn' good title."

"Perhaps we could buy the title at a reduced fee and write a story round it," said Philip with a purr, "Or how would it be to use it for Mimi Blake's picture? A school story. Mimi can be a little girl with a horrid temper who is really golden-hearted."

"Title's a bit heavy for Mimi, I think," said Montagu. "'Savage Saint' doesn't suggest a kiddy, somehow."

Two of his telephones rang simultaneously and Philip, ignoring his obligation toward the wire basket, extracted from a blue folder his half-written script for the Bradford picture. It had been typed for him on Friday. He settled down to read and correct it comfortably. The telephones of Montagu continued to ring. The one-sided and besotted conversations raged; his secretary took letters, made appointments, left instructions for many absent persons to ring Mr. Rivers on their return. The room began to be warmer. Rivers's pipe and Philip's cigarettes thickened the atmosphere with smoke. The door opened, jarring Philip's desk punctually. By eleven o'clock he knew that he must waste no more time and promptly decided to descend to the canteen for a cup of coffee. Montagu Rivers interrupted the dictation of a letter to chirrup: "Losing consciousness again?" He had taken this opportunity since Philip's unwary confiding of the fact that he always felt a little faint at this hour. Philip had laughed politely when Montagu laughed and still could not find the joke. He could see nothing funny about any sort of illness. His mild morning symptom had planted misgivings about the state of his heart until a specialist, for three guineas, established its soundness. After this the sensation had come less frequently.

His motive in going to the canteen was more nearly concerned with Victoria Lloyd than with an appetite for coffee. He would find Julius Cohen at the canteen, drinking hot milk and looking like a melancholy marmoset. Cohen had charge of the wardrobe in the present production of "Blue Butterfly." Victoria had submitted the first designs.

The canteen, a long glass cage strung out at the back of the building, wore its usual aqueous look; the grey daylight and the yellow electric lamps competing in a steamy mist. At the long tables the groups of actors wearing their make-up and costumes suggested that a fancy-dress ball was taking place in a swimming-bath. Julius Cohen was in his corner. Philip, carrying the coffee, sat down opposite him. "Good morning," said Julius Cohen, and added: "If there is such a thing."

"It's bloody cold," said Philip. "How are you?"

"My kidneys are terrible."

"I am so sorry."

"We were on the set at five o'clock this morning."

Philip grunted and groaned with him.

"Oh, it's a great life," said Julius Cohen. "You scenario boys don't see half the fun. When Malvina put her foot through a hundred-pound costume before the first take, I could have killed myself laughing."

"Are they using Victoria Lloyd's designs?"

"Eh? No. My designs. Her ideas."

"Sorry——"

"She's a bright girl, all the same."

"Was it you who told me she was Lowenstal's niece?"

"I? No. Why?"

"Somebody said she was. She can't be. There's no Jewish blood there."

"No. She looks like a goy," said Cohen. "Perhaps she's an adopted niece." He winked and sighed. "No? Nice little girl?"

"Very nice," said Philip and then regretted that he had not chilled Cohen with icy dignity. He could think of nothing further to say. He knew that Cohen would change the subject and he did not mind. He had released something in himself merely by speaking her name. He paid for the coffee and left the canteen.

For two hours he read the contents of the wire-basket. Stories, synopses, amateur efforts at a script; all had been sifted through the editorial department and it was therefore necessary to give them his whole attention. A year of sharing the room with Montagu Rivers had taught him to concentrate. He could have read a story and made an accurate report on it with road-drills and parrots ranged about his desk. At one o'clock, when the girl had taken his notes, he rose, stretching and walked to the looking-glass. He could rearrange his hair at leisure. There was a sudden adventure in being alone and quiet. He decided against lunching in the canteen. He ate alone at a restaurant overlooking the river, reading the evening paper whose early edition with its excitable headlines was more of a tax on his concentration than the morning's work had been. He wished, as he read, that he might, without effort become better informed on contemporary issues. In order to excuse his apathy he was obliged to readjust his state of mind until he could believe that he was a creative worker whose eyes must be necessarily turned away from such things; whose selfish preoccupation might some day bear fruit and shake the world. In an honest mood this argument was very little consoling. What was he, after all, but an office-boy of the arts? A slick and governable messenger running between the purveyors of rubbish and the devourers of rubbish?

He knew that he could not excuse himself on any grounds save the grounds of a congenital discomfort. He was doubly no Englishman; he dared not lift his head to the wide and troubled skies over Europe because they shamed him. The desolation of his country reproached his conscience while it left his heart unmoved. England he could not love; he took her for granted as a son might take his family for granted. It might have been a perverse

loyalty to Germany that kept him indifferent. He would defend himself against Sally Fisher who read every word of the debates in the House of Commons, who dragged him to the Stranger's Gallery against his will, who could discuss unemployment assistance or army estimates with a knowledgeable mind.

"What would be the good of my taking an interest? I can't do anything about it."

"All you ever read is Proust and silly novels."

"I like to think about people; not institutions."

"You like to think about yourself."

He did not tell her that the congenital discomfort could on occasion breed nightmares of fear in his mind, until he saw Germany strong again, and again at war with England. In this nightmare he saw his brother Joseph playing a leading part. He would be obliged to fetch Joseph from Germany, look after him always. He would be obliged to fight against the country for which Joseph had fought and crippled himself; his own country. He would put a full stop to these thoughts with the boast that he was a pacifist; that no power and no law would make him fight. Sally found this philosophy tiresome. Before the steady truculent look in her large eyes, he would force himself to admit secretly that the pacifism was less a principle than a dignified retreat organised by his own fear of death.

He ranged over this old ground with the accusing newspaper propped against his glass. He smiled because since yesterday he had become afraid of one thing only, of losing his love; and as yet the thought of loss was touched with the same beauty as the thought of gain. He was driven through this day, whose common shape had no room for love in it, by the lights and the music of enchantment. They went with him through the afternoon.

At half-past four the writer Ralph Broughton arrived and Philip conducted him to one of the small theatres where the tests of Mimi Blake awaited inspection. Ralph Broughton, a stocky young man with yellow hair, sat attentively studying the screen. Mimi was a Carnival Princess from the North Coast; an English discovery; seven years old. She had curls and an oblong smile. She marched to the front of the screen, pirouetted, curtsied, sang a song, quarrelled with her teddy bear and presently danced to the accompaniment of "The Wedding of the Painted Doll." At intervals the large wooden clappers descended across her complacent shape and a voice yelled: "Mimi Blake. Test Number Three. Cut!"

"She's a clever child," said Broughton when the test ended.

"I think she might easily prove the blackest disaster in English film history and nobody could say fairer than that."

"Do you really think she's frightful?"

"Yes," said Philip. "Don't you?"

"Yes," said Broughton.

"Well, come up and have some tea. Rivers left a lot of stuff for you to read."

"What sort of stuff?"

"Old scripts," said Philip. When they reached the room he rang for the tea and began to make his usual speech. "Rivers said he didn't want you to be influenced by these in any way. There might be an idea in one or two of them, that's all. If you get quite a different idea don't worry; go ahead on it." He glanced down at the note in Rivers's handwriting—"I think that's about all. He'd like something next week if you can manage it. A rough synopsis of about two thousand words. Oh, yes. About The Prince Who Was Frightened. You'll find when you begin to read that one that it has been written for a boy actor, but Rivers sees no reason why it shouldn't be altered to suit a girl. Of course there's no need whatsoever to use any of this stuff unless it appeals to you."

"I say," said Mr. Broughton, putting five lumps of sugar in his tea, "could you tell me one thing?"

"Certainly."

"Who writes the first script?"

"Of what?"

"It's like this," said Broughton, "I've been offered quite a number of film jobs since I got into the theatre-world. And every time the same thing happens. I mean there are always a lot of tripey old scripts that aren't any good and I'm given them in case there's an idea in them somewhere. Who writes them?"

"Well, two of these were written by me as a matter of fact."

Ralph Broughton apologised, was soothed and took the scripts. "I can't talk money to you, can I?" he asked wistfully.

"I've nothing to do with the finance, but I can give a message to Rivers for you."

"You can't possibly tell me what I get for this job? My agent keeps ringing up Rivers, only he never seems to be able to speak."

"Poor chap, how can he? He's only got three telephones. I can tell you exactly," said Philip, extending his cigarette-case. "If Rivers likes your

synopsis he'll persuade the company to take out an option. They'll probably pay fifty pounds for it."

"How soon do they pay?"

"Oh, at the end of a month or two. Depends how long the cheque takes. It has a pretty tough struggle through the accounts department; they hate making out cheques. Then it has to be signed by two directors and there are never two here at once. I should think you ought to get it by March."

"And if they take up the option, how much do I get?"

"About five hundred pounds. They needn't take it up for three months if they don't want to. That's the point of the option; it saves them from making up their minds which is a thing they all find very difficult."

"And supposing Rivers doesn't like my synopsis in the first place?"

"Well, then you won't get any money at all."

"I see," said Mr. Broughton. He sighed. "You don't know if they have decided anything about my play, I suppose? They're pretty sure to throw it out now it has flopped."

"Actually they have asked me to go and see it. They want another opinion."

Mr. Broughton looked less miserable. "Do they really? When would you like tickets? You can only see it this week, you know. What about to-night?" This was not Philip's wish. He said feebly: "That would be lovely," and remembered his intention of dining in bed. Mr. Broughton had already seized one of Rivers's telephones. He gave formidable instructions to the box-office. "Two stalls somewhere. What? Anywhere I like? Oh. Well, two stalls. In my name. I shall probably see you there," he added to Philip. "I go down most nights." Apparently inspired with new courage he left the office. Philip hesitated. He was tempted to invite Victoria. After asking for her number he cancelled the call and telephoned Sally. Sally said that she would change and meet him for dinner somewhere cheap at half-past seven.

"Why somewhere cheap? We're getting the tickets for nothing," he said and at once felt himself to be mean, while Sally was honestly careful.

"That isn't an argument. I will meet you at the French Horn."

The French Horn stood at a corner on the edge of Soho. Philip approached it in a taxi, taken as a protest against Sally's restrictions. These, perhaps, had urged him into the mood for desiring luxurious things. The hot bath, the shave and the black tie were well enough for a beginning. They should, he thought, point the way to something more adventurous than the three-shilling dinner and the play whose run was now a short walk into obscurity.

This, to-night, was the London of all imagination. The dusk wore the lights with an air. He was encouraged to think extravagantly. He made voyages in his mind after another, highly-enamelled existence; to wish for all the kingdoms of the world that were not his. He went in through the unassuming doorway of the French Horn.

The dining-room was constructed and decorated to resemble a Provençal kitchen; with the spit turning above the open fireplace; with brick walls and beams. There were no table-cloths. There were red-and-white check curtains, brass pans on the walls, a smell of wood smoke and roast chicken.

He sat down at a table near the fireplace. He drank a Dubonnet and tried to warm himself with memories of summer in France. He was used to waiting. An obsession for punctuality brought him ten minutes ahead of time to any rendezvous.

Sally came, wearing black velvet and two greenish orchids. She explained that they had been used for a photograph of flower-decoration in the office. "Good, aren't they? I took them quite openly." She began to study the menu. "Isn't it odd," she said, when they had ordered, "how new people always crop up again. It is like opening a door and letting more things through than one knows."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, until I went to Victoria Lloyd's house last night I knew nothing about her except from the office. Now I have been hearing her name all day."

"Oh?" he said, elaborately indifferent.

"Did you know that it was your horrid chairman, Lowenstal, who set her up in business?"

"No. Who told you that?"

"The fashion-editress. Apparently she wanted to start in the West End and he wouldn't let her. Too mean, I suppose. Or perhaps it was sense. Anyway, she did so well last year that she intends to move in the spring and take a lovely shop off Berkeley Square. And Lowenstal is livid with rage."

"Livid," said Philip, "he will never be. Purple, perhaps. But why doesn't he want her to be in Berkeley Square?"

"I don't know. But he is threatening to take his money out of the business. And Victoria says she doesn't care."

"Probably she can afford to do without him."

"I don't think she can."

“Is he a relative of hers or not? In the studio they say he is and I don’t see how he can be. I swear she hasn’t a drop of Jewish blood.”

“The fashion-editress took the view that he was her protector,” said Sally. “But it seems hard to believe. Why are you taking four sardines?”

CHAPTER SIX

I

THE stalls held only a scattered few. The curtain rose ten minutes behind time; as though, Philip thought, the management were hoping vainly for late arrivals.

This was the sort of situation that he would at any other time have taken to heart. Sally was already in the state of despondent sympathy to which she was easily moved by a restaurant with many empty tables or a shop where no one came to buy. For once he could not care. While the orchestra made martial noises, he found himself arguing with his own soul. He would break off the thoughts suddenly and retrace them to their beginning. Their beginning did not vary.

"I shall not go to the French Horn any more. It will be always full of Sally's voice saying that thing. But it is absurd to feel afraid. Why should it be true? Why should it not be true? Why should I mind if it were true? Let it not be true.

"If it were true, would it matter so much? I wish I could remember exactly what she said. I wish I could forget it.

"Supposing Victoria had been Lowenstal's mistress, what would that matter? Why am I building up this story? I won't think about it. I would rather she were a dozen men's mistress than that I never saw her again.

"It all fits in so well. With his being angry and going and Harrison staying on. But it can't be the same story with Harrison. It can. It easily can.

"I don't care. I am not afraid. I know she will love me. I know she loves me now. I know that it is not true. She is the last person. I shall find out that it is a lie.

"I shall not go to the French Horn any more. . . ."

The lights were low. The orchestra was quiet. In the instant of dark before the curtain rose he became aware of Sally and was grateful for her because she had never changed.

He had not expected to enjoy the play. He was surprised when its plain legend came alive; when the exquisite colours and clothes assumed their rightful place in the background, subjugated by the words. He was the more

surprised when he remembered Broughton, a dull father for so persuasive a child.

"The Savage Saint" told the story of a shepherd on the Roman hills. He left his gentler task when he heard the tramp of the legions shaking the road below his hut. He followed the eagles. He lived to take the sword against Cæsar's tyranny and died at the spear-points of his own men.

The woman who loved the saint and failed the man supplied a recurrent motive like pain or melody.

Their dialogue was stylised; when the two met they repeated the same words. When she made her final confession to him he spoke again his opening speech of love to her. Its pathos was greater, Philip thought, than any reproach would have been. Listening he felt as though a mirage of spring had imposed itself on winter's landscape. This man was speaking the thoughts that he could not speak.

The clamour in his mind was silenced. He saw the woman go on dragging feet and knew himself identified with the lonely shape upon the stage; the shape that waited by the broken column for the spears.

As the curtain fell he drew his hand across his lashes. Sally wiped her eyes frankly and grinned at him. She said: "*Why* don't they like it?"

"Mr. Meyer." He saw Broughton lodged eagerly in the gangway. Broughton looked no more inspired than Philip's memory of him had looked. He was as pleased as a puppy when they told him that they had enjoyed the play. He said stoutly: "If it hadn't been such an expensive production we could have kept it on. Everybody who has seen it likes it. Gage killed it, to begin with. Come and have a drink in the manager's office. Or shall we go round? I want to see Margaret. Please come. She'll give us a drink. She will want to hear about the film."

Philip hung back and was unable to refuse. With Sally he followed Broughton through the pass-door at the side of the stage where the two-dimensional scenery lost its persuasion; up many stone steps in a bright light. The leading woman, still wearing her clothes of the last act, received them as though she had heard of them, and instructed the dresser to give them whisky and soda. Philip perched on the side of Sally's chair. Broughton leaned against the door. Margaret Ford sat at the dressing-table, ugly with her eyelids comically blue, her stained cheeks and her thick powder. She unbound her head-dress; her black hair was obvious above the untruthful mask. Behind her mirror, pinned to the wall and stretching down each side of the wall in a dozen rows were telegrams of greeting for the first performance. These, like the flowers and plants with their cards attached,

drew Philip a little way from his own discontent to another discontent. He did not like to be shown the beginning of a project that was dead already.

"It's disappointing," Margaret Ford said; "because we all loved the play so much and believed in it."

Philip wondered whether she had another job in sight. His thought was rooted in the shadow now thrown by Victoria's name and it branched toward all women who must earn money.

Sally said: "They are such exciting words. Can one buy the play?"

"You will be able to. But it won't be the play, really," said Broughton. "The play is what you see in the theatre; the audience is part of it. It ceases to exist when the curtain comes down."

"You're talking like Gage," said Margaret Ford in her slow, amused voice.

"How was Gage?" Philip asked, waking up.

"On the first night? She stayed exactly half an hour in the theatre," said Ralph bitterly.

Philip knew the only female dramatic critic by sight. She was a tall woman with cropped hair and an eyeglass. She wrote reviews for four different publications. Erudition was her watchword. It was said of her that she had never recovered from her own surprise at being able to read. She was an eccentric, living in the wrong century.

"I don't seriously believe that even Gage can kill a play," he said. "Surely her prejudices are public property. And the fact that if she doesn't like a play she doesn't stop at it."

"No," said Broughton; "you're wrong there. She can write as though she had in fact seen the play and her judgment is uncanny. Besides, nobody outside the London theatre has any idea what she's like as a person. Her private life must be, mercifully, a closed book to them."

"Her private life," said Margaret Ford, "needn't really affect her abilities as a critic."

"It needn't, but it might," Broughton said, planting his feet widely and thrusting his head forward. "I find the persons of my own sex who suffer from that disability extraordinarily unsound. They are admittedly a small, Londonised assembly. I suppose they follow fashions. The way they all squeak and back each other up and run away from anything that isn't tainted ——" He began to mark off his points on his fingers. "An up-to-date sufferer can always be trusted to abominate success except in one of his own kind; to dislike rhymed poetry; to despise women under the age of sixty; to extol anything written in a language he cannot understand, like a play in

Russian or a book in Swedish; he has a sort of Bloomsbury impulse to contradict obvious truths; he will tell you that the hotels on the left bank in Paris are more expensive than the hotels on the right; that D. H. Lawrence was the greatest poet of all time; that Budapest is an ugly city; he admires old age, decay, bad smells and meaningless art by way of self-defence. The rot began with Proust. And it hasn't by any means stopped."

"Sally, we must go," Philip said.

"I'm going too. I'll show you the way out." Broughton was officious with them as far as the stage-door where he shouted: "Good night, Henry," at an old man with white moustaches behind a grille.

"What do you think about its chances for a film?" he asked, halting them for a moment in the alleyway outside the stage-door.

"I shall recommend it loudly."

Broughton said: "I wish you would." Philip observed that his sleeves were too short. This circumstance, with the eager, solid face and the attitude of one ready to hit out at fate, endeared Broughton to him.

"You realise," he said, "that if they did make the film they would change your idea out of all recognition; and probably ruin it."

Broughton nodded. "But I don't think I should mind. Provided that some of it got through. Would you like to come to the Café Royal and have supper?"

Philip looked at Sally. She said: "I couldn't be more hungry."

In an echo of his luxurious mood he began to say: "Isn't there somewhere nicer than the Café Royal?" and then remembered that he might find Victoria there.

"No, there isn't really," he interrupted himself quickly. They walked down Shaftesbury Avenue three abreast.

II

They sat at a table in the balcony; Philip took a chair beside the rail, that he might look down at the floor of the café and search among the muddled crowd. The demands of the search took him away intermittently from the conversation. Broughton ruled the conversation, splashing meanwhile in a plate of creamed haddock. He stormed at the narrow world whose orbit he allotted to Philip, to Sally, to himself. "The middle parts of London; the semi-intellectual field; near-literature, near-art and near-East, begging your pardon, Meyer. We work. We believe that we create. When we aren't

creating we read other people's novels, go to other people's plays, hear other people's music, look at other people's pictures. We have a social time-table in the arts."

"Why not?" said Philip, lifting his chin from the rails.

"Tell you why not," said Broughton, tearing a roll in half. "Because that way we become carriers."

"Pigeons?" said Sally.

"No. The sort of carriers they talk about in hospital; chaps who can spread disease without having actually caught it."

"What disease would we carry?"

"Any one that happened to be going," said Broughton. "We ourselves should be immunised by our toleration; all of our particular bunch from West Hampstead to West Kensington are inoculated by little drops of learning; little grains of psycho-analysis; little excursions into sex-knowledge; a few words of art-jargon. We pass them on; we pass on, without having acquired them ourselves, the main supplies from which those germs are spread."

"But why," said Sally, "should art and sex and literature be counted as diseases?"

Broughton dropped part of the roll into the remains of the cream-sauce and chased it round his plate.

"We don't stop at art, sex and literature; we smile on bad art, perverted sex and pretentious rubbish. We follow the fashion of the minute. We pick up little smatterings of whatever topical creed happens to suit our limited understanding. And that goes with the rest."

"I am tired of hearing intelligent persons bludgeoned because they use their heads," Philip told him.

"I bludgeon them because they don't. They pride themselves on open minds. If you leave your mind open, queer things get in."

"Satan finds some mischief still?" Sally asked. "Or am I thinking of 'swept and garnished'?"

Broughton wiped his mouth, dropped the table-napkin on the floor and said: "Either. Or both."

"It seems a very gloomy view."

"I take a very gloomy view."

Philip watched a man with a beard push his way sturdily through a bunch of pink young men wearing tweeds and whooping. The hats of the

women were tiresome, hiding the faces beneath. He could pick out only two hats seeming likely to hide Victoria's face.

"I don't mean that we are important," Broughton was saying.

Sally said: "If I were a writer I should have to think that I was important. Otherwise I couldn't be bothered to write."

"Have some more beer," said Broughton. "Meyer, do stop hanging over the rail like a sea-sick passenger."

Philip straightened himself and drank his beer.

"What sort of people do you like?" he asked faintly.

"Don't like anybody much," said Broughton. "Except soldiers and farmers and barmen."

Philip wrinkled his nose. "Why don't you be one, then?"

"I didn't say I should like to be one. I like people who fight."

"Do farmers fight?"

"Yes," said Sally. "They fight with the soil. Very epic and earthy."

"And barmen? I suppose they fight with drunks," said Philip. "But you'd better not be a soldier, Broughton. You won't get a chance for years and years."

"Worse luck. War is so healthy."

Philip tried to look as though he were thinking of something else. Broughton watched him. "Don't you agree with me?"

"No," said Philip. "But that is probably because I have a bias against dying."

"Too many people have."

"Would you like to die?" Sally asked him.

"I shouldn't mind at all. The only thing I've got against war is that it is usually the result of graft. But a thing like Gage is graft; the Press is graft; and the cinema and the theatre and all the other ways in which my feet are set. So why should I care? Waiter, bring three more beers."

"You are a hearty chap, aren't you?" said Philip.

"Hey. Don't be nasty to me."

"As one of your fellow-carriers I thought I was entitled to be. And why poor Sally should be included I don't know. She admires Mr. Baldwin and she's marrying into the Air Force."

"Are you?" said Broughton. "I hoped you would marry me."

Philip leaned upon the rail. He saw John Harrison sitting alone and his hopes revived. He waved to John Harrison who did not reply. This made him

so peevish that he turned back angrily to the argument. He interrupted Sally.

"The Army a good life? How can it be? Of course it looks pretty; and honourable; and all boys together. Join the Army and see the world, and then die! I hate the guts of every silly Cockney child in khaki uniform and black boots. He doesn't know what he's at. And I hate still more the guts of his superior officer; the Sandhurst baby with the blond moustache and the tailor's bill; the sahib with a smile for the sergeant; the lad with the purse for as many drinks as the Mess waiter will pour out for him; the licensed killer with the polished gaiters and the book of bad cheques. The market for prostitutes; the good fellow with the smutty stories; spawned in the snob-tradition and only fit company for the horses he can't afford to hunt."

"Keep your Jews in the film trade if you prefer them," said Broughton.

"At least they have the courage of their origins," said Philip.

"Particularly the ones who change their names."

"Why are you so horrid about the poor Army?" Sally asked, and at once he was regretful, wanting to unsay it all. He remembered that when he was seventeen, he had told Aunt Frieda that he hated the German poets. He remembered her sad, perplexed face as she said: "*Als wir sie zu lesen pflegeten, schienen sie Dir ganz gut zu gefallen*, Philip."

He looked over the rail and saw that John Harrison was no longer there. Perhaps, he thought, he had conjured John Harrison out of the fever that was now cooled, leaving him no longer savage and anxious, only ready to weep for all the world. He tried to say: "I am sorry." He would have been glad to lay his head upon Victoria's shoulder, to tell her the things of this evening that had made him sad; from the unwanted play to his own last venomous speech.

And, he thought, if she were at hand he would not tell her. These were the things that never could be told; as sorrowfully private as the pain of the tortured animal; as worthless in their grief as the tears shed on waking from a dream. He thought again: "If only I could ensure the happiness of every human being and every animal; if nobody need ever be hurt or alone again. Christ could not do that. And God will not."

He saw Sally looking at him with her large, compassionate eyes. Broughton was leaning over the back of his chair to call for the bill. He said to Sally: "Do you still want me to come with you on Sunday and meet those parents?"

"I would like you to. But perhaps it would be dull for you."

He said: "It wouldn't; I should love to come," with stupid emphasis. "I didn't mean what I said, then. Please forgive me."

“Of course. That’s all right. Why are you so worried, Philip?”
He said: “I am not worried. I am just a hateful, ill-mannered little Jew.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

I

FOR two days at the studio Philip waited in expectation of a summons from French. His slight sense of guilt increased. It combined with the prospect of Thursday to give him a pain in his stomach and a stab higher up his chest when the telephone rang. He was surprised that the shock of Sally's hint concerning Victoria should subside and leave only this acute anticipation.

"You're like a monkey on a tight-rope," said Montagu Rivers.

"Sorry. I think I've got a chill inside."

"I think you've got Jeremy inside."

"Well," said Philip, turning the knob of the silver-framed calendar until the word "Thursday" reached the centre of the frame, "I do want to know what the old fat thing has decided."

"If you want to know what people have decided, Philip, I wonder you stay in this business."

"But they've got to start shooting next month on the terms of Renshaw's contract. They must find a story for him. They are bound to make up their minds this week."

"Pouf," said Montagu. "Laddie Renshaw isn't as big a star as all that. The company won't feel it if they keep him on contract for a year."

Philip glanced at his watch. A quarter to ten. He did not know when to telephone Victoria. He was afraid that he might be told: "She is not here; shall I ask her to ring you?" and then wait vainly all day. He stabbed out one cigarette; he lit another; he stared at the telephone. When it rang, he jumped and dropped his cigarette on his waistcoat.

"Mr. Meyer, are you free now? Mr. French would like to see you."

"That," said Rivers, "is as much of a surprise to me as it must be to you."

"Do you think I ought to take my script along?"

"No, I don't. Seeing as how Jeremy has probably forgotten all about it."

Philip ran down three flights of stairs and along the passage that was punctuated by the doors announcing the board of directors name by name.

French's door at the end of the passage had no name painted on it. The secretary in the outer room said: "Sorry, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Lowenstal has just gone in. I don't expect he'll be a minute." Her telephone rang. "Oh, yes, Mr. French. Right. Mr. French says will you go straight in."

Having no time to determine and assort his sensations, Philip entered the inner room.

French's straddling bulk obscured the light from the window. Lowenstal was perched on the corner of the deserted desk. Their cigars were at the stage of early ferocity which filled the room with blue and grey smoke.

"Good morning, Meyer," Lowenstal said; he might, Philip thought, be less at ease than usual. French winked one raisin-like eye and said nothing. Philip saw their three heads reflected in the horizontal mirror on the wall behind the desk. He liked the tilt of his own head with the highlights on his hair. In this three-quarter view the curve of the nose was understated. He was not disturbed at the sight of Lowenstal, who remained obstinately in his former frame; the superior officer, noticeable by reason of his superiority; not a man at all.

"French and I have been discussing your factory picture," said Lowenstal, and nodded to French as though relinquishing his hold on the conversation.

"I am going to make it," said French. "It's my picture all right. Have you got that story in synopsis, Meyer? Your version, I mean."

"I've got about half the complete shooting-script. Shall I get it?"

He saw them exchange glances; he knew the difference between this kindly amusement and the glance which he was accustomed to intercept. Suddenly he felt very warm and light-headed.

"I don't remember asking for a complete shooting-script," French said. "But perhaps you were intending to make the picture on your own." Lowenstal laughed loudly. "Bring it along." Philip turned and was arrested by Lowenstal. "Here, I want to talk to you. O.K., French." He walked with Philip to the door. French called: "Bring that along when he's finished with you, Meyer. I've only got half an hour."

"Come into my room for a moment, Meyer. Sit down. Have a cigarette?"

Philip took the cigarette; Lowenstal seated himself behind his desk, chewed upon his cigar and blew a long funnel of smoke.

"That's a good setting you've chosen. I think the story's weak, but you can knock it about all you like."

"I've knocked it about a good deal already."

"Well, you and French can fix that between you." The large silvery head moved inquiringly: "How long have you been where you are? With Rivers?"

"Just over a year."

"I want you to have your own room. You'd find it easier, wouldn't you?"

"I would. You see, there are the telephones behaving like an electric rookery all the morning and Rivers dictating: and no space to put anything larger than a three-penny piece."

"Yes, yes, that is exactly why I want you to change."

"He doesn't really like me," Philip thought. "I talk too much."

"Hazelton is going on the First, you know."

"Is he? I am sorry."

"I shouldn't be sorry if I were you."

"Oh? I like him."

"He's no good on this job, Meyer. I've told him he'd better go back to journalism and forget about pictures."

Philip remembered that Hazelton's wife had two babies, one six weeks old.

"But that's beside the point. I want to try you in his place for a few months. You're getting four hundred and fifty now. I'm raising you to six hundred. And if it works there'll be bigger money. I'm going to make a lot of changes."

Philip looked at the pattern of the carpet, dark red and dark blue. He found that his eyes were dazzled as though with sunshine, that there was a noise of bells in his head. He did not hear the detail of Lowenstal's complimentary speech. He shook hands limply, grinning and backing to the door.

"And now you'd better get that script or Jeremy will be cursing me."

He had plucked the door open and fallen into the passage. He was running with large leaps, slapping at the walls. His knees shook and he stumbled on the last stair. He staggered, singing, into number 326. He saw Rivers's pink face, the lifted eyebrows of the secretary. He ran to his desk, scattering papers all over the floor. He chanted:

> "Thronging of the thousands up who linger under sea,
> White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for liberty."

"For God's sake," Rivers said, "can't you see I'm dictating?"

"Vivat Hispania! Domino Gloria!
Don John of Austria has set his people free!"

"Oh, really, Philip. Even if Jeremy is going to make your damn' picture — —"

Philip had the script in his arms and was charging past the hat-stand which he kicked, showering the two hats on to Rivers's blotter. "Even if Jeremy is," he retorted, "that's not so good as six hundred a year and a room of my own, is it? No. Exactly my reasoning. I agree with you absolutely. Pick up my hat, Montagu, there's an angel. Try talking through it instead of yours if you like." He danced away, cradling the script as though it were a baby. He was at French's door before he remembered Victoria. "I'll ring her when I'm through with this. Who said nobody would get a rise for the next four years? Who is on my side, who? So they threw her down. Soho." He was still bouncing when he reached French's desk.

"Here it is. I want you to read it now if you will because there is an enormous amount to be done and I shall have to get on with it immediately. I have started exactly where I told you when we were at Ilkley, with the road running from the moorland into the city; a straight sequence till we stop on the door of the factory and— —"

"Shut up," said French patiently. "Just shut up."

II

French prolonged his half-hour, adjourning with Philip to the canteen, returning to cancel appointments until after midday, when he suddenly yawned and said: "Anyway, it's no good talking story in this mausoleum. I need a fire and a bottle of whisky. Come round after dinner to-night and we'll get down to it. My wife's used to that; we ought to be able to have the whole rough draft down on paper in three hours. We can have a girl there with a typewriter if you like."

"Damn," said Philip. "I can't to-night."

"Why not?"

"I'm doing something after dinner."

French sank three chins on a fourth chin. "Can't you chuck it?"

"I must telephone first," Philip said miserably.

"Use that telephone if you like."

"May I speak to Miss Lloyd, please?"

"I think she is engaged with a customer. Who is that speaking?"

"Mr. Philip Meyer."

"Will you hold on?"

She came. The light voice saying: "Hullo? Philip?" brought the picture of her instantly more near.

"Hullo," he said, cautious as a trout, with the consciousness of French at his back.

"About to-night," he began.

"Have you got something in your mouth?"

"No. Why?"

"You sound as though you have. Is it that you aren't alone?"

"It is."

"Oh. Well, I'll do the talking. About half-past ten?"

"I'd rather make it eleven, if that isn't too late for you."

"It isn't a bit. Would you," her voice hesitated shyly, "would you think it very odd if I came to your house? I'll explain why when I get there."

"Do that." The effort of restricting his words infuriated him. "Say eleven-fifteen. I'll be back by then for certain. You've got the address, haven't you? Number seventy-nine A, Gloucester Terrace. And my name's over the bell. Till then."

"Good-bye," she said with a sad upward note on the second syllable. He wondered whether this were her habit or whether she had thought him unkindly casual. He swung off the desk. "That is all right. I needn't be anywhere till a quarter-past eleven. Shall I come at nine?"

"Yes, that'll do." French looked up absently and looked down again.

"Well, see you then," said Philip, hovering inconclusively. "I'll get on with the part we have discussed at once."

French grunted. Philip went out, only a little quenched. He had ceased to be surprised that his neighbours, whether in the studio or beyond its walls, should not like him. He was resigned to this circumstance. He would reflect upon it without rancour. The thought of living, popular and befriended among numerous persons, who believed him to be a jolly good fellow was impossible as the thought of living at the Ritz Hotel, of inheriting a title, of possessing blond hair and a turned-up nose. He weighed his triumphant morning against the natural bias of French, of Lowenstal, thinking: "It is easy to get on in the world if people like you. But French must have hated admitting that my ideas were good and Lowenstal must have hated admitting that my work was good."

He was, according to last Sunday's invitation, lunching with Jennifer Nash, Mrs. Simon Flood, at Kensington Square. He was dismayed on three counts. The first, that he had not dressed in a better suit than the present shabby dark blue with the pin-stripe; the second, that these were strangers to whom he could not comfortably prattle of his new success ("But I shall, anyway, however much I try not to, because I always do."), the third, the certainty that Jennifer Nash would have forgotten all about it. He entered number 326 more soberly than before.

"Look here, Philip," said Montagu Rivers, "first thing I do is congratulate you."

"Thank you very much." Philip took the small, warm hand. "I apologise if I was tiresome just now. I was so pleased."

"You deserved it, old boy. I'm sorry for Jack, but you deserved it."

Philip recalled Hazelton and the six-weeks-old baby. "Has he got another job?"

"Shouldn't think so. But don't you worry about him. You go right ahead. Good show." Montagu looked at his blotter. "Second thing I do is give you a hint, old boy. Don't go and fly off the handle. I wouldn't say it if it weren't for your own good."

Philip said: "I'm sure you wouldn't. What is the hint?"

"Well, I know you're excited and all that, but it isn't good policy to go shouting about your salary in front of one of the girls. No reason why she should know you're raised to six hundred. See? It's a kind of unwritten law here that nobody mentions his screw. That's all. Don't get savage with me. You'll find in your new job when you're nearer the big boys that they appreciate these little things; respect for the ordinary rules and so on."

"I see," said Philip. "Thank you very much. I always do think it a little *bourgeois* to avoid mentioning money, but I dare say that is due to my race, which seldom mentions anything else." He rose, taking his towel and soap from a drawer in his desk. "Thank you, Montagu. I'll bear it in mind."

On his way to the lavatories, he began to imagine an office-day spent in a room of his own, a room without Montagu in it. He did not dislike Montagu, because he disliked nobody. He knew that the maddening accumulation of Montagu's personal habits was only the result of so long a proximity. Without that proximity he would never have noticed, nor resented, Montagu's little, punctual sniff; his operation on his nails with the end of a pocket-knife; his hard collar and opal tie-pin; the ridges of his pants distorting his socks, nor the pipe that hissed and smelt and was excavated. He need never have known Montagu to suffer from noisy internal

disturbances. He might not have made acquaintance with the fact that Montagu called his wife "Pops" and said "Pardon" when he did not hear.

He was headed for a room with space to move, unhampered by hat-stand, chairs, Montagu's prevalent shape; without "Sorry, old boy," and the soft bump of Montagu's haunches against his own as they put on their overcoats. A room where none would laugh at his preoccupation with the mirror nor his pedantic tidying of the desk. He wondered how many times he had heard Montagu say: "Now that the ritual is concluded——" by way of prelude to the morning.

He dried his hands, combed his hair, and went back to Number 326 purged momentarily of all apprehensions save that of arriving at Kensington Square to hear a polite butler tell him that Mrs. Flood was not at home. He hesitated beside the telephone. He was not good at asking the simple, frank question. He knew that it was beyond his powers to say: "Is Mrs. Flood expecting me to lunch?" The most he could hope was to ask: "What time is lunch?" The resulting information would be less helpful than embarrassing, supposing that she had indeed forgotten her invitation.

He tried to retrace her words; there had been too many things happening to him since the night of meeting with Lawrence. The boy, with his mother and stepfather were walled about by the larger events coming after them. He tried to force his way back to them, via the adventurous morning. By the two dull, nagging days wherein he forgot the anxiety whose seeds were sown by Sally on the night when he saw Broughton's play; the two days of waiting to hear from French; past "The Savage Saint" with its individual ecstasy; to Monday's black frost and Sunday's long evening, with the various scenes at Victoria's house sharp as the silhouettes thrown by candlelight; he restored Lawrence and a shadow of Jennifer; he remembered Simon Flood exasperating him in the hall; Simon Flood had spoken of to-day's appointment.

"Hell; it's all right, I'm sure," Philip said. He would arrive at one-fifteen, which compromise would effectively excuse his lateness for luncheon at one or earliness for luncheon at half-past one. He set his soft black hat at an angle, pulled on his yellow gloves as though they were clean and presently hailed a taxi at the corner of the High Street.

III

Kensington Square in daylight, with the black, fronded trees and the grave façades, was a different place from Kensington Square in the dark and

the rain. Still irked by his failure to re-establish Lawrence, Jennifer or Simon Flood, Philip saw it appear and disappoint his hopes of remembering.

He stepped on to the pavement. At once the door of Number Seven opened and closed. A square shape topped by a bowler hat, terminated by brown boots, buttoned into a tweed overcoat, hurried down the steps and away. A glimpse of the aggressive jaw and thick neck supplied Simon Flood.

"He must have had lunch early or not at all," Philip hazarded. "Of course, it may not have been Mr. Flood, but somebody come about insurance; he looks like that." Still doubtful, he mounted the steps and rang the bell. He waited for a longer time than he expected. Then the butler opened the door and he remembered that the butler's name was Mason.

Mason preceded him by way of the shallow wooden staircase. Philip had time to comment upon this house, whose date he placed between 1750 and 1800. The feel of the house was amiable; as though haunted by mellow ghosts.

Mason announced him at the door of the room where Simon's and Jennifer's supper had been laid before the fire. He heard an answering chirrup. Lawrence dropped a book and came to him with his hand outstretched. The image of Lawrence was immediately restored; he looked more golden, more placid, more diminutive than his faded predecessor in Philip's mind.

"How are you?" said Lawrence. "I knew you were coming. My mother said you would forget and so there was only fish, but I told Mason to do some scrambled egg."

"Ought I to be here?" Philip asked; suddenly comfortable in this presence.

"Yes, of *course* you ought. You were invited. There's a certain amount of trouble going on, as a matter of fact, but I don't expect you will hear about it. Can I give you some sherry?"

"Yes, please."

"Is this it?" Lawrence asked, sniffing at the top of the bottle. "I simply don't know."

"That is it." Philip took the glass from his hand; he recalled the room at a glance; the glass cases of jade were more suggestive of a museum; the curtains and furnishings more obvious; the whole room thinned out with daylight; any civilised room whose present paid respectful, uninspired compliment to its past.

Lawrence said: "Please come and sit down. My mother won't be a minute. Are these the sort of cigarettes you like?"

"Yes, thank you. What have they been doing to you?"

"Surely I don't look as though people have been doing things to me?" He sat on the low stool with his knees supporting his elbows, his hands concealing his chin.

"No. I was putting two and two together. Two was your remark about trouble and the other two was your stepfather, whom I think I saw leaving in a hurry."

"Yes; that was Simon. He did leave in a hurry."

"Does he always do that at lunch-time?"

"No, rather not. He left because of the trouble."

"Then shan't I be in the way?"

"Oh, no," said Lawrence dreamily; "it's all over now. I can't exactly tell you because it is mixed up with both of them. I am going away this afternoon."

"Not back to school?"

"Oh lord, no. They wouldn't do that. Even Simon wouldn't do that."

"Where, then?"

"To Oxford," said Lawrence. "And the screaming blight is that I have to go to the dentist first."

"Pulling or stopping?"

"I hope only looking." He wrinkled his nose: "But you never know, do you, once you get there? They poke round with sharp things and *make* holes."

"Mr. Meyer!" Jennifer entered, crashing the door behind her. She looked wild and pale. She had been crying. Philip thought that she might have aged by ten years since their last meeting. The strong roots of the hair, the features of the face, triumphed gradually over these things, and after a few minutes he could look at her without embarrassment.

"You have come to a horrible lunch," she said. "Do you mind? One of those days when God begins at home." She snarled at Lawrence over her glass of tomato-juice. "All very well for you to grin, my lad."

"I wasn't grinning. I was feeling my teeth."

"How is the British Film Industry supporting itself?" Jennifer said.

"I don't know," said Philip. "It's supporting me very nicely, having just raised my salary by one hundred and fifty pounds."

"How *lovely*!" Jennifer screamed the second word. "When did they do that?"

"This morning."

"Oh, dear. And there is only fried sole. Would you like some champagne?"

"That's an idea," said Lawrence, starting toward the door.

"No, really," said Philip, "I don't drink during the day; except sherry or something, please."

"Would you rather go out? We could get in a taxi and go somewhere amusing."

"No, no," he said, wishing that he had not inaugurated this discussion. He felt as much embarrassed as though he had pleaded a birthday and now received the apologies of those who had not thought to bring him a present. Mason solved his difficulties by announcing lunch.

IV

They argued.

"But when you say 'the workers'," Philip complained, "you seem to me to be talking of some imaginary class, brilliant with intelligence, eager for ruling-power, only kept down now by the deliberate despotism of a capitalist order which, though entirely inferior to the unsuccessful in every way, is accidentally possessed of money. If I am a worker, you may be right, of course. But I don't think you have me in mind. I can, after all, earn more than a living wage; I stand as good a chance of becoming an unpleasantly rich Jew as most. Who are your workers? Factory hands? Domestic servants? Do you really believe that they could run the state?"

Jennifer only smiled and looked vague, as though this speech were too amateurish to require an answer. Lawrence had his elbows on the table. His small face was still calm and courteous, despite the thrust of his chin. "We don't want them to run the state. We want the state to be run for them by persons capable of the job." From the dining-room the long windows looked out upon the Square. In the temperate light of afternoon Philip thought that the two faces were brittle and strained. They wore their strain with a difference. Lawrence might have spent many hours in work whose final result pleased him. This was not the impression given by Jennifer who might, Philip thought, have been arguing on four different sides since breakfast and convinced herself with none of them.

"You have got it all wrong," said Lawrence patiently. "You are probably confusing Russian with universal Communism. Russia has got the Communism which she deserved; and needed. We don't happen to be as

congenitally stupid a race. I think it quite unlikely that we shall have to pass through a stage resembling the present conditions in Russia. The importance of the state is only a phase. It depends entirely on external circumstances how long that phase must last. Once the need for it has passed, the state army, for example, can be abolished. Then——"

"You haven't answered my question," Philip said. "Who are these workers? Why are they so important?"

"You couldn't carry out one of your ideas without them."

"But they wouldn't have any ideas without me."

"That simply isn't the point."

"And there will be coffee upstairs," said Jennifer.

She swept ahead of them. Lawrence said: "I've got such a little time. The dentist is at half-past two. Will you be here when I come back?"

"I am afraid not. I can't stay away too long from the office."

The boy took a handful of the sugar crystals from the coffee-tray; he said with his mouth full: "I suppose I couldn't possibly cut the dentist?"

"No. Sorry."

"Well, will you come and see me at Oxford, Philip?"

"Lawrence, don't persecute people," Jennifer began.

"Yes, of course I will. I'll come down one Sunday. Where shall I find you?"

"Care of my father; I will write it down."

Philip subdued his curious appetite; he would have liked to know why this destination had been chosen, Lawrence's remarks in the train having led him to believe that the traditions of a split family withheld him from contact with his father. Neither now gave him any opportunity to wonder.

Jennifer left the room to superintend the packing. Presently the boy shut the book saying: "The car will be here in a moment."

"I ought to go."

"Well, come down with me."

Philip descended the stairs with him. There was no sign of the car. Lawrence sat down upon a settle in the hall; his feet planted apart, his hands hanging loosely between his knees. The light in the hall was modified and yellowed by the panelling; thick shadows crawled upon the floor. The child sat motionless in his patient position; his neat skull with the flat gold hair glimmering faintly. The silence sang on about them and the half-light tricked the eyes until Philip saw in the still figure the reminder of a miniature soldier

after battle. The two limp hands might have steadied a rifle between his knees. The butt of the rifle would have been grounded on the stone floor. The grey clothes might in this obscurity be some field-uniform. The chance, ordinary crease, drawn by his position, from shoulder to waist, made the line of a cartridge belt. The flat shadow flowing away from his foot was liquid as an old bloodstain. The picture became so complete and prophetic that after a minute Philip was obliged to blink it off his eyes. "Well," said Lawrence, shaking himself wearily and rising, "That will be the car. Here we go. Good-bye, Philip."

"Good-bye. I will try to come to Oxford this Sunday if you like."

Jennifer rounded the bend of the staircase at undignified speed. "Must you go yet, Mr. Meyer? We haven't managed a word between us."

"I needn't really be back till three."

"Then come up and have some more coffee. Run along, Lawrence."

The small composed shape moved out under the high doorway. It turned to wave a hand. Philip followed Jennifer up the stairs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I

SOME mood of contemplation endured from the moment in the hall; a mood that made him more aware of the living quality in her story. He might have been watching the scenes, not hearing the dull, second-hand way of it.

She had given him a glass and explained the stuff in the glass as a liqueur from Hungary. It was sweet, strong, not in the least the kind of liqueur to be taken after lunch. He was careful with it, letting the glass rest in his hand for a long time.

He looked at her seldom while she talked. The image of herself which her words created in his mind was more vivid, more sympathetic. She might have been speaking of another person.

He saw the young woman who had been fledged in a rectory, indulging her first wing-spread at Oxford, throwing her firecrackers of opinion. There were other similar firecrackers waking the restless world of before the war. He saw the person of George Nash; the would-be social reformer checked always in a practical approach to the present by his knowledge of things past.

("He contradicted me at a meeting of the Fabian Society and I went round to his rooms to argue with him. We argued for a fortnight without stopping, except for meals.")

He saw how these two met; their earnest discussions at odds with the physical enthusiasm of their flesh. They were married at a registrar's office in Oxford. Nash surrendered his Fellowship of All Souls; they settled down in two rooms to shake the world.

Just how the world was to be shaken, they had not in their arguments mixed with kisses decided. They could never agree. Nash doubted that anything other than education could save humanity. Jennifer had swallowed Karl Marx whole because, in her view, Karl Marx began where she began; with an unholy war against established altars.

("I think I was born a Communist; he wasn't.")

If she could throw away the old creed that had kept her youth in chains, she would find happiness. The old creed was not easily identifiable. It

involved guilt, God, virginity, submission to discipline; four instincts which irked her energetic person. Philip thought that when she became a pillar of Suffragism, she would have been retaliating on behalf of the young girl with the long plaits and the decorous blouses, the young girl who had raged in the rectory. Perhaps when she worshipped the bony and red-bearded Mr. Shaw she was replying to the stained-glass and not dissimilar deity who filled the window above the chancel in the parish church.

("We lived together for a week first and thought that very intelligent of us.")

When she had wooed her young, bewildered lover to a clumsy consummation on the horsehair sofa in his rooms, she would have completed the revolt. Philip could imagine the encounter taking place in this way.

Their married crusade began with theories and lectures, with half-written pamphlets in which Nash the metaphysician lost interest as soon as they became exuberant. Jennifer could not cool her thoughts down. She was preoccupied with an emancipated flight from her origins. She fitted into the donnish life not at all. They were already quarrelling by the end of their first year.

The war dropped on their desires and gave them new desires. George Nash refused to nourish any hope of saving a world gone so finally mad. He would not make public declaration of his private views as a conscientious objector, because his health forbidding him to fight, appeared to him to make the protestation futile and insincere. Jennifer stormed at him before she left him. She was shouting "Stop The War!" from a platform in Hyde Park while he was taking refuge with his books in the changed Oxford. She might have found herself in prison but for the one aspect of marriage which she had failed to envisage before the year 1915. She had not bargained for Lawrence.

("I went back to Oxford as soon as I knew that I was going to have a baby. I was furious. I remember crying all the way down in the train and an old lady asking me if I had lost somebody at the Front. I made a bawdy answer but she didn't, luckily, understand it.")

George wanted the child. For a few weeks it seemed to each as though they would be together again: as if this ludicrously simple outcome was all the reason for which they had met. Then the small hope perished; they were farther apart than before.

("Somehow it didn't work. Our home-life was too uncomfortable. Servants always hated me. George had a mania for order and I had none.")

Philip thought that one glimpse of her was enough to indicate the truth of this statement. He could imagine, because he worshipped neatness and cleanliness, this woman as a young girl unconcerned with either. He could see the messy meals; the dust; the feminine disarray behind the wardrobe doors; in the second room a pile of unwashed dishes standing on the papers that littered a desk. The pedantic, reticent young man returning home would regret his own monkish privacy in college. Philip sympathised with him.

("I took the baby as a personal insult.")

She might have seen that the unappeasable gods of her youth were not mocked, that the independence of escape was denied at the outset; that she was ludicrously illustrating the exact function of woman when she had bayed to the moon against woman's fate. It was natural in this discovery that Nash should cease finally to symbolise freedom and become identified with the obscure persecutors of her sex. She hated him before Lawrence was born and afterwards.

At first the child was an ignominious handicap; as pathetic, dependent and unseemly a possession for the adult as a guinea-pig would have been. He was delicate; he was difficult to feed; he was an uncomfortable reminder of the universal weakness when women stopped her in the street where she pushed the second-hand perambulator, to coo at the pale, shrivelled face under the hood.

("I hated looking so ugly; I had had no new clothes for two years.")

She was only noticeable then as the young mother; the last rôle for which she believed herself fitted. The war years and the war baby took away the splendid portrait of Jennifer Nash. She never forgave them.

By the winter of 1918, when Lawrence was two years old, his father saw the return of his sane abstract world, of his lost pupils, of a chance to build again. His wife pursuing her dull time-table saw nothing comparable. She had lost the power for moral indignation. When the lunatic prosperity and optimism shed their *feu d'artifice* upon the public mind she caught little more than its pale reflection and did not trouble to dispute the validity of that.

("I was living the life of an incompetent servant with just an incompetent servant's outlook.")

She was cooking, washing small soiled clothes, making her hopeless muddle in the home; a sullen ghost of her younger self and presenting the unusual spectacle of a ghost who was haunted. The haunting was the angry certainty that a career of brilliant promise had been betrayed. She had not much proof of the certainty. There were yellowed cuttings from the

newspapers; there was—perhaps—the faint echo that the name of Jennifer Nash might make in such ears as were not entirely dulled by cannon, casualty-lists, lies, rumours and food-prices, not ultimately deafened by the clamour of the Armistice.

("It was then that I decided to leave George and go to London to work for the things that I believed.")

To strike for the Left when the common hysteria had only lately ceased to strike for the Right was a task which she could comprehend and accept more easily than the task of running a home and a nursery. She was prepared, she said, for obstacles. The way to the obstacles was made more smooth by the arrival in her life of another man.

("I fell in love again. They let me have the custody of the child because I would have money and a home for him. George was going back to live in college.")

She did not marry the co-respondent in the case. The prophecies of "money and a home" remained unfulfilled. From the year 1921 until her acquaintance with Simon Flood she lived in a large, untidy and deliberately Bohemian flat among the grey backwaters of Bloomsbury. Here she carved out an up-to-date facsimile of her original career; with visits to Russia and Germany; with public statements on working conditions throughout Europe; with one unplotted aspect of the tardy freedom, which was her authority upon the subject of the child.

Her new interest might be explained, Philip thought, by her echoing complaint that, had it not been for her youth's restrictions, she would never have plunged ignorantly into early marriage. He guessed that in studying education she would be exploring the dangers of any childhood which faintly resembled hers. The new interest might also have root in the nine years of intermittent poverty that handicapped Lawrence from birth. Philip could observe that this woman would have always a sharp eye for money. She still believed that she should have been heiress to the estates of the world.

Lawrence, dragged through kindergarten, taught at home when financial extremes compelled, was painfully unlike the heir to those estates.

The two persecuted children, herself and her son, would have cried out equally in her mind for justice. When she began to act upon their urging, to write of saner upbringing, cheaper schools, franker counsel from parents, the claims of instinct against discipline, she was as zealous and unmethodical a fanatic as ever the young Suffragette had been.

("I knew nothing. I had to teach myself before I could teach anybody else.")

Nine years gave her a more orderly approach to her ideals. Now she was, if a little absurd, at least a serious force among those who still argued the child's way to freedom via Freud. Now she was, if a little out-of-date, at least a figure-head for the eyes of the young revolutionaries who, looking eagerly about them for signs at home of something attempted, something done, could point to Jennifer Nash as pioneer.

("Our Left Evenings might amuse you. Don't just come to one at random. I'll send you what remains of the winter programme. Pick out a subject that sounds as though it might be interesting and come along. You can always walk out if you are bored. I used to have the meetings in this house, until the attendance outgrew the chairs.")

This house. The house that was the property of Simon Flood, just as Jennifer Nash was now the property of Simon Flood.

("Before I married Simon we really hadn't got bread to eat.")

There might, Philip thought, be other reasons for the marriage than the crude, inescapable reason of money. He could not imagine the other reasons. She might have tired of haphazard love.

Eighteen months ago there had been the marriage; the honeymoon; the salute to a future of wealth, comfort and respectable pairing. It was, Philip supposed, the ideal climax for a woman who had brandished her independence.

("He has been a great help to me.")

The Left evenings would benefit because their devotees could now be accommodated with paid lecturers and reasonable refreshments; the work for the workers could continue more practically with capital behind it. The boy who was growing up would have the advantages with which the spectacle of wealthier children, despite their ill-advised discipline, their obsolete education, their hidebound homes, might have reproached his adolescent eyes.

A satisfactory finale. And if Simon, the suddenly pathetic person who had led an orthodox life making money (with his brown boot on the workers' necks, Philip assumed) had fallen in love, what did that matter? If he had been warmed by the misdirected fires, stirred by the over-ripe energies, stimulated by the peevish wit and the spiritual torments, if he saw in these exaggerations the same bright liveliness that the young Nash had seen twenty years ago, that was his affair. He was a middle-aged man with a

market-proof bank balance. He was the deserts of every woman who had vowed to do without them.

("I hoped that he and Lawrence would get on; that Lawrence would realise how much Simon meant to me.")

Jennifer, then, might fool her forty-year-old emotions; might disguise her fiercely practical instinct of self-preservation with the argument of love. Jennifer might have thought herself into a mood wherein Simon Flood became desirable as well as considerate.

Lawrence would not. Lawrence, emerging penny-plain from the twopence-coloured patches of his education, had a straight, uncompromising eye. Lawrence must have recognised Simon Flood as more than a little aggressive and quite definitely a bore. Lawrence must have disliked the business man who was a business man and nothing else. Lawrence must have disliked his lack of imagination and his uncompromising views. Lawrence might be capable of saying: "But you *can't*. He's perfectly frightful. He doesn't agree with any of our things!"

("I've tried to keep the peace.")

Jennifer, hushing him, had embarked upon a choice between two bones of contention. When with Simon, the bone was Lawrence. When with Lawrence, the bone was Simon. Each, having naturally good manners, attempted to place the other in his private scheme and there respect him. The attempts could not succeed.

("I believe that if Lawrence hadn't run away from school they would have settled into armed neutrality.")

Simon had spoken bluntly at last. The child was not a normal boy. The child needed exercise and some real enthusiasms. The child ought to be made to go back.

Philip could assemble the reason for this final retort. Up till now Simon must have tolerated Lawrence as being the inevitable result of Jennifer's idiosyncratic experiments. He would have judged that three terms at a public school would clear all that nonsense away. During the holidays he would have smiled and sighed and raised his eyebrows and felt much better once Lawrence had left the room. He might, even, have persuaded himself into noticing the beginning of improvement. The calm contradiction must have come as the latest of the many last straws.

Lawrence's viewpoint could most easily be reckoned by his words to Philip in the train. "He can't make a fuss, being a stepfather, can he?" An optimistic premise. For three days, cold and courteous arguments had ended in politely-shut doors and parallel arguments with Jennifer.

"He is impossible, Mother, isn't he?"

"Really, Jenny, I think I have been as patient as I can, but the child is quite impossible."

Which led her to conclude that there was not room for both of them in the house and that, since this was Simon's house, Lawrence must go. She had telephoned to George Nash at Oxford. Probably, Philip reckoned, she had not spoken to him for years and would find nothing odd in crying shrilly: "Is that you, George? Jennifer here. I'm worried about Lawrence. Yes, Lawrence. Our child, in case you have forgotten. He must have a tutor or something; he won't stay at school. Can you arrange it? Yes, yes. Near you, if you like. I think that a very good idea."

II

Jennifer said: "I think it a very good idea to send him down to be with his father for a time." She sat up, uncurling her legs. She shook her hair. She handed Philip a cigarette.

"Are they fond of each other?" he asked.

"No. Lawrence is fond of me. But I should like him to be fond of George. And the tutor whom George has chosen is quite a possible person, with an intelligent wife. I went down to see them on Tuesday."

Philip had begun his usual ineffective attempts to say good-bye. She was vague with him. She laughed to herself. "Besides, I think Lawrence will be quite glad to come home to Simon and me when he has been with his father for a term. The donnish atmosphere is not very sympathetic to little Communists. And, although it is early to diagnose, Lawrence does seem to have grasped my ideas thoroughly. He's a sensible cub," she said musingly.

"I must——" Philip began. She kept her chin on her hand, gazing past him. "I never wanted him to feel that there was any restriction on that acquaintance, do you see? Absent fathers are inclined to resemble forbidden fruit. Sometimes I have felt that Lawrence has a kind of hankering for George even when he criticises him. But this is the first time that he has agreed to spend more than a day in George's company. Got to go?" she snapped.

"I must. I am so sorry."

"All right; no offence."

He thought that in half an hour he had learned her by heart. Her voice had an obsessing quality; its light peevish cadences would be easily remembered. While she walked with him to the door, he was more conscious

of her than he had been conscious of any woman. Her physical presence was as definite as the presence of an animal. Her hand laid in his was compelling despite its moderate clasp. He was obliged to look at it; at the thin platinum ring and the other ring whose graceful diamonds interrupted the short, tapering finger and seemed out of place there. He was obliged to look back, over her square shoulder and beside the strong aura of her hair, to the room where they had talked.

He saw the hot cave which any firelit room in winter could tunnel out of a flat, grey afternoon. The room was now overwhelming; she also, weighing down his thoughts. He said: "May I see you again?"

"Please. Any time. Just walk in." Her lips drooped. She looked surprisingly unhappy when she said, "I am going to miss Lawrence so much." This seemed to him the first sincere remark that she had made.

CHAPTER NINE

I

FRENCH'S flat was an angle of the top floor on a building between Oxford Circus and Park Lane; an expensive unimaginative shell for modern furnishings, modern comfort.

Philip never could envisage an ordinary existence in these surroundings. The long pale drawing-room had always the look of a room in an exhibition. The bare walls, the absence of any fireplace, the piece of contemporary sculpture jutting from a pedestal in the middle of the floor, discomfited him even when, as now, the air was thick with friendly smoke. The cushions on the Empire sofa were crumpled, littered with his discarded sheets of paper. At French's desk there was the half-empty whisky-decanter, the typewriter, the pile of script. These, the signs of work and habitation, could not dominate the cool white shell of the room.

On this night of Thursday Philip found concentration begin slowly. The physical drag of digestion, the precipitate sleepiness induced by too hurried a dinner, impeded him. He could have dozed by the fire, had there been an arm-chair in which to sprawl or any fire save the neat red scrolls of electricity within their aluminium shield. As it was he sat slanted and unhappy, hearing French plot the changes in the script. He was very near to the stage of saying: "I can't work to-night."

French chivvied him. When his reluctant brain found itself stooping to the job in hand, he knew a satisfaction that was entirely apart from its aftermath. This was a smug, intact absorption. He had no ambiguous purpose while he scribbled, swore, changed French's idea for his idea. The sleepy temptation to laze and await his later rendezvous departed. He became invulnerable, just as French, shouting into the telephone: "I can't possibly talk now," became invulnerable.

French's wife knew better than to disturb them. She had retreated to the shelter of another pale, proportioned, unkind room, with needlework and the wireless programme. Neither he nor French need trouble about her. Here where the windows steamed was the only thing that mattered.

And, once the pace slowed, once there was no answering suggestion from his own mind, once their silences prolonged themselves, the thing that had been work mattered not at all. The brain dropped the momentary issue

gladly. The half-finished thought which, an instant earlier, had presented itself for urgent completion, shrank and was shelved. With the surrender of saying: "We can settle that to-morrow," they became again aware of time.

French poured himself another whisky, pushed his outsize chair away from his desk, blew a long breath. Philip collected the untidy notes, shaking them into a sheaf and doubling an india-rubber band to enclose the cylinder.

"Drink?" French offered.

"I could do with some soda-water."

The time was only half-past ten. For once he need not make anxious excuses. God was good. He filled a glass with soda-water and afterwards lit a cigarette to contradict the new refreshment in his throat. French nodded like a mandarin. "It goes; it goes. Well, you've had a successful day, haven't you? What had Jacob to say?"

"Only that he was raising my salary and giving me a room of my own. No——" Philip remembered, "he said that there were to be changes in the office."

"So there are."

"What changes?"

"You can't keep anything to yourself or I'd tell you."

"Isn't that too bad," Philip murmured. He knew himself to be expert at dealing with such statements. Just as the way of enticing a cat was to ignore its dignified velvet shape, so was the way of inviting a confidence to disclaim all interest. He said: "I had a most entertaining lunch-hour. Do you know Jennifer Flood? She used to be Jennifer Nash."

"Never met her."

"She's a peculiar circumstance. I say, oughtn't we to go and rescue your wife from exile?" Philip made the pretence of rising from his chair. "She must be very bored by now."

"Marita is never bored; hasn't got the equipment. You can call her back in a minute, if you like. But I mustn't let her into company secrets. How do you feel about Leslie Gage?"

"Feel about her? I leave that to her own sex," said Philip and was rewarded by a cackle from French.

"Not bad. I mean what do you think of her as a dramatic critic?"

"Just what everybody else thinks, I imagine. That she's exasperating; prejudiced; affected; in love with her own small symptoms of education; but quite abominably significant."

"H'm," said French, "I can always rely on chaps of your race never to use one word where twenty will suffice. In seven, you hate her but you read her."

"Certainly."

"Jacob is putting her on the board."

"What board?"

"Ours," French said over the edge of his glass.

"Good God, why?"

"Literary and dramatic adviser. You, my child, will be working in direct contact with her after March."

"You make me feel very ill. What is the idea?"

"Jacob's idea? He wants to develop a new kind of highbrow section of the scenario department. A brains trust. He's got a fancy that he can stop the sale of all these British novels and plays to Hollywood."

"I dare say he could; if the company had the money."

"Ah," French rocked and developed several more chins. "But this isn't only a question of money. This is not so crude as you and me. This is an effort to put taste across as a prime factor in British pictures. This is a naïve wish to show that Wardour Street and Elstree aren't the half of the industry. He's bringing Bloomsbury in. He's segregating the boys who know how not to split an infinitive (you're the first pick; I got you that) and setting them up in a strictly non-commercial atmosphere with old girl Gage at the helm."

"It sounds crazy," Philip said.

"I don't know yet if it is or it isn't. He only sprang it on us yesterday."

Philip glanced at his watch, hoping that he was unobserved until French said: "What's your hurry? I thought you'd cancelled a date."

"I put it off until eleven-fifteen. I needn't go for ten minutes yet."

French sucked at the stem of an elaborate pipe. "What do you think of the idea?"

"I haven't begun to think. I dislike the thought of that woman intensely. More than ever since I heard that she killed Ralph Broughton's play."

French said: "There I'm with her. I loathed it. I read your pompous report on it this morning, by the way."

"Will it get through?"

"I'm afraid so. Thank God I shan't be directing it."

"Broughton will be pleased. He's broke. I must go."

"Good night to you."

Philip realised with astonishment that the last minutes of his separation from Victoria were falling back. He scurried out across the wide courtyard, under the straight walls of light and the straight lines of shadow. The towering block of flats hid the sky. When he reached the edge of the pavement he saw the stars. He breathed the new air. He would have liked to prolong this anticipation; the slow hands of the clock at last moved quickly, allowing him no time.

II

He had dreaded some punishment for his threatening happiness; even a letter from his brother Joseph would have been enough to tumble him into gloom. There was no letter.

While he waited for her in his room, he thought that it should have been better prepared for her coming. He turned off the centre light, leaving its task to the lamp burning on his desk and the sharp glowing fan that spread outward from the gas-fire. This precaution disguised the empty flower-vases on table and sideboard, the long stretch of bare carpet, like sacking. He pulled the single deep arm-chair out from its retreat beside the window. He urged the divan down the opposite wall so that the end of it came within the radius of the fire. Since his desk stood under the window the lamp would be behind her head. He sat experimentally in the arm-chair where she would sit. From here he saw the colours of the dim brocade nailed above the chintz divan, and the firelight sliding up the chintz; beyond, the green china within the glass doors of the cabinet. The rest of the room outside the lit circle became a high darkened space, not unpleasing. Its shadows hid the poor display where he had unfolded a leaf of the table pushed against the wall, to accommodate two bottles of beer, a syphon, a half-empty bottle of whisky and two unmatched glasses.

He walked, smoking and emptying the ash-trays punctually. The time was now seventeen minutes past eleven. He could not finish any thought. He kept wondering whether this day had been too good to him already; whether he dared to hope for more from it. The gods might justifiably think its gifts enough for Philip Meyer. In which case the telephone-bell must ring and Victoria's voice explain that a meeting to-night had become impossible. Or perhaps there would be no telephone-call; only a long silence here until he gave up hope and went to bed. He tried to think about his promotion, about the Bradford picture; these were flat in his mind. He could see that they existed as good things, as though someone else were to enjoy their privilege. He was in the act of lighting another cigarette when the bell that rang from

the front door spurted once, briefly. He was not aware of any thoughts at all as he went down the stairs.

When he swung back the door he found that the unlit cigarette was still between his fingers. Her hand crushed it. She wore a cloak and this seemed to him exactly right, for now they were silent as conspirators in the dim hall. The cloak was of black hard stuff with a steel chain across the throat. Her face and hair were vague above it. He said: "I thought you wouldn't come."

"I am not late, am I?"

"No."

"Then——"

"I just thought you wouldn't," he repeated. "Shall I lead the way? There are only two flights."

He heard the stiff noise of the cloak behind him. When she reached his open door she pulled the chain at the throat and swung the dark folds away and stood before him as narrow as a pencil. Her frock was scarlet. He had not thought of her wearing any bright colour. He shut the door. "What will you drink?" he asked, hurrying her toward the arm-chair.

"Nothing for a moment. I have been dining late." She gulped childishly with her hand below her breast. "I have eaten too much," she said. She looked about the room and back to Philip. "It is a nice room."

"It isn't, really."

"Did you mind my coming to it instead of your coming to me?"

"No. I love that. Do sit down."

"You see, I thought that if you came to me, the people who were giving me dinner might take me home and come in and sit; you know how they do; it is always easier to escape if one is not going home."

The words woke the echo of apprehension in his mind. "Do you often have to escape?" he asked.

"Yes. Don't you?"

"Only from dull things."

Her large moth-grey eyes were fixed on him with such direct curiosity that his hand went automatically to smooth his hair. She seated herself, clasping her fingers round one knee. He sat down on the end of the divan, leaning forward into the firelight. "I have had a lovely day," he said, and began to tell her the story of it. He ended suddenly, ungracefully: "That is more than enough about me. What have you been doing? Are you going to move the shop to Berkeley Square?"

"How did you know about that?"

"My spies informed me."

"Well, I am going to," she said obstinately, as though he had already argued against it. He was becoming used to the look of her in the chair with the lamplight round her head.

"If I *don't*," she said, stabbing one finger into the arm of the chair, "I shall lose business. The showroom in Orchard Street is good enough. I hardly need a larger window. But the work-rooms are awful. They are small and dark and badly ventilated and full of mice. I like mice, but the girls do not like them. I tamed some once with cake. Philip, if I move I may be able to carry out the costumes for the studio as well as designing them. That is what I am aiming for. The shop in Berkeley Square has other good rooms above it still to let, so far. I could expand later on. It is an enormous rent; but even with the present business I can cover my overheads."

While she talked he saw her for the first time as a person existing apart from the dream in his mind. The haunting of his love, the image of the absent, could not be at company with this energetic and selfishly absorbed young woman. She said: "I have worked it all out with my accountant. Now it only remains for my backers to agree. Have you ever had a thing like that? I assure you nothing could be more exasperating. It is my worst thing; being made to feel guilty and being obliged to take advice. It is odd, isn't it, how one goes along imagining that one is grown-up until suddenly somebody says: 'You mustn't do that,' and one is as dubious as a child again."

" 'Sour authority's ancestral show.' "

She grimaced. "They make me so cross."

"Who are they?" Philip asked.

"Old men in the city. My father's trustees."

"Not—not Jacob Lowenstal?" He was surprised that he could ask the question so simply and lightly. She looked at him for a few seconds without speaking. "Jacob advises me. I have known him a long time. Why?"

"Somebody told me that he was your backer."

"No."

"Oh. I am glad," said Philip, adding hurriedly: "Not that I have anything against him. He has always been good to me. But I should think he could be very avoidable about money; a characteristic which my race enjoys almost without exception."

"I like your race."

There was a silence. She lay in the chair with her finger-tips spread out on each arm of it, her body fallen back into a hollow curve, her chin lifted

and the eyes never moving from his face. “I didn’t mean to talk business at you,” she murmured, almost whispering. He slid off the divan to squat on his heels at her feet. He said: “You are so very young to have all these things; I cannot imagine you in the middle of the shop, being grown-up and efficient. I have tried to imagine it.”

“Have you?”

“Yes. Your name suits you extraordinarily well. You are like a Victorian child, who seems old beyond its years at one minute and the next an absurd baby.” He tried to take her hand; she drew it away, seeming to be intent with a private problem. “That is how you think of me,” she said at last.

“That is some of it.”

“When I think of you,” she said, and stopped and made a disclaiming gesture. “It is silly to start that way. Like throwing a return bouquet. But I remember when I first saw you. You didn’t see me.”

“When was it?” he asked.

“I should think two years ago. I was in the waiting-room at the studio. You came down to speak to some person who had been there for a long time. I suppose he had come to see Montagu Rivers. You stood talking very kindly to him. You were wearing a bright green shirt.”

“I got it in Paris. I threw it away afterwards.”

“And very pale flannels.”

“I must have looked revolting.”

“You didn’t. Do you know what I thought? I thought that you were the most vivid person I had ever seen, except,” she added, “for an Italian baby who once begged from me and he should have grown up rather like you, anyway—I’m sorry.” He remembered her habit of tacking the artless apology on to the previous word with comic effect. He said: “What else did you think?”

“Only that,” she said. “And I remember being surprised because when you had finished talking all the light went away from you suddenly and your face was quite sad and heavy.” She did not now attempt to withdraw her hand. He knelt more upright and pressed his lips to the back of it.

“Oh, no,” she said softly, as though speaking to herself. “It wouldn’t do. I might love you too much.”

“Will you please say that again so that I shall know I have heard it.”

She laughed. “Wasn’t it rather a trite thing to say?”

“Nobody has ever said it to me before.”

"And how many people have you loved?" she asked as he leaned his head back upon her knee.

"None, I think."

Her fingers moved over the jutting line of his brow, closed his eyelids and moved downward to his mouth; they passed under his chin with a brief, unfinished gesture. She said: "I should go, Philip. It is late."

"You can't go." He turned, laying his arm across her lap. "Do you think you could love me enough to marry me?"

She looked as shocked and baffled as though he had made the alternative suggestion. She did not speak. He waited painfully. She began to chatter.

"You do not know me at all. I am bad-tempered and selfish and when people make me afraid I go wild; if I were a cat then I should run up the curtains. All I really think about is my job and I am very unkind to my mother and I talk in my sleep. Don't laugh; I should make you unhappy; I never want to have children or be tied. I can't marry anyone." She pushed him away, then held his hands and looked at him sadly in silence. While the silence prolonged he saw her again becoming quiet, vague, as when first he saw her. Now her mouth was pursed and thoughtful, almost prim. Still the blue shadows on her skin, the hollow at her throat, the small, lifted breasts gave him so profound a curiosity for her body that he felt only the response in his own. When his hands shivered she clasped them more tightly.

"I can't marry anyone," she repeated. He was silent. "I must go. Will you give me my cloak?" Her eyes were so much afraid that he said: "All right. I wouldn't make you stay." When he put the cloak round her shoulders she turned to him within its folds. He heard his own voice saying faintly: "But if you love me——"

"Please don't be urgent with me. Or angry."

"That is foolish. I shall be neither."

"You see——" she began, drawing away from him. He thought that she looked at him with pity.

"Why are you being sorry for me, Victoria?"

"I am not sorry for you. When can I see you again?"

"You, to ask me that. To-morrow."

"Yes. Where?"

"Where and when you like."

"Will you telephone before lunch? Lunch is silly, anyway; we should both have so little time." These words might have reminded her of something. She went quickly to the window and drew aside the curtain. He

followed her. “Nothing,” she said before he had asked the question. “I always like to look out of the window in a new room and I was shy when I arrived so I did not.”

“Good-bye, my beloved.”

She said: “Good-bye,” with the sad upward note.

He watched her drive away. He went up the stairs. As though this were not now his room at all and he a trespassing stranger, he walked with quiet careful footsteps to put out the light.

CHAPTER TEN

I

AT either side of the Oxford road the landscape was sharp and coloured with a frosty morning. Colour ceased with the trees, lovelier because the leaves were gone, greyishly pencilling the hard blue sky.

Philip looked upon these things and was hurt by them. He could find no word that would not bring the tears to his eyes. He was ashamed of himself because this must be obvious to Sally, who, gentle and practical a companion as ever, was careful to ignore it. She had said once: "Are you unhappy?" She had taken his answer: "No. Happier than I have ever been in my life." And that was true. Why weep, then?

"Sorry," she said suddenly. "I always forget you hate driving fast."

"I wasn't worrying. There are days when I don't notice speed at all." Now he was reminded and therefore apprehensive while the speedometer's needle moved upward. He wriggled. Sally said: "Do you want to take your usual walk or can you last till Oxford?"

"I would like to get out for one minute, if you don't mind."

She braked, shut off the engine, and lit a cigarette. He came back, still ashamed of himself for the stupid precaution.

They sat in the car at the side of the road because Sally wished to smoke her cigarette peacefully. He was still less at ease now that the movement and the noise of the engine did not cover his silence. He lay back with eyes half-closed, thinking: "It was lovely—last night. It was all I wanted. If only I could see her I should know that I had not been clumsy and inadequate. Perhaps she is wishing that it had never happened. I never meant it to happen."

"It is only half-past eleven now," Sally said. "Will you be too early for your little Socialist?"

"No. I said I would find him in his father's rooms at half-past twelve."

"Then how will you get to Abingdon afterwards?"

"I'll get a bus or a cab."

"You won't be later than four, will you? They are particular about time, the parents."

"Ronald won't be there?"

"No," she said mournfully.

He could look at her with sympathy; not in the eyes, because they might tell his secret; when she turned her elegant and trustful profile away from him he studied her. She was such familiar company that it was not his habit to think of her as a woman. He watched her hands that were pink with the cold; they were unimportant, virginal hands. They brought back the image and the touch of the other hands. He went on remembering until the bruised desolation became unbearable. He did not know in this mixture of remorse and loneliness whether he wished more that it had never happened or that it might be happening now again.

He was certain that, alone, he must for ever be thus incomplete; he could not forget long moments of the night when he had been as much alone as at this moment. This, then, might be all that love could promise; solitude even in companionship. It seemed a dubious gift.

He envied Sally; her capable behaviour with the car matched her life's deportment. He thought that honesty was the keynote of her character; she would never lose herself in the dark, tangled places where he loitered. He said cautiously: "How much Jewish blood *is* there in you, Sally?"

"I am going to impose a fine on you for every time you mention the race."

"Do I mention it so often?"

"About twice an hour."

"Aunt Frieda mentions it much more often than that. But with a difference. She likes it," he said, and added: "I wonder if she really does; if anybody really does."

"Rabbis," said Sally.

"I ought to write to the old girl; I never do."

"Well, it's only just a week since you saw her."

"So it is." He looked back to Sunday a week ago, when he had stood with French on Ilkley Moor. He said: "How very long ago that seems."

II

After Sally had driven off, he walked through the streets of Oxford. It was not easy to renew memories; these were all in the senses; as though only the trivial whiff of malt from the brewery, the shape of one leaning gargoyle, a chime of bells, could survive against this present that was making older and sadder echoes in his mind. He stood on the bridge to watch the young

men go by. They might have been the same young men. He had no wish to be among them again. He leaned on the bridge to watch the river; the pace of the water was momentarily soothing, as the movement of the car had been. When he turned back, having wasted not enough time, he was already ahead in thought as far as the evening. She had said: "It will have to be to-morrow." That must be for to-morrow; not for to-night. What would be for to-night? Just this. His footsteps made the noise. Just this. Just this.

He went in under the archway and the effect of the quiet green inside the grey walls was unchanged: sudden in its peace like a silence fallen on the hour and on the world. There was nobody in the porter's lodge. He waited. The sunlight sharpened the lines of the flagstones; the straight shadows lay half-way over the grass. From one window voices sounded, the words beyond earshot; they might have been the chant of a young, strange language.

He climbed the stairs. The scout who had been sent with him knocked on the door and Lawrence opened the door. "My father," said Lawrence, "is still in some peculiar chapel or other. He said I was to give you a glass of sherry."

In answer to Philip's questions he replied that the tutor and the tutor's wife did no harm except for wanting him to go to bed early; that they lived at Sutton Courtenay which made Oxford difficult of access except during week-ends; that work was quite enjoyable, although having had only two days of it he could not yet give an opinion as to the tutor's methods; that the house was cold and that he was reading Ouspensky's *New Model of the Universe* which he thought a very insidious book. He added: "There is a sheep-dog. I'd like you to see him. I was wondering if my mother would stand for a sheep-dog when I got back. Or would it be unkind in London?" He stood with his usual air of amiable wonder; the room was as Philip had expected it to be, with the bookshelves and the wide window looking on to the garden. The luncheon-table was laid below the window.

"She doesn't like animals, you see. But that's enough about myself," he said sharply. "What have you been doing? You look as though you were tired." He perched on the window-seat. "It is awful to tell people they look tired, isn't it?"

"I shouldn't have thought so. Women don't like it," said Philip, "because they think it means that they are looking plain."

"I've never seen a woman who wasn't plain," said Lawrence dreamily.

"Your mother isn't."

"Oh? I should have thought she was, rather. Nice plain. Perhaps she isn't. I really don't know what women ought to look like."

George Nash came into the room. Philip judged that he had heard Lawrence's last remark. Perhaps he had always this look of perilously avoiding laughter. He was medium-sized and slender. He had Lawrence's roundness of forehead; his thinning hair was the indeterminate colour at which blond hair arrived in its process of turning grey. The eyes were slits of bright blue and the features small; the most definite thing about him was his voice, deep and metallic.

Philip found himself staring while he reconstructed from this later portrait the young man in Jennifer's story. There was, he thought, something babyish in the face that denied the middle years; the movements of Nash and his son were alike youthful and neat. While they slipped into their chairs and cut up their food, Philip felt that he might be in the presence not of one child but two. The fact that Lawrence called his father by his Christian name helped the illusion.

Throughout luncheon he found his attention focusing strongly upon them for minutes at a time, then shifting from them altogether while he remembered; as though he saw his company in violent sunshine and interrupting shadow; their faces now clear to the very grain of the skin, now blackened in silhouette while he drifted away. He was glad to be here among the hints of the world where persons were less significant than thoughts. He noticed an instance of Nash's typically dim and donnish isolation when Lawrence talked about the film industry. Nash began to ask Philip painstaking questions, ending: "Well, you give me a great deal of hope. I had always imagined it to be entirely in the hands of half-wits."

"So it is, at the moment," Philip said; "but that won't last for ever."

"The screen," said Lawrence, "ought to be the finest medium in the world for propaganda."

Philip saw Nash's eyebrows meet comically; at this moment Nash might have been the irreverent child and Lawrence the grown-up. They drank their coffee beside the fire; Philip took the glass of port for fear of seeming impolite. Nash was talking of Oxford; when Philip admitted that he had left without taking a degree he felt guilty and foolish. Nash passed the confession by. Lawrence said: "I couldn't possibly stay here for years."

"You'll have to get here first," said Nash. "Forgive my mentioning it."

"I shall get here. Anybody can pass exams, can't they?"

"I have met quite a few who couldn't."

"Were they very stupid people?"

"No. Some of them were most intelligent."

"You're pulling my leg, aren't you?" said Lawrence.

"I assure you," George Nash disclaimed. Suddenly they both began to laugh, for no reason that Philip could discover. He watched Nash aim a mild blow at Lawrence. "They are just happy," he decided, "as though they had wanted to meet for years." This thought remained with him while the two, momentarily unconscious of him, argued before the bookshelves where Lawrence was demanding a volume of political economy.

His father said: "But I tell you, imbecile, that if you start there you're starting in the middle."

"I want the middle. I know the beginning."

"You know nothing whatsoever. Who were the Physiocrats?"

"Crackers; I don't know," said Lawrence.

Philip thought: "Somehow I can't believe that this is what Jennifer had in mind. Their being all boys together about economics. She looked so miserable when she said she would miss him. Perhaps it is just that I can't imagine anybody who misses a person, liking to think of the person as perfectly content somewhere else."

Lawrence denied being perfectly content. This was after they had said their early good-bye to Nash; the car ordered for Lawrence would take them as far as Sutton Courtenay. "Then," Lawrence had said, "I can walk over with you to Abingdon. It is a good day for a walk. I will ask if we can take the sheep-dog."

"Does he look like a chrysanthemum?" Nash had asked.

"Yes, he does. Exactly. I hadn't made up my mind what it was. I thought it might be one of those long fringed lamp-shades. I didn't know you cared about dogs."

Philip had seen the expression on Nash's face; the effect of being caught unawares by his child's reminder that they were still comparative strangers to each other. Nash had said in a voice a little injured: "I do care about dogs." His figure standing under the arch as they drove away was taut, watchful; he grinned and waved to them. When Philip looked back he saw that the figure was standing there still.

Then Lawrence had changed the subject rapidly. It was not until they were well beyond Oxford that Philip interrupted him in his criticism of Ouspensky to ask: "You like your father now, don't you?"

The child wrinkled his nose. "Like him? I don't know. He is odd, isn't he? Not at all the sort of person one would expect a professor of political

economy to be. I liked staying in college, though."

"I thought you and he seemed to be getting on rather well."

"I suppose we have some things in common. But he thinks he knows a hell of a lot."

"Presumably he does."

Lawrence crossed his knees and wriggled into a comfortable position, leaning back in his corner; the car was a musty local taxi lined with faded whipcord. "I say," he said, "did my mother talk to you about all this?"

"A little."

"She doesn't mind my being here, does she? I mean, it was her idea."

"No, of course she doesn't mind. She thinks it is good for you."

"George says that nobody can tell what is good for me until I grow up. He makes me feel that people of my age are not important at all. He's a jolly sight too detached, if you ask me. But I do see that it's no good being a politician if one doesn't know the whole history of the world and how it got like it has. I say, that is frightful grammar, isn't it? He's always correcting my grammar."

They drove through Sutton Courtenay, arriving at the house of Lawrence's tutor. He appeared for a moment to shake hands with Philip, license the sheep-dog's company and to say: "Don't dawdle on the way back." He was a tall thin man with a face and head too small for his height. The house was restored Tudor, the garden untidy. Lawrence released the bouncing sheep-dog and they set out beside the river.

The afternoon was still bright, the colours of field and sky vivid. When they reached the place where the river divided they stood still to gaze at the white waterfalls. It was too cold to stand still. They shivered as the sharp reflections in the water shivered. The dog padded on ahead, his large feathery haunches blowing. They cut across the fields toward the main road.

"Roundheads and Cavaliers fought all over here," Lawrence said. He walked with a jerky stride; Philip kept shortening his steps politely and then forgetting. He could ask himself from time to time: "What am I doing here? Why am I not with her?" as though this was a foreign country and Lawrence a native of the place. When he looked down at the small shape in its tight blue overcoat and grey flannels he could wonder whether with its lucid mind, its abstract problems, this would ever be a man. Lawrence seemed to him as sexless as a green leaf in spring. All the ideas in his own mind now were sentimental, softly phrased, as the thoughts at night which would seem shameful in the practical light of morning. Lawrence had the quality of that light, save when he spoke of his own affairs.

"She didn't say how long I was supposed to be here?"

"No. I imagine that you will stay for the length of a school term and go home at the holidays."

"Oh. Well, I think I can stick that all right. Come out of the mud, silly," he shouted to the dog. "You'll have to be washed and wiped. He has so many *clothes* for a dog, hasn't he?"

"I shall go and see your mother and tell her that you are well."

"Parents always want to know that, don't they? I am always very well. Could you throw this stick for him? I can't throw it far enough. I say, Philip."

"Yes."

"You weren't born into a split family, were you?"

"No, I wasn't. I know nothing about it."

Lawrence knelt beside the dog, removing a trail of bramble from its fur. "I think," he said, "that being a don makes one very superior."

"Was I being superior? I am sorry."

"Oh no, not a bit. Honestly you weren't. When I talked to you in the train I thought you were one of the least superior grown-ups I had ever met."

"Thank you. You don't really find your split family a serious disadvantage, do you?"

"Oh, no. I used not to think about it at all. Perhaps it is only because of having been sent down here."

They were out of the fields and on to the road; the sky was becoming misty, with a red-gold tinge in the blue. "How hard the road is after the grass," said Lawrence. "Who are these people you are going to see at Abingdon? Or is it rude to ask?"

"Not at all rude. They are the future in-laws of my third cousin. That sounds like a French exercise, doesn't it?"

"It makes them sound very remote indeed. One is always miserable about the person who isn't there, I suppose," he said suddenly.

"Why do you ask that?" Philip said sharply; his absorption with his own mood led him almost to believe that the peculiar child had guessed it.

"Only because I keep being miserable about my mother. I don't mean home-sick," said Lawrence. "I mean being sorry."

"Guilty?"

"In a way."

"You have nothing whatever to worry about."

"No. I suppose really it is a kind of conceit. Thinking that because I am not there she must be unhappy."

"Do you play any games—football or anything?"

Lawrence twinkled. "That's funny, Philip. Whenever I get really awful talking about myself or about politics or about religion somebody always says: 'Do you play any games?'"

Philip said: "Cold baths; whippings; plenty of wholesome sports."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing."

"Who ought to have cold baths? Actually I do in this house, but they are meant to be hot."

Philip stood still to laugh. Lawrence watched him perplexedly. The dog, like a greyish snow-cloud, halted in the road looking back at them; his open mouth and pink tongue alone making an expression on his face; his eyes were hidden by the long fur.

"George laughs at the things I say."

They came to Abingdon; the frontage of the houses along the river, the curve of the bridge, had a foreign look. The town itself seemed very quiet and empty. Lawrence dragged Philip by the arm to admire the Wren Town Hall and to jeer at the Victorian-built hotel opposite. They went down narrow streets, secretive with the fading afternoon. The little Georgian houses pleased him and he wondered why he should find so great a satisfaction in this period of architecture. Lawrence took him to see the Alms-houses and led him out again by the river. From here they looked back to the bridge over which they had passed. A kingfisher flashed suddenly, low upon the water. Lawrence squeaked with excitement. "It's almost four o'clock," he said afterwards. "I ought to be going back."

"Will you be all right by yourself?"

"I am not by myself," he said, playing with the dog's ears. "I shall go like stink. The tutor is teaching me to play chess and if we get really well on in a game perhaps we shan't have to stop for church. Well——" he shrugged with the movement that Philip remembered from the hall at Kensington Square, the movement expressing clearly his resignation to departure; it was, Philip thought, too final a gesture for a child. He held out his hand. "Good-bye and thank you most awfully for coming to see me."

"Thank you for inviting me."

"Will you come down again?" Lawrence asked, with his head on one side.

"Yes, of course I will. In about a fortnight?"

"That would be grand. You'll tell my mother——" he said, looking at his muddy shoes.

"I'll tell her that you are very well and quite happy but that you will be glad to come home when you've worked out your term."

"That's *perfect*," said Lawrence and turned abruptly, still keeping the dog beside him. Philip watched them move off together, growing smaller on their way to the bridge. He hesitated. From here he could find the house to which Sally had directed him. He had but to walk a few hundred yards along the river-front. He lingered because he had time to linger; the mist came up off the water. He was bewildered to return among his earlier thoughts and to find that he must still weep. The only consolation for him would be in her arms, because of whose acquaintance he needed consolation.

III

He pushed the gate and walked into the garden. It wore the sad look of all gardens in winter, with the brown, waiting flower-beds; the wet laurel; the monkey-puzzle-tree's synthetic green and the bare prunus branches faintly red; there were three bare prunus trees growing out of the lawn. The house was large and amiably ugly with gables, scarlet brick and the whiskers of bygone Virginia creeper. It suggested to him the word "family" and a ninety-nine years' lease. He saw Sally's car standing in the circular drive; another car, low, boat-shaped, splashed with dried mud.

A servant opened the door and he asked for Sally. The servant said that Sally was in the back garden with Mr. Ronald. This astonished Philip and he was glad for her as he told the servant that he would go out to them.

She led him across the hall. Under the angle of the white-painted staircase a door whose upper half was of stained glass opened upon the back garden. There were rose-bushes round a stone sun-dial; then apple-trees in long grass; afterwards a tennis-court, divided by a yew hedge from the vegetable allotment beyond.

He did not know why he found it endearing. The mist was shaggy here where the ground lay as low as the river and the last of the sun strove through the mist. The persons of Sally and her Ronald were almost in silhouette. They were throwing a wet tennis-ball over the head of a spaniel who leaped between them; his lovely head and his flying paws, the curve of his shining back, were eternally hopeful. He had a fish-like quality, shooting upward through the thick air. Above his head his two tormentors kept a

rhythm with the arc of each arm as it threw, with the emphasis of the catch and the timing of the next throw. Their shapes were slight and easy on the mist. Philip would have watched them a moment longer. They saw him and came to him, the dog running anxiously ahead.

Philip, entirely prepared to hate Ronald, observed that his face had a lean, intelligent worry about it, contradicting the blue eyes and the English complexion. He observed another thing. Just as George Nash and his son were obviously branches of one stem, so these two matched; with their ruffled hair and the blood in their cheeks, with their look of belonging to the casual garden. While he shook hands he could not be surprised that they should want to marry.

"How are you?" Ronald was saying. "Glad to meet you. I didn't expect to get away. Only for half a day, but worth it. Sally tells me you have been devoting yourself to a small prodigious infant at Oxford."

"That is right."

"Well, you have earned your tea. Come in. I am afraid the parents will be there." For a moment Philip thought that they were, all three, still young enough to mark off their own territory and to feel that they left it when they entered in the wake of the silver tea-pot.

There was chintz in the drawing-room; with more white paint and Queen Anne furniture. The tea-service stood on a low table and Ronald's mother stooped above it. Dusk came into the room. Philip thought that from the outposts of their arm-chairs they might all have been feeling for diplomatic methods of communication. It was obvious that the parents were embarrassed by Sally. The mother, with lean and faded beauty, the father, a brown, wrinkled version of Ronald, kept the talk among impersonal things.

Lawrence would say, Philip thought as he listened, that these people belonged to a vanishing class. They clung with pathetic tenacity to the dim glories of their India, their hunting-fields, their leisured progress through a world where ladies and gentlemen must fit a stock-size measurement. That measurement was now tragically shrunk within the limits of the pension and the well-cut, shabby clothes.

He had the impulse to talk loudly, to chivvy them with hints of Left politics, to be as Jewish as possible. He refrained, perhaps because Sally's eyes pleaded with him; perhaps because on this day he would not be unkind.

"And, after all," he thought, "what harm do they do? Except gaze smugly on their child and imagine that he has a hundred privileges that are denied to them: when actually the only one that he wants was theirs when they were twenty years old: marriage." He was indignant on behalf of

Ronald who, whether describing Air Force limitations in coloured language or questioning him about his own job, exhibited a lively intelligence.

"Wish we could get a company as efficient as yours to make the new Air Force picture. We've had a couple of highbrow saps smashing up their expensive cameras at the job this week."

"If you saw our board of directors," Philip said, "you would understand why the Government doesn't attempt to strike a bargain with them."

"I suppose they are *most* unpleasant people," Mrs. Arthur moaned.

"No," said Philip; "just Jews." Sally cackled, the parents looked uncomfortable; Ronald gave his wide, slow grin below the moustache that recalled to Philip his own impatient words about the blond baby subaltern.

"We ought to be going back," Sally said. "It is nearly dark."

"Don't go yet." Ronald's voice was urgent; its note drew the parental glances in his direction. Sally turned to him, saying as quietly as though they were alone: "Darling, I must. It isn't my car, and I have to deliver it into the hands of its owner by eight o'clock."

"Always have to go," he muttered. Philip wondered whether he were reading his own tragedy into their attitudes, their low, defeated words.

Ronald got up quickly from his chair and said in a changed, abrupt voice: "Anyway, a drink before you go." The noise of the door shutting behind him was brisk. "Reggie, dear," his mother addressed the colonel, "supposing we have a little more light?" It was this light, when he had pressed the switch, that gave Sally to Philip's eyes in an unprepared pose; she moved swiftly, not so swiftly that he missed her bowed head and clasped hands; the momentary surrender to grief. She met his stare with her head held high. The pallor of her face was more obvious than the light alone should have made it. The parents appeared now to notice nothing. That they should go on talking across that stiffly mournful shape seemed to him idiotic. They were talking lightly of Ronald's chances in promotion; saying that he might be sent to the East. He thought: "Are you blind? It is like talking when there is somebody very ill in the room."

Ronald came back with the decanter of sherry and the glasses. He spoke to Sally with chilled politeness; she went on looking wounded while she answered him. Mrs. Arthur was saying: "Once these terrible Bolsheviks are out of power."

"Very mild Bolsheviks, aren't they?" Philip hazarded. Over his shoulder he saw that Ronald stooped beside Sally, filling her glass. He saw her hand move upward to touch his cheek and arrest itself, falling heavily to her lap with the gesture incomplete.

"Ramsay Macdonald is a traitor."

"I never quite know what a traitor is," Philip said, rubbing his forehead. He quoted a remark made by George Nash at luncheon. "The trouble with the people in this present Government is not that they are extremists; it is just that they are uneducated as statesmen. They make a mess of everything because none of them has enough experience on the Front Bench." He did not know whether he himself believed this.

Nobody answered him. Sally set down her glass and said: "Philip, please, we must go." He rose, shaking hands with the parents who seemed to say good-bye thankfully without discourtesy. Ronald came into the hall with them.

"We must meet again; next time I struggle out of my dismal station for long enough to get a night in town."

"I'd like to; so much," said Philip. He hurried into the lavatory, hoping that the two would amend their differences while he was absent. The front door was standing open when he emerged. In the cold blue evening he saw them stand together; they were whispering. He heard her voice raised to cry: "But it is no *good*," then Ronald turned away from her furiously. She caught his arm.

Philip climbed into the car. Now they were saying good-bye beyond the range of the headlights. She returned. She was silent until they had passed the gate where Ronald stood; he raised one hand a little and walked back down the drive. She said: "It was nice of you to come. I do hope you weren't too bored."

"Of course I wasn't. I like him enormously."

She sighed. At once he was with his own sorrow again; now his physical fatigue drew level with the fatigue in his mind. The image of Victoria had shrunk to a small lost doll. The memory of last night had only the pain left to it.

He wished that he were as dignified an animal as Sally, who even now worked to keep her discomforts hidden. All through the long drive home, with the other red tail-lights stringing out ahead of them, with the by-pass road opening before them like a mechanised and abominable Styx, with the race against time signalled by each glaring clock-face, she remained amiable, quiet; she did not confide. He tried to belittle her, thinking: "At least hers is familiar ground for sorrow. Straightforward affair of wanting what she cannot have. And I have had——" He checked himself. He heard Sally speak an urgent question and did not hear the words.

"Sorry. What did you say?"

"That car."

"Which car?"

"The one that cut in——"

"What about it?"

"Didn't you see it?"

"No. Why?"

"I thought," she began, then stopped.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Sally, are you dining somewhere?"

"With Michael and Clare. They said that they were going to ask you."

The cousins, the Davies family in Bryanston Square, representing the most direct link between Sally and himself, looked undesirable from here. "A rich cold supper, I suppose. And Michael stroking your leg under the table."

"Don't be horrid."

"I am sorry, sweet."

"All right," she said.

When they reached London he found himself a little restored by the liveliness in the air. He was sorry when they turned at Hyde Park Corner, driving away from the blue avenue of Piccadilly, up through the Park to Marble Arch and beyond. The Paddington streets were dim; they promised nothing.

"Do you mind if we go straight to my flat, Philip? It is just on eight."

"I shall walk a little way," he said, when they came to her street, with the "To Let" boards, the stucco and the sad lamps.

Sally did not answer. She was looking at a car that stood outside her front door. She braked. She left the engine running and the door open in her flight. Philip leaning out after her with curiosity, saw under the lamp that the car was boat-shaped, splashed with dried mud. There was a man standing in the doorway. From where he leaned he could hear Ronald's voice and her voice answering.

Then she called jubilantly: "Philip!"

"Hullo?"

"Could you bear to ring up the Davies's house and say that I can't come. Say anything."

"I will do that."

He waited for some further word; none came. The front door slammed behind them. He shut off the engine and descended from the car. He stood on the pavement, looking up until he saw her windows lit. "Now they'll kiss and make it up again," he thought enviously. "Ronald must have driven the wheels off that machine. I suppose it was he who passed us on the Great West."

He turned away with his footsteps making the double beat that they had made upon the pavements at Oxford. "What is for to-night? Just this—just this."

IV

When he stood outside the house in Gloucester Terrace he did not look upward at his own darkened windows. He had ceased to envy Sally and Ronald their young reconciliation. He let himself into the hall. The last time that he came here had been in grey morning; the earliest hours of this day.

He wished that he might now, as then, be heavy and careless with sleep.

He plunged up the stairs in the dark. When he reached the second landing, he saw that there was a line of light under his door. He supposed this to be the street-lamps shining through because the curtains were not drawn. He went into the room.

Victoria was sitting in the arm-chair beside the fire. She looked at him with careful, alarmed eyes.

She said: "I couldn't stay away."

He threw himself down beside her. He did not mean to say "I loved it so. And I thought you didn't like it." If he had not said this, he thought she would not have replied: "It is always like that when two people haven't done it together before."

"Always?"

"Oh, yes."

"Do you know or are you guessing?"

"I know."

"I see."

She looked at him remorsefully. "There won't be anybody but you now. Ever."

"It is all right."

"Are you angry?"

"No. It is all right."

“We are going to have a lovely time.”
“Yes.”
“Perhaps I shouldn’t have told you. I thought you knew.”
“It is all right,” he said again.

BOOK II

"*That Which I Have . . .*"

April, 1931

CHAPTER ONE

I

PHILIP and Victoria halted at the corner of Berkeley Square. The stationary van was in the way of the traffic that came from Bruton Street. Remonstrating voices, short impatient hoots, the scrape of gears persisted.

Overhead on the blue sky, white balloon clouds tumbled with the wind. The wind came round the corner of the street. It ruffled the colours in a flower-seller's basket. The sunlight fell flat against the Mayfair houses; the pavements were still wet. In the square the small green leaves were whipped inside out. This was hurried weather. Weather belonging peculiarly to London in April.

The men carried the furniture from the van. The shop-window was empty, the doors thrown wide; the beginning of the new carpet, littered with straw, was visible beyond the step. In these circumstances, the plate-glass, the black and white bricks of the façade had an ingenuous, personal look. The shop was like somebody caught half-dressed.

Victoria, holding Philip's arm, might on his behalf have allowed herself a respite. For the moment she had ceased to be harassed. She was as artlessly excited as he. She appeared content to hold his arm and stare.

He looked down at her face that was the blue-white colour of expensive china, at the narrow black clothes and the silver fur.

They had lunched in celebration at the Berkeley. The smooth extravagant atmosphere was continued here. He could taste luxury and believe that it was his privilege.

Victoria said: "Come in for a minute."

"Only a minute. It is nearly three o'clock."

He stood with her while she patted the furniture as though it were several dogs. He walked with noisy feet upon the parquet while she argued with the head saleswoman who had a shiny face like a sugared almond and thin scarlet lips. The men carrying the furniture requested him to mind his back.

"Victoria, I must go. Shall I call for you?"

"No, darling, because I don't know whether I shall be here or at Orchard Street."

"You haven't forgotten that Ralph is coming for a cocktail?"

"Ralph?" He thought that she did this deliberately; being vague on purpose, with her eyes very wide and blank.

He said: "Broughton."

"Oh. . . . Do we want him?"

"I do."

"All right. I don't know what time I shall get away. We are dining, aren't we?"

"Yes, but early, sweet. I have to go round to the Davies's afterwards."

"It can't be very early. I may not get home before seven-thirty. I've no idea." She was harassed again. He pressed her hand. "Don't worry. Come when you can."

He did not hail a taxi until he was out of sight of the shop. Victoria discouraged the habit. While the traffic in Berkeley Street compelled slow progress, he agreed with her. Her attitude to money was not his. She was unceasingly careful without appearing mean. She was not interested in other people's money. She knew where to buy cheap things that were good. She saved without effort. She might have been a Frenchwoman with her practical rules of living. When they went together to Berwick Market to buy the food for the week-end he would watch her choosing as warily as she chose her handful of new models in Paris.

The taxi had struggled beyond the range of the lights in Piccadilly. The speed suited the wild, new day. He hugged his knees, content with everything; even with the prospect of entering Leslie Gage's room ten minutes after the time agreed. He looked forward to the tussle with Gage. In the days when he was alone, he had dreaded argument and quarrel. He did not know why his private security should induce a fighting spirit throughout his working day.

He slammed joyfully into his neat, empty room. He arranged his hair before the adequate looking-glass. He lit a cigarette and dawdled down the passages until he reached the door where large black letters announced Miss Gage.

In the outer room the small blonde secretary was typing. She looked at him as though she tried to remember who he was. Refusing to enlighten her, he glanced about the room. Branches of palm in a square glass vase, a box of Turkish cigarettes, a silly modern carpet with a meaningless design that suggested entrails. On the wall a caricature of Gage smoking a cigar was signed, "*A l'ami Leslie*."

"Mr. Meyer," said the secretary with wondering emphasis. "Oh. You're late, aren't you? I don't know whether . . . There was somebody else. . . ." She rose and walked with the swing of a bathing-belle into the next room. Philip sat in a blue arm-chair, shaking his cigarette-ash carefully upon the carpet. The secretary hovered back to him.

"Will you go *in*," she murmured.

He went in. Leslie Gage's room was principally furnished in brown leather. The dramatic critic wore a loose brown suit, an orange-coloured shirt and brown tie. She was slanted, a long untidy figure, upon the corner of her desk.

"Hullo," she barked. "I thought you'd been kidnapped."

Her thin short hair was brushed straight back from her forehead; her reddish face had a look of bonhomie, roistering, save for the smallness of the eyes. Her eyeglass now dangled from a long brown ribbon.

"Sit down, Meyer. Have a cigar?"

"No, thank you."

"What do you suppose I did with that scenario of yours?" She strode to the door and bellowed: "Marjorie? Where the devil did we put 'The Savage Saint'? Oh, is it? *Quelle delicatesse!* It is in the 'Wanted' file." She held an indulgent hand in past the open door, drawing it back with the script. She perched again on the desk. She flipped the pages in silence. After a moment she fixed her eyeglass and looked at him steadily.

"See the play?" she asked.

" 'The Savage Saint'? Yes."

"All of it?"

"Yes."

"Congratulations. I didn't know that anybody had. Had you any reason for staying after the first act? I mean, was it raining or anything?"

"I liked the play."

Leslie Gage's face became pleading. "Oh, now; this is too much; this isn't probable. It hasn't validity. It is the end of cognition; the beginning of chaos. Damn it, Meyer! I asked you a civil question and I expect a civil answer."

"I repeat I liked the play."

"Then *you*," said Leslie Gage, pointing her unlit cigar, "were the unprincipled cad who influenced the poor woolly lambs on the board to buy this thing."

"I was."

"And not content with that, you write the scenario. Have you no bowels? Look here, take it from me, it's lousy."

"The scenario?"

"The scenario is the play; the play is the scenario. And the greatest of these is charity. Which I do not propose to exercise."

"Perhaps it could be read by somebody with a less—personal view."

"It could," said Leslie Gage. "Anybody could have done it, but the whisper came to me."

"What do you want done about it?"

"I've rewritten it. Last night; on a bottle of champagne and the Seventh Symphony. Took me six hours."

"Is it typed?"

Leslie Gage looked aggrieved. "Meyer, you look a nice boy. That's the deceptive thing about you. *Typed*. If Shakespeare turned up with the manuscript of 'Hamlet,' you would ask him if it were typed."

"Now let us examine this piece of intellectual turpitude in detail."

Philip sat on the desk beside her while she harangued him. She appeared to take the view that he was the author of the original idea. She said: "You set out"—"You presuppose": "You make a totally false statement to your audience." She took the play as a personal insult. At any moment, he thought, she might challenge him to a duel. Her methods with the four telephones which were agitated punctually according to the tradition, consisted in gemovin them from their brackets and laying them in a row where faint reproachful voices bubbled through them until the secretary came to complain. At half-past four the secretary brought a cup of scented tea which she placed before Philip and a whisky and soda which she placed before Leslie Gage.

"Now," said Leslie Gage, her conversation suddenly obstructed after the first gulp of whisky, "let us see how this sterile, purposeless, dishonest theme—had it by some impossible mischance come into my mind—could have been reasonably developed." She reached for a heavy chunk of manuscript where her even, purple handwriting flowed. "Now. This fellow, Cyrian, isn't a shepherd. He is obviously a novitiate monk. He envisages the fight between good and evil as a fact: which it isn't. That gives him some reason for being moved by the sight of the legions marching and deciding to follow the fact. This enables him to get his woman into the bargain. She's the nigger in the wood-pile because she turns Christian on him. He has the job of rounding up a few turbulent Christians for the lions; she is among them. Now, then. Does he condemn her to death or let her go?"

"Search me," said Philip.

"Lets her go, of course. Loses his generalship as a result. Goes back to be a monk; ends watching the legions again. There's your story." Gage leaned back. "What do you think, you with the musing eye?"

"I am sorry," said Philip, "but I don't call it an improvement on the original story. And the authorities here would never stand for the theory that the fight between good and evil was less of a proposition than straight war."

Gage let her eyeglass fall. "I'm not here," she said, "to bow myself down in the house of Rimmon. I came here because they wanted new ideas to thaw this frozen hell."

"That I am afraid you should discuss with the board rather than with me."

"The scenario in its revised form must go before the board, certainly. This stuff of mine only wants arranging."

Philip said: "Will you please get somebody else to arrange it, then?"

"I hate to remind you, *cher ami*, that I am the head of this department."

"I don't need reminding. I am asking you politely whether you will give somebody else the job."

"And I am telling you politely that I won't."

Philip rose, pulling down his waistcoat. He said: "I have already spent six weeks on that scenario. I have two other immediate jobs. I do not think it very reasonable of you to ask me to work on a completely new script without submitting the present version."

"The present version is no damn' good."

"I should like a second opinion."

Leslie Gage said: "Are you entitled to ask for one?"

Philip said: "This is the third thing of mine that you've thrown out in four weeks. I stood for the others because they were only rough synopses. This is what I was told to prepare before you joined the firm; a complete shooting-script. Forgive my saying that I don't think, with your four weeks' experience, you can have any idea of the work involved."

"Very well," said Leslie Gage. "Take this up to Lowenstal and repeat to him exactly what you have said to me. Tell him that you don't intend to work for me because in your opinion I haven't learned my job. And send me a runner with his verdict. You bore me."

"Thank you."

"Not at all. No effort needed on my part, I assure you."

Philip took the scenario from the desk. He was on his way to the door when he stopped and came back saying: "With your permission I'll take the new version along. I am seeing the author this evening; he should be interested."

She did not reply. He waited for a moment and then left her. He continued to be angry until he reached his room. Then he was sorry for her because she was lanky and ugly. He would not look at the scenario again. He told his secretary to pack the two versions for him to take away. He sat smoking and weighing the wisdom of an argument with Lowenstal. He thought that he could trust Leslie Gage to give the message on her own account. He must get to Lowenstal first. This clash, however trivial it might seem to those in command, had been foreshadowed from the first day of her arrival. It was better to establish the difference in their opinions now. No. It was not. Lowenstal would never have the patience to listen: Gage was his latest toy in the firm, the vehicle of good taste and literary eminence; Philip Meyer was a raised underling with no background. If the new régime were not working that must, in Lowenstal's view, be obviously the fault of the raised underling.

"Still, nothing will induce me to revise the script according to her idea. She has only asked me to do it by way of bullying me; she doesn't like my work. I think my best way out is to write Lowenstal a note."

He dictated:

Dear Mr. Lowenstal,

According to my instructions I have prepared a complete shooting-script of "The Savage Saint" and submitted it to Miss Gage. The alterations which she suggests are so heavy that in my view another conference now becomes necessary before proceeding with them. I think that Mr. French should be present as, you will remember, he consented to direct the picture entirely upon the strength of the original rough script written by me.

I should be glad to have your opinion on this matter at your earliest possible convenience.

"That'll learn the old cow," he added to his secretary.

II

Enlivened by the notes of battle, he left the office immediately after signing the letter. He endured the underground journey without his usual

distaste. He could enjoy it because it took him home to the life that had ceased to be lonely. He liked the short walk from the tube station, whatever the weather. On this evening the air was still lively; the end of a rainbow curved above the roofs. "Make up your mind," he said to the weather and ran upstairs with the beginning of a poem in his head. He stood in the middle of his changed room. There were new curtains; the sacking carpet had given place to grey-blue felt; two tall lamps stood under white vellum shades. There were tulips and freesia in the Chinese vases that Victoria had bought for him. He opened the doors of the mahogany cocktail-cupboard, setting out the glasses, the bottles and the silver shaker. He sat at the desk scribbling his poem. It was a painted Italian desk; Victoria had found it at an auction and dragged him with her to bid for it.

Broughton sat down in the arm-chair and began to fill his pipe; a process which reminded Philip unpleasantly of Montagu Rivers. Broughton was a religious pipe-smoker. While he filled and prodded and applied the careful match, Philip felt himself becoming irritated. He wondered again how and why he had achieved these beginnings of solid friendship with Broughton.

Broughton disagreed with him on all subjects. Broughton's beliefs were at the altars which Philip would willingly have wrecked. Their arguments seldom stopped short of the stage where both lost their tempers. Nevertheless, they continued to keep each other within sight; here or at Broughton's muddled Chelsea flat. He was the first person with whom Philip had found the habit of confidences come easily. Broughton had seen him through the early weeks of relationship with Victoria; the ice-walking period when he never dared look beyond the moment and could never rest content in it. Broughton had said: "She is quite right not to marry you. You've got about as much experience as a chicken. Complete the experiment first. At the end of a year you'll probably be bored with her; or she with you."

Philip had found small consolation in the prophecy. Now that the beginning was nearly three months away he could be grateful to Broughton. He had made his study of Victoria passionately; he was still making it. He knew that she hated to discuss the future, to plan; he was gentle with her temper when she was tired; he asked her no questions about the past; when they escaped on their rhythmic week-ends to country hotels he would never suggest that they stayed away later than Sunday afternoon; Monday morning was work and work had a stronger hold on her than he had. He was not yet used to the secrecy, the lies; the false name in the register. These things aggravated his natural sense of guilt. He felt most guilty towards her mother.

Victoria had the talent for secrecy. She could say nothing and be bland. He would look back to the time when he himself had practised the extreme reserve. Reserve was easy when there were no secrets to tell. Now he thought that his love must show in his face so that all who met him would be aware of it.

Broughton drew gently upon the pipe. Philip mixed the drinks. "I have been fighting for you this afternoon," he said and told his interview with Leslie Gage.

"Let's see her version."

"You had better absorb several drinks first."

"Anyway," said Broughton, "she has the last word, hasn't she? I don't see what you can do about it."

Philip arched his eyebrows. "My dear Ralph, I haven't the smallest intention of letting her employ those outsize brogues for the purpose of trampling on my face. I shall decline to continue working for her."

"Don't be an ass."

Philip waved his hands. "Are you suggesting that she knows more about your play than you do—or more about scenario-writing than I do?"

"Neither. But I think she's a dangerous tough to quarrel with in any circumstances. And if your company has put her in they presumably want this sort of demonstration from her. Don't you touch it, old boy. Let her turn the whole play into an Italian opera if she feels like that."

"Ralph, this isn't entirely a matter of whether your play gets altered in the screen version; there are other aspects. Jeremy French hated the play, as you know. I remember his saying when he heard that I had recommended it: 'Well, I shan't be directing, thank God.' He only changed his mind when he saw my script. I've reminded Lowenstal of that in my letter. There's going to be *Sturm und Drang* to-morrow."

Ralph Broughton removed his pipe from his mouth; he pointed with the stem, as Leslie Gage had pointed with her unlit cigar.

"I've two pieces of advice to give you, Philip. Good ones. So try to listen, for a change. The first is for general use. Remember that a person of those abnormal tendencies can never be relied upon; not even to fight fair in a row like this. The second is for the moment. Just because you are happy in bed, don't come bouncing out like a jack-in-the-box to try conclusions with the world. You are only what a lady novelist would call 'rejoicing in your new-found manhood.'"

Philip said: "Will you go to hell."

"I know, or you'll hit me on the jaw. Me, I like a fight," said Broughton. "But not after a day's work. So stop turning white round the nostrils. I warn you for your own good. I don't want you to lose your job. Now let's look at the old girl's script."

"What do you mean, lose my job?"

"Exactly what I say, old boy. Your race has never learned how to handle other people. It is perky and servile by turns and that's one of the reasons why it gets itself hated."

"I know they hate me at the office. It doesn't disturb me at all. They can't do without me. Anyway, I am up against my own kind there. Here, you take the original and I'll tell you where the changes come."

An hour had passed before they reached the end. Philip lost interest, watching the clock and listening for Victoria's footstep on the stairs. At a quarter to seven Broughton said: "Well, that's that. I don't call it bad. In fact, I think she has made rather a good thing of it. It isn't my play, but then yours wasn't my play either. I've no views about the film; never had."

"From which I can only assume that all you want out of us is the money."

"And can you blame me? For one thing I am damned glad to get the money. For another—and this your thick head will probably fail to grasp—I can't, as a writer, be interested in any job once I've done it. It's finished. It's out of me. I have said what I had to say as clearly as I could, in the medium which occurred to me. I don't want to say it all over again in another medium. I mistrust these chaps who are always turning their own plays into novels or making adaptations of their novels for the stage. If they want to do that, either they haven't finished their job the first time round or they're so bloody sterile that they must go on playing with the old idea for want of a new one."

"That is quite off the point," said Philip, going to the window. "My contention is that Leslie Gage has made an amateurish mess of a good story and lost the chance of our only decent director on the picture."

"Well, I'm not one of your phony company, thank God. I've no influence either way. But as far as I'm concerned, Gage's version goes."

"And as far as I'm concerned," said Philip, "it goes out. There's Victoria now."

He hung at the window, watching the foreshortened view of her. He thought that it was worth the wait, the apprehension, to see her coming, to know this sudden peace while the distance diminished between her feet and his doorstep. He ran half-way down the stairs to meet her.

After Ralph was gone they sat side by side on the sofa, their hands linked, hardly speaking, staring before them as contentedly as cattle. From time to time he turned and watched her profile, bewildered again because he had once found this face ordinary, unnoticeable. He said: "This is the best part of the day."

"Is it? You do think things out so much more thoroughly than I."

"I am not used to being happy yet."

Her fingers clutched his. "Are you happy?" There was a note of pity in her voice.

"Till the world ends. Which means until you leave me."

"I never shall," she said, and sank into a long silence while he kept the echo of her words in his head, until it seemed that hardly a second had passed between those words and the next. "I heard from John to-day."

"Harrison? Is he still in America?"

"Yes, darling."

Philip tilted his head back to grin at the ceiling. "I shall never believe that he didn't go there to shoot a new species of big game. Gangsters, perhaps. Or film stars."

"I tell you——" she began.

He interrupted her. "I know he was in love with you. It is idle to say that he was not."

"I think he thought he was."

"Isn't that the same thing? Where's the difference?"

"Perhaps there is no difference."

"Didn't he go because of me?"

She sat upright, turning to face him. She said: "No. Why do you keep on saying that?"

"Because you lie to me."

She flung his hand away.

"No," he said, "I don't mean that. I don't mean that I suspect you and him of having been lovers. I can't think about those things: my brain stops working when it gets there. I mean that you deny John Harrison's importance in your life because you think I should be jealous if I knew it."

"Let us go and have dinner. There is so little time if you must play with those Jewish cousins."

"I must. I'll get away by eleven. Leave the light on. Or do you think you ought to go to bed early?"

"What would you say if I said Yes, and that it would be better for you not to come?"

"I don't know what I should say. You have never given me the opportunity of finding out."

III

The house in Bryanston Square still kept for Philip its youthful associations. Caught unawares by the past echo he would find his throat constricted with shyness, his thoughts speeding into excitement; as though the ghost of the younger Philip Meyer waited on this doorstep to haunt him. Then the shyness had paid tribute to his sharp-tongued relatives who could, with the adult's illogical behaviour, serve a second helping of meringues and a snub at the same time. The excitement had not been only for the matinée, the cinema, the party. Its root was the conviction that London beat Bradford into a cocked hat.

Now, with the light blue evening upon the square, the pillared door challenged him differently. He might tell himself that these, the rich cousins, the family-furniture of a lifetime, were unimportant; that he had grown out of the need for them. Still there was the past echo and the present mood. He competed against these people; any success or sophistication achieved was an answer to them. His mind registered the score half-consciously, caring nothing whether they knew of it or not. They were the symbol of his origins, against whom he must be for ever fighting.

The servant said that the party had not yet left the dining-room. Philip smoothed his hair before the looking-glass in the hall. This was an old mirror and flawed so that he got the reflection of a satiric, twisted face. The voices behind the dining-room door blended, making a loud chorus while he stared fascinated as always by the reflection in the glass.

It influenced him to decide that his rôle to-night would be that of the detached and mocking stranger. He went in. The highlights and the shadows made much of the room that did not need their flattery. It had never failed to impress him with its sombre elegance; with the folds of the brocade curtains that might have been carved in wood; the panelling and the portraits; on the refectory table, the dim velvet runner and the branched candlesticks; these things, seen since childhood, were for a moment more distinct than the faces round the table.

Michael Davies sat at the foot of the table, with Sally on his right. Clare, Michael's wife, was at the head; the two Davies sons and Michael's sister

made up the family party. They had all dressed for dinner. Philip, who had not, wondered why they paid this much of compliment to one another.

He went round the table, shaking hands and kissing where kisses were required. When he came to Sally she said: "I thought you must have grown a long white beard by this time," and he felt guilty because she did not look well, as though it were his fault. He had seen very little of her during the past two months; he had now the habit of cancelling engagements at the last minute; a habit made necessary by Victoria's dislike of planning in advance. He thought that he must have cancelled a dozen with Sally. She grinned at him: with her old black velvet frock and the string of artificial pearls she contrived to suit the moment as well as Clare Davies suited it. He looked at Clare Davies, forty, with hair like American cloth, an unforgiving profile, a brilliantly simple frock and four diamond bracelets. He looked at the two boys. They were supple and jointed Jewish dolls, alarmingly well dressed. Leonard was twenty, John eighteen.

They flashed their teeth at him and asked for news of the film-world. Michael's sister Laura stretched her long white neck and gave him a hand whose fingers were craggy with rings. As a child he had found her fair, frizzy head and protuberant blue eyes very pretty. Now he thought that she looked like an aquiline ostrich.

He sat down at the corner of the table, beside Michael Davies. Michael was suited by the candlelight. The shadow peeled the unbecoming bulk from his massive head and neck; softened the veinous skin, the harsh curve of the nose. It left his sympathetic smile, his military forehead and moustache.

"Philip dear, something to eat?" Clare was calling. "Have you really? Are you sure?" "As though," Philip thought, "I had not refused their invitation simply because I was dining somewhere else. As though I must be starving when I am not accepting their bounty. As though they were a charity organisation. Oh well——" He accepted a glass of brandy and refused a cigar. Michael Davies said: "You're a great success, aren't you?"

"How? Where?"

"At your job. Congratulations on the promotion."

"Thank you. I'd forgotten," said Philip. "It was three months ago."

"Well, it isn't our fault we don't see more of you." He leaned nearer to Philip. "Have you heard from Frieda?" he asked. "I understand she's not so well." He spoke as though this were private information of extreme importance.

"I heard from her last week. She didn't say she was ill. What is the matter?"

Michael grimaced knowledgeably: “Kidneys. Don’t like the sound of it. Thought of running up there next week if I can get away. Damaris is much better,” he added on a triumphant note. “*Much* better. I told that fool of a doctor he was all wrong.”

Trying to remember who Damaris was, Philip caught Sally’s look and bit his lips. They could imitate the Davies’s conversation on these lines indefinitely. Laura was ending a bridge story: “And the fool never took me out. We went down four hundred.” Clare commiserated in the manner of one offering condolences for a death. Leonard behind his cigar said: “Mummy, if we aren’t going to play to-night, I think I’ll go round to the club.”

“He’s terribly keen,” Michael whispered to Philip. “Really has got the makings of a player.”

The women left the table. Philip thought: “I have never been bored here before. I have been irritated or amused. Why do they bore me to-night?” He glanced at his watch and saw that another hour and a half must go by to this accompaniment. At least nothing that happened here could have the slightest importance for him. He was at liberty to relax, to dream and wait.

CHAPTER TWO

THE curved side of the grand piano reflected the persons at the bridge-table. It amused Philip to watch their reflections drowned in this upright lake, made fantastic; their hands moved like fishes; their shoulders would be squared or elongated suddenly; their profiles telescoped or stretched. Collar, shirt-cuff and cigarette-end shone in the black mirror. After a time he did not watch the players at all, only the reflection until Sally's face, turning to her opponent, hung there watery as a face in a dream. He was startled by the change that the mirror wrought on this face particularly. The eyesockets were cut into dark crescents; the jaw thinned, the line of the cheek hollowed. He might have been seeing Sally's death-mask. When he looked at her he saw that there were in fact the sharp black circles below her eyes.

"And the rest are mine," said Leonard.

"*God!*" said Michael Davies. "Why not a heart? I ask you, Sally, why not a heart?" He threw down the remainder of his cards. Before Leonard had announced the price of the lost rubber he was again smiling at Sally in forgiveness.

"You're dreaming to-night."

"I know. I'm sorry."

Clare rose from her seat beside Philip on the Knole settee. She cut into the game. Sally, released, wandered to the tray of drinks and squirted soda-water to fill a glass. She drank two glasses. Philip joined her beside the tray.

"So tired," she whispered discontentedly. "Can't we go soon?"

"It's half-past ten. I think we might in another quarter of an hour."

Conspirators, they stared down the room to the four preoccupied heads. John Davies had departed ostensibly to read law-books. "They don't need us. Are you going somewhere after this?" Sally asked, "or could you take me back? I should like to talk to you."

"I must go on, I am afraid."

"Victoria?"

"Yes."

"I could drop you there."

"It is out of your way."

She shook her head.

"Doesn't Michael want to take you home?"

"*No*. I wish you wouldn't go on about Michael."

"Sorry." He handed her his cigarette-case and was surprised when she said: "No, thank you. I have stopped smoking."

"Why?"

"What are you two muttering about?" Clare called. "Come and watch the game."

They were, Philip thought, Sally and himself, relegated to childhood; perched side by side on an embroidered stool; awed into silence; polite. He could see their two reflections in the piano. He kept his left hand advanced upon his knee so that he might not lose sight of the time. Twelve minutes; ten; five; three; he nudged Sally. She remained silent.

He said: "Clare, will you forgive me if I go now?"

"Tired?" Leonard asked; Philip found his young patronising manner offensive and said: "I am pledged to a party."

"Nice one?"

"Yes, thank you."

"That's game," Clare said. "Let's stop for a minute. We haven't seen very much of you, Philip." She extended a cheek for him to kiss. "You want to go, don't you, Sally, darling? You look very tired. Leonard, telephone for a taxi."

"I will say for Clare," Michael Davies remarked to the ceiling, "that she seems as anxious to get rid of the guests as the guests seem to go."

"Oh, Michael," Sally began.

"I am offended. Good night, Sally." Philip saw that he tried to kiss her lips and that she turned her face. He regretted that Michael was taller than he. He would have liked to gaze downward upon Michael with a knowledgeable grin. He attempted the grin. Michael looked fleshily unruffled.

"Good night. See you in a year's time, I suppose."

Laura Davies squeezed his hand. "Come and have a game at the club, won't you? I'll ring you up. I feel I hardly know you these days."

This gave him pleasure. The remark suggested that he had been successfully mysterious. He kissed her hand. Leonard giggled and Clare said: "Very gallant all of a sudden, isn't he?" He went out sulkily. Once in the hall, standing again before the flawed mirror, his spirits revived because he was rid of this evening. Sally waited placidly while he smoothed his hair.

"I'll drop you," she said again.

"Darling, it's a mile out of your way."

"I must," she said, "if you won't come back with me. Won't you? There is some beer."

"I can't. I promised Victoria."

"All right. Get in."

She leaned forward to shut the glass panel behind the driver's head.

"I want you to help me with something."

"I will, if I can. What is it?"

She felt for his hand, clutching it, a gesture that was not usual with her.

"Do help me, Philip."

"Tell me what's wrong."

"I am going to have a baby."

After he had thought about it, he said: "Oh, God!" and then: "Poor darling."

"No," she said, "because I did it on purpose. I thought that we should have to be married, if I did. Only now—I don't know why—I feel mean. That isn't the way to get married."

"What does Ronald think?"

"He doesn't know."

"Sally, are you sure? I mean——" he wondered why he should find himself shocked and embarrassed. "People can make mistakes about that, can't they?"

"Yes. But this isn't a mistake. It is two months."

"You must tell him."

"No."

He said bewilderedly: "I thought that you and he weren't on those terms at all."

"We weren't. Until that night when I drove you back from seeing the parents—a Sunday, do you remember? And Ronald chased us up to London."

"I remember that night," he said.

"Do you know any places, Philip? Anywhere I can go?"

"To have the child, do you mean?"

"No. To have an abortion."

"Sally, don't. You can't. They kill people."

"Not always."

"Please don't do that."

At once he began to remember stories; they were stories of blood-poisoning and temperatures and discovery; of doctors who lived in obscure streets doing the job and afterwards escaping trouble. The young women with whom he had made his tentative early experiments had talked of these things. They had said that there was always a risk. They had said: "If you have money you can get it done any time." Still clutching Sally's hand, he could recall his innocent wonder because the young women, who might have been described as amateurs, adopted a professionally cynical attitude toward this particular possibility. And they appeared to like talking about it.

"Don't you know anywhere, Philip?" she repeated.

"No. Anyway, you can't do that. You must have the child. Ronald will like it and so will you. All this rubbish about not marrying until he gets promotion will have to be got out of the way."

"It can't."

"It must."

"You don't understand. I won't tell Ronald. That's flat. I must get rid of it. If you don't help me I shall find somebody who will. Girls at the office. I expect they know."

Girls at the office—Inquests on typists. *The witness said that he had no idea of her condition at the time.*

"For God's sake," he began.

"Wouldn't Victoria know?"

"She might," he said reluctantly, not wishing to think that she would. He stared at the window. They were through the Park, turning out of Albert Gate.

"Please ask her. Ask her to-night. You needn't tell her that it is for me."

"Darling." He forgot Victoria for a moment. He saw how sharply Sally was isolated in importance; as a sister would be; this being her problem was also his. He had no choice. They were together now because always they had been together. He said: "Swear not to do anything at all. And I will try to find out if there is anybody who is safe." He put his arms round her. He said: "Cheer up. We will manage something." The taxi was into Montpelier Square. "Damn," he opened the glass panel, saying to the driver: "Stop here till I tell you to go on."

"You'll be late for Victoria."

"Never mind."

"I am sorry to be a nuisance."

"Sally, have you tried taking things? There are medicines, aren't there?"

"Yes. Steel and apiol and iron and aloes. I got them from a chemist in Charing Cross Road. They aren't any good."

"You oughtn't to be working at the office."

"It doesn't hurt me. If only I could stop thinking about it and wishing I were back where I was before all this happened. It is like being quite a different person."

"I will find somebody. I am trying to think now." He lit a cigarette. "I remember a girl telling me about a man in Bloomsbury somewhere; she said he was quite safe. I don't know if any real doctors do it. *Who* would know?"

"You seem to be as vague on this subject as I am."

"Sorry."

They sat in silence until she said: "Tell him to drive on, Philip."

"I don't want to leave you."

"I'm all right."

In the barred lamplight through the window he could see that his watch was pointing a quarter-past eleven. He said: "Perhaps I had better telephone you in the morning. You see——"

"Silly. Of course I see."

He was ashamed of himself. She said consolingly: "I don't suppose there is any hurry. I just wanted to tell you to-night because I couldn't be sure when I would see you again. I couldn't think of anybody else to tell except Michael."

"Don't tell any of the family. That would be idiotic."

"I won't. Here you are, Philip. Good night and thank you for being so nice to me."

"Oh, darling," he said, "what did you think I would be?"

He saw her face at the window; as pale now as in its watery reflection; she waved to him. The taxi turned clumsily and creaked away.

He looked up at the house. The light was in the window. He remembered the first time that he had come in the dark to this house; from the Bradford train and his encounter with Lawrence Nash. He thought, "Jennifer would know," and wished that he had thought of this before Sally went.

For a moment he was unwilling to enter the house to leave his thoughts. He leaned upon the gate. He was haunted by Sally. "Won't you come back? There is some beer," he repeated in mournful echo of her voice. His thoughts said: "Oh, God, why does this have to go and happen? To Sally. Supposing it kills her. Jennifer will know. It does kill people. Jennifer will know. 'There is some beer.' Being all alone in that flat and thinking about it.

I can't tell Victoria at all; I don't know why. I suppose because it is a family thing. Family thing. Family way. 'In trouble.' Septicæmia. *An instrument had been used*. But not Sally. She never did anybody any harm. Bloody Ronald. It is quite an ordinary thing to happen. But not to Sally. 'There is some beer.' It does kill people. Jennifer will know."

He pushed the gate. He halted on the doorstep to find his key. He was always afraid that Mrs. Lloyd would discover his possession of a key. He was prepared to say: "Victoria lent me her key." Victoria sailed over this probable emergency as she sailed over others, with the unvarying recipe: "Why say anything at all?"

The lights were out on the ground floor. He walked softly up the stairs. She opened the door of the study.

"Is that you, Philip?"

"Yes, my sweet."

"You are late."

"Yes, my sweet."

He heard her laugh. He found her silhouetted on the lit doorway. She drew him inside the room. It was the room where Lowenstal and Harrison had discomfited him on the first evening, the room with the bookshelves and the divan. The ghosts of that evening were out of it. Perhaps in a moment Sally's presence would fade also, not follow him here.

CHAPTER THREE

I

THERE were, Philip discovered, two methods of procuring an abortion in London. The first method cost a hundred pounds and was safe. The second cost from ten to twenty pounds and was all right.

Ralph Broughton said: "My advice to you is to keep out of it. Bad enough taking the risk when it's your responsibility, but sheer damned idiocy when it isn't. Oh, well. I think you're a sap. There's a man in Hampstead. She'll have to go straight home afterwards; he won't come to her if anything goes wrong. I don't imagine anything will. He's been at it for years. I think he charges ten. I'll get you the address. She'd much better have the child. As Saki says, he can go into the Navy when he's thirteen."

One touch of nature; a secret password to unlock universal confidence. A man in Shaftesbury Avenue. A woman at Putney. "Perfectly all right." "Went back to the office immediately afterwards." "Bad luck!" "I'll get you the address." "Mrs. Simon Flood is away from home for a few days." Sally said: "I am sorry to be so squalid."

He forgot that he was awaiting Lowenstal's reply to his letter about Gage. He was ashamed of the relief that he found in escaping to be with Victoria. The shop at the corner of Bruton Street and Berkeley Square displayed its empty window: beyond the plate-glass the showroom was taking semblance of order. "Victoria Lloyd invites you to her opening on April the Twelfth. Cocktails." "Try this stuff. I'll get the name of the chemist." The amount of information available astonished him. Three days taught him much that he had not known before.

Jennifer's voice, alternately vague and shrill, apologised at length. "So sorry . . . I went down to fetch Lawrence home . . . he's longing to see you. . . . What? Yes. . . . Can't you come now? . . . Six is no good. Five-thirty?"

He telephoned Sally: "I am seeing her at five-thirty."

"You are an angel. Do you hate doing all this?"

"Of course I don't. I'll come to you as soon as I have talked to her."

Victoria said: "Well—seven o'clock, then? Good-bye," with the sad, upward note. He sat staring ahead of him. As usually, the wire basket on his

desk carried a load of papers. “Mr. Meyer: for your urgent attention and report, please.”

The telephone rang. “Mr. Meyer, Mr. Lowenstal would like to see you at five o’clock.”

“I can’t manage that, I’m afraid.”

“But, Mr. Meyer——”

“I—I am going to my doctor at five. Explain to Mr. Lowenstal that I haven’t been feeling at all well to-day. I could come now.”

“Mr. Lowenstal is in conference now. He just sent me out the message.”

“Well, tell him, will you?”

“Yes, Mr. Meyer.”

Jennifer said: “I have banished Lawrence. Sit down.” She was wearing tweeds. Her hair had been set violently on the foundation of its own natural waves. She curled up in the corner of the sofa.

“My poor friend, how harassed you look. Would you like a drink?”

“No, thank you. Jennifer, I want advice. A girl, a great friend of mine, is going to have a child. Not by me.” He had the formula by heart. “Of course I am not trying to involve anybody else in this and I shall entirely understand if you say that you can’t help me. All I want to know is——”

“Abortions aren’t dangerous if she has the money. For a hundred pounds she can go into a nursing-home. I can give you the address and the name of the doctor. Could she pay a hundred?”

“Nothing like it. I think between us we could pay about thirty.”

“He won’t touch it for that. How far gone is she?”

Philip said uncomfortably: “I think about two months.”

“The man won’t marry her, I suppose?”

“He can’t.”

“Look here,” said Jennifer. “You go to ——. He’s perfectly all right. Take twenty pounds in cash—pound notes—and plank it on his desk. If he says he won’t, you can mention me; not otherwise. I should go to see him yourself before you take her. And after he has done the job get your own doctor to come to her. Can I lend you the twenty pounds?” she snapped at him.

“No, really, Jennifer, thank you. I couldn’t let you do that.”

She uncurled her legs. “He’s in the telephone-book. Philip——”

“Yes.”

“Ever been to a money-lender?”

"No."

"Oh. Well, money-lenders and abortionists are very much alike," she said and seemed to think that he would understand without further explanation. She went into a reverie, looking at him bewilderedly when he woke her by saying: "Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why are money-lenders and abortionists very much alike?"

"Oh. Because you want something out of them and they are usually nasty little men and it is such fun for them to realise that there are times when decent people do need nasty little men. That's all."

II

He took the Tube to Earl's Court. He walked. Rain had begun to fall. He saw how the house would look before he reached it; one of a long, hopeless row; he saw the flight of steps and the black door, thick lace curtains; the brass plate with the name. He rang the bell.

The door was opened by a little old maidservant who peered up at him. He expected her to refuse him admittance or ask his business. She said: "Will you come into the waiting-room," as though, he thought, this were an ordinary doctor and he an ordinary patient. He was surprised that the hall should have this homely look; a dispirited mackintosh hung on a peg; there was a fern in a pink bowl; a brass tray for visiting-cards.

In the waiting-room half a dozen persons sat against the wall; one man; five women. The heavy wallpaper, the steel engravings, the dark green curtains and table-cloth conspired to make this an abominable, lifeless place. Philip perched on the edge of the table and lighted a cigarette, turning the pages of the old magazines; he glanced from time to time at his fellows. He could form no opinion of them; they remained respectably anonymous. The women might have been servants who would earn the adjective "superior" in their references. The man had a bent, guarded face. He could not imagine that any of these shared his errand; perhaps the doctor was not only an abortionist.

A second door led off the waiting-room and at intervals the voice of the doctor could be heard approaching the door; Philip caught no glimpse of him when the door opened and the exchange of prisoners took place. Once he heard a woman's voice raised; once the doctor laughed. He exhausted the magazines. Newcomers filled the room; he felt the satisfaction of the person moving to the top of a queue and observing its length behind him. He was

lighting a fifth cigarette when the doctor opened the door wide and stood in the wake of his departing patient.

"Mr. Meyer? Will you come in?"

Philip abandoned the cigarette. The consulting-room was small and stuffy. He did not like the smell in it; nor the horsehair couch spread with the white towel; nor the opaque window.

"Won't you sit down?" He sat down himself, putting the ends of his stubby fingers together.

"——," Philip thought, "is not this one's name. This one is a Jew."

Not a sympathetic type of Jew; the thick-faced type; squat; gold-rimmed glasses and sparse black hair; a Jew with a chin on him as well as a nose. He spoke in a chinny voice.

"You're a new patient, aren't you?"

"I am not exactly a patient."

"Oh?"

"I have a friend who is in trouble. She is going to have a child. And she doesn't want to."

"Married?"

"No."

"How far gone is she?"

"I am not sure. I think just over two months."

"Are you the father?"

"No. The father can't marry her."

"Poor little lady," said the doctor. He left a silence, rubbing his chin with his thumb.

"I wondered if—if you could do anything to help her. Mrs. Simon Flood sent me here."

"Mrs. Simon Flood?"

"She was Jennifer Nash."

"Oh, she sent you, did she? Well, well. I used to help those little Communist girls of hers, sometimes. Of course she's a very sensible woman."

"She said——"

"She said I'd put your friend right, eh?"

"Yes."

"Very well. You bring the little lady along." He glanced at the desk diary under his hand. "Five o'clock to-morrow. Can you bring forty pounds with you? In pound notes? Got it?"

"Would you take thirty to-morrow and the rest next month?"

"Well, I suppose I'll have to. Can't you raise the other ten?"

"I'll try."

"Do if you can, there's a good chap. I don't do this job for fun. What about the father? He ought to pay. Run off and left her, I suppose."

"Not exactly: I can't explain. But he hasn't any money. It—will be all right, won't it?"

"All right? What? The job? I assure you. Safe as houses. Damn sight less dangerous than an inflamed appendix."

"Do you do them here?"

"Surely. You can wait outside and smoke a cigarette. Well, see you at five to-morrow. Not at all. Glad to be of assistance. Don't forget about the doings, will you, old man?"

III

He supposed that the others would have given the same promise; the man in Bloomsbury; the woman out at Putney; the chap in Hampstead; all the quota of furtive necessary persons who did this thing and took the money. "Safe as houses." Safe as that house? He looked back at the lace curtains. He did not think that it was fair to hate the pathetic, unlovely house, the chinny little man. Now every doorway that he passed was a duplicate of that hateful doorway. He went on in the rain, and while he went the house followed.

He repeated for his comfort: "Damn sight less dangerous than an inflamed appendix: it happens every day."

His mind answered: "But the inquests happen; all the time. That room was dirty; his hands were dirty. His would be one of the names mentioned at the inquest; and mine, because Ralph says I would be an accessory before the fact."

("Not at all. Glad to be of assistance.")

He had meant to walk as far as the Tube station. When he saw a taxi he hailed it, thinking that he would sooner be rid of this place in the shortest time possible. The black shiny leather inside the taxi recalled the horsehair couch. ("Surely. You can wait outside and smoke a cigarette.")

"They can say what they like," he thought, "Jennifer and all of them. I know it is not safe. Jews always think that things are not safe. They are scared stiff of illness and doctors and microbes. I am. But this is different. This is an ultimate risk."

When he ran up the last stairs to Sally's door he had gone so far in thought that he could not expect to find her. She opened the door matter-of-factly. "Hullo, love. Was he awful?"

"Yes. No. I'll tell you."

"You're soaked."

"I walked some of the way. I think I will take off my jacket if you don't mind." He went into the room with the bright paint and the posters. The crazy weather had changed again; the small bunch of narcissus in the vase upon the window-sill showed every petal transparent against the sun.

"I hate the light evenings," he said, curling up in the chair beside the empty grate. Sally was pouring two glasses of sherry. While she came towards him he thought that he could see the thickening of her body. She said: "Will he do it, this person?"

"Yes."

She said: "Oh, lovely. When? To-morrow?"

"Yes. But I want to talk to you about it first."

"Is it a horrid place?"

"Yes."

"Dirty?"

"Dingy."

"Depressing?"

"Yes."

"I expect they all are," she said. "Do I stay there afterwards?"

"He didn't seem to think that would be necessary."

"Does he do it with an anæsthetic?"

"I think so."

"And what does it cost?"

"That's not the point. Sally, this cannot happen." He heard his voice shiver. She looked at him tolerantly.

"What frightened you?" she asked as though she spoke to a child.

"The whole thing. There was nothing wrong; nothing at all. The man was quite amiable. Common little Jew."

"Probably an Irishman," said Sally.

"Not at all. Listen, darling. Those are the places where it goes wrong. I just know that they are. And I can't stomach it for you. I have a better idea. Will you please be good and listen?"

She said, with her chin on her hands, her large, honest eyes staring over his shoulder: "No. I am so tired of all these medicines that don't work, and of being sick and waking up every day knowing that it is the same. You don't know about it, Philip. It isn't that I am miserable exactly; it is like walking down a horrid long dull tunnel with nothing at the end and no way out."

"I am not suggesting that you have the child. But Jennifer and other people tell me that there are nursing-homes to go to; doctors who do it properly in an operating-theatre; then you stay there for a few days and it is safe. It costs a hundred pounds. If I get the hundred pounds, will you agree to do it that way?"

"No," she said. "Why should you? It isn't fair. I am sure this man must be all right. Jennifer wouldn't send you to him if he weren't. I think you're naturally more apprehensive than you need be. You always do get into a state, darling, don't you?"

"Yes, I think I do," he said humbly. "But you would be scared if you saw the room; it is an ordinary consulting-room, very shabby and rather dusty and there is a black couch with a white towel over it. And his hands aren't clean. Anyway I see remarkably little use in our discussing the matter because I refuse to let you go there. I will only help you if you promise to go into a nursing-home."

"Where could you get a hundred pounds?"

"Borrow it from cousin Michael. I shan't tell him what it is for."

"But you hate Michael."

"That will only make the deal more satisfactory."

Sally went past him into the small kitchen. He heard her clattering with dishes and tins: the puff of gas from the tap on the stove.

"Don't do that!" he called. "Come and dine with Victoria and me."

"Thank you, Philip, that is kind, but Ronald is coming up to-night."

She had rolled her sleeves above the elbow: she was ministering to a piece of raw meat, pinching flour and salt upon its surface: she laid it in the frying-pan. She peeled onions and sliced them. She said: "Don't stay in here; get the evening paper and read it. I heard it come through the door."

"What a good wife you would make, darling. Oh," he said, "I am sorry, Sally. That was a stupid thing to say."

"I am not crying," she said, "it is only the onions."

Steak and onions for Ronald; he would have a hearty appetite, he knew nothing about Doctor ——, about "this stuff" or a woman out at Putney or borrowing a hundred pounds. Ronald would talk Air Force shop with a tankard in his hand. For a moment he was preoccupied with hating Ronald.

He said to Michael on the telephone: "May I come in and see you to-morrow?"

"Why do that? Why not come in to-night? What are you doing now? Can't you come along?"

("Their bloody curiosity," Philip thought, "he's interested.") He said: "Well, I should like to see you alone, if that were possible."

"Why shouldn't it be? We can talk in my study. I'm going to be damned busy to-morrow, as a matter of fact."

Sally said: "I am grateful. Please don't think I am not, because I don't come with you to any of the people. It seems so mean for you to have to do it all."

He shouldered into his jacket. He kissed her and ran down the stairs. As usually when in a hurry, he failed to find a taxi until he had walked half the length of Praed Street; he was driven to Bryanston Square, arguing his line of approach.

On the doorstep he measured the short distance between this moment and the last time that he had stood here; then he had been amused by the illogical echo of terror sounding from youth. Now the formidable present capped the past. The servant said: "Mr. Davies would like you to go straight up to his study."

Glancing into the flawed mirror Philip saw that his hair was beyond any smoothing with the hands. The fault in the glass did not flatter him to-night; there was a dismayed and crooked face. He left the reflection hurriedly; he trod the soft stair-carpet for two flights; the servant held open the study door.

Here, he saw the Chippendale furniture and the leather-covered books in the shelves, one subdued light burning at the arm of Michael's chair. A low table held the drinks; while he circumnavigated the table Philip thought of the number of interviews to which drink might contribute the decision. He said: "No, thank you," Michael Davies removed horn-rimmed glasses and sat down looking portentous; bulky; as though his well-tailored clothes restricted his breathing; a large, bullying Jew. "Which he is," Philip commented, folding his hands lest they should move too soon.

"Cigarette?"

"No, thank you."

"What's happened to you?" Michael derided.

"Nothing." Philip hoped that he had contrived the faint, superior smile at which he aimed—"I don't want to drink or smoke at the minute; that's all."

"Well?" There was never, he reflected, any compromise about Michael; no side-stepping to mention the weather or the family when a point of importance threatened.

"You said you wanted to see me urgently."

"I do. I am very grateful to you for seeing me to-night." ("Too florid," Philip corrected himself. "He won't swallow it from me. Straight stuff.")

"Rubbish. What's the trouble?" The small blue eyes were kind enough.

"It is trouble, Michael."

"So I gathered. Nothing urgent is ever nice."

"I have come to you because I thought you would understand." ("Good. The right method: keep to that.")

"M'm?" A gratified grin stretched under the clipped moustache—"What is it? A woman?"

"Yes."

"Is she married?"

"No."

"Then what the hell are you bothering about?"

"Just that."

Michael frowned, swallowed a mouthful of whisky and said, still smiling: "I don't get you. You haven't put her in the family way, have you?"

Philip wondered why this usual phrase should affront him; he said: "Yes; that is what I have done."

"Bloody fool."

"That I realise. A little late."

"What do you want to do? Marry her?"

"No. I can't. Marriage is out of the question."

"M'm," said Michael again. He leaned forward, hunching his shoulders. "Give your eyes to be out of it all, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"So?"

"Well, there has to be an operation."

"Who's doing it?"

"I know the doctor who will: I can't tell you his name. Michael, I have come here, quite unforgivably I admit, to ask you if you would lend me the money."

"How much is it?"

("No good hoping too soon. They all ask that, even when they don't mean to do a thing.")

"A great deal. A hundred pounds."

"A hundred pounds?"

"I am afraid so."

Michael crossed his knees; he leaned his head back so far into the shadow of the chair that only the highlight on his nose was visible.

"Pretty," he said after a time. "Very pretty."

Philip employed the necessary effort to remain silent.

"I have my responsibilities, you know."

Philip said: "I am not such a sap as to think you haven't. I know I have no right to ask you; I shall absolutely understand if you refuse."

"Not very friendly to any of us, are you?"

"What do you mean, Michael?"

"What I say. You turn up here because you want something, don't you? Was that why you condescended to come round three nights ago?"

"I knew nothing about this then."

"I suppose I am bound to believe that."

("I mustn't hate him. I mustn't say the things I want to say.")

"Not unless you wish to believe it."

"A hundred pounds is a lot of money."

"I know. I could pay you back a bit every month; I could give a banker's order."

Michael came forward again into the light. "I shan't have a very high opinion of you," he said, "but if you can stomach that, I'll do it."

"I have no choice."

"——" said Michael. "You choose the easiest way. Like everybody else in my acquaintance. Isn't that it?" The smile returned. Philip thought: "He is loving this."

"I suppose I do."

"Glad you admit it. All right, Philip." He rose and went to his desk. "Shall I cross it?"

"As you wish. I am most terribly grateful, Michael. I'll get the banker's order to-morrow. I can make it for eight pounds a month."

"I'm not worrying."

("Just to show me how rich you are.")

Michael held the cheque between finger and thumb. "Quite sure you're not being blackmailed?"

"Quite."

"Well, it's a possibility, you know."

"It isn't: not this time."

"And what about the police court? If something goes wrong?"

"It isn't really a risk."

"It's always a risk. I know, my dear boy."

"This is the safest way it can be done."

"And not too bloody safe either, I imagine. Still you're old enough to get into trouble without involving other people beyond a hundred pounds or so."

"Sorry, Michael."

"Not at all. And now I suppose you want to go."

Ten minutes to eight. Victoria would be punctual as always. "Not unless you're in a hurry."

"Actually I am. If you don't mind. I've got to change. Julian and Susie are coming. You'd better go and tell your girl friend you've got the money. And for God's sake don't send me a sloppy letter by the last post."

"I won't," Philip said. He put out a hand which Michael accepted after a moment's deliberate stare. "Will you forgive me if I don't show you out?"

"Yes, of course. Good night, Michael, and thank you a thousand times." He went down the stairs at a run. The extreme heat of his body turned to a chill that made his teeth chatter. He was sweating despite the chill. His hands shook; as though they were another person's hands he watched them struggling with the latch of the front door.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

HE was obliged to stop for a drink on his way to the French Horn. He arrived twenty minutes late. The restaurant was full and warm. The fire blazed under the spit; Victoria sat at a window table. He saw beside the red-and-white check curtain the resigned angle of her head and the hand supporting her chin while she read a newspaper. He pushed his way through the small spaces between the tables. He said: "I am so sorry."

"It doesn't matter, sweet." She looked up at him anxiously. "Philip," she said, "are you all right?"

"More or less. There isn't anything the matter, love. I'm tired and I ate my lunch in the canteen: both of which reasons are enough." He tried to keep his hands still while he held the menu. "I can't face food yet. Do you mind if I just drink and look at you?"

"There is something the matter," she said. "You have been looking very odd for the last few days. I think you ought to see a doctor."

"I don't think I like doctors. Order your dinner, Victoria."

He noticed that she did not ask him why he had postponed their usual meeting at six o'clock. It was her habit never to cross-examine him; she did not expect to be told. While he drank brandy and ginger ale he saw that the memory of the tortured day would grow less. Even Michael's remarks would have lost much of their sting by the morning. His stomach was steadier. He could congratulate himself on having achieved the hundred pounds; he could console himself with the consolation of the martyr. He watched Victoria and was at peace.

"Better?" she asked him gently.

"Much better. Tell me what has been happening to you."

"Well, as you weren't about at six o'clock I stayed at Orchard Street and finished sending out the invitations. Have you seen Jacob?"

"Lowenstal? No. Actually he sent for me but I'd another appointment. Why? What has that to do with the invitations?"

"I thought," she said faintly, not sounding interested, "that you were anticipating trouble with him."

"I am; if he takes Gage's side. But that doesn't matter."

"I had thought of asking him to come to the opening."

"Why not?"

She laid her knife and fork neatly together before replying: "There might be signs of strain. I am not on the best of terms with him as it is."

"You never see him."

"No, that is what I mean."

"Oh, let the old ox come if he'd like to. Where's the harm? Bring me another brandy, waiter."

"Darling, isn't it time you ate something?"

"No: I don't want to. Please."

"All right."

"It is odd that you should talk about Lowenstal here," he said.

Her eyes had the blank look. "Why?"

" 'I shall not go to the French Horn any more,' " he quoted and refused to explain. She said after a time: "I wish you didn't always expect to be unhappy."

"And what do you mean by that?"

She shook her head. By the time that she had drunk her coffee, he was feeling less well. The sweet taste of the ginger ale stayed in his mouth. He felt the cold of the night on his face and was surprised by it. When he hailed a taxi Victoria said: "Don't come to Montpelier. I am going to take you home and put you to bed."

"Sorry to be tiresome."

"You never are." She held his head fiercely against her shoulder. "You haven't seen Jacob without telling me, have you?" she murmured.

"No. I swear I haven't. Why?"

"Somebody has done something to you."

"How do you know?"

"Easy," she said.

She lighted the fire in his room and sat with her arm about him while he shivered in his pyjamas.

"Do get into bed, Philip."

"I must telephone first."

She laid his dressing-gown across his shoulders while he was ringing Sally's number.

"Hullo," he said cautiously, "I've got it."

"You haven't? Was he frightful? What did you say?" Sally's voice was young and jubilant, contradicting all his present thoughts of her.

"I'll tell you to-morrow."

"Was he beastly?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Philip. What do we do next?"

"I get the name and address from Jennifer."

"Lovely. Nothing to be afraid of."

"Nothing. Have no fear."

"You sound tired, Philip."

"I am a little. I'll ring you in the morning."

"Right. I can't tell you——" she began and was interrupted. He heard her say, "Philip," in answer to a question at the other end of the line. "Is Ronald there?" he asked.

"Yes. Good night, darling. And I am so very, very grateful."

He hung up. He blinked upon the room. Victoria had drawn the curtains, tidied away the morning's newspaper and an empty envelope from the table.

"I am boiling you another hot-water-bottle," she called from the bedroom. "This one must have been put in before lunch."

"Don't bother, darling." He sat resting his forehead on the tips of his fingers, becoming aware that there was nothing in the room on which he could focus his eyes comfortably.

Afterwards she sat beside him while he lay in the bed, feeling cold and small. She gave him tablets in hot water, saying that they were a sleeping-draught. He asked: "Why do you carry them around with you?" and did not hear the answer. She sat stroking his hand. After a time he found that it was an effort to open his eyes. Still she sat there: he could feel her light weight pressing down the side of the bed. He said: "Do go, darling," and heard her reassuring murmur come from very far away. He muttered: "Silly—waste of an evening. Only half-past nine—Do go." He slept.

II

Through his dream, that was concerned with Michael, he became aware of an urgent noise and struggled back through the heavy walls into consciousness. That was not a noise of the dream. That was the telephone. Stupid with sleep, he sat up turning on the light. He remembered Victoria sitting beside him. The noise had ceased for a moment. He looked at his

watch. Only half-past eleven. The bell rang again; a long, insistent note. Not the telephone; the front door. He thought: "She has come back," and stumbled out of bed, clutching at his dressing-gown, pushing one arm into it as he lurched along the landing. On the stairs he was surprised to find his knees very shaky and his head very light. He flapped across the hall; opened the door.

"Good evening, Meyer."

For a moment he did not recognise the young man with the intelligent, worried face, the blond moustache. The young man remained on the step, his back to the dark. He had his hands in his pockets. "Good evening, Meyer," he repeated. Philip recalled Ronald Arthur.

"Hullo," Philip said, forcing a smile through the overtaking yawn. "Come in. Sorry. I was asleep." He stood swaying. "Where's Sally?"

"Sally has gone to bed. She didn't know I was coming here. I want a word with you."

"Yes: of course. Come up." He blinked wildly. "I'm terribly sorry. I shall wake up in a minute. I've had a sleeping-draught."

"I should think you needed one, didn't you?" said Ronald Arthur.

Philip stopped on the lowest stair. He wondered whether Ronald were a little drunk; whether the confusion in his own head made that remark sound meaningly.

"Let's go upstairs, shall we?" said Ronald. "We'll be cosier."

"All right. Sorry," Philip said again. He plodded, hauling himself along by the banister-rail. When they reached the sitting-room Ronald Arthur stood in the middle of the floor, lighting a cigarette.

Philip, attending to the fire, bringing the drinks from the cupboard, nudging at the arm-chair, became conscious of the silence. He looked at Ronald and Ronald looked at him. He smiled. Ronald did not return the smile.

"Beginning to come round a little," Philip said. "What are you going to drink?"

"I'm not."

"Sure? I think I'll have a whisky. That dark Munich's rather good."

"I'm not here for fun, you know."

"I don't do this job for fun," Philip remembered inconsequently. He wished that his head would clear. He said without rancour: "Well, what are you here for?"

"To tell you that I don't like your habits much."

"Look here," said Philip, "I know that I'm one degree less intelligent than usual and that you are a worthy young man, and that there's no reason on earth why we shouldn't have a midnight chat in perfect accord, but do you mind if I ask you what the hell you're talking about?"

"I'm talking about Sally. Does that say anything to you?"

"Certainly. It says you're talking about Sally."

"And Sally's baby."

"Oh, she has told you, has she? About time."

"She didn't have to. I am not quite such a gutless fool as you appear to think."

Philip drained his glass.

"Well?" he asked drowsily. "I still don't see why you are towering and blowing like that. I've done my best to help Sally during your period of ignorance. In fact, I think I might say that I have been shouldering your responsibilities quite adequately."

"Damn your eyes. I don't know if you're a fool or a knave, but I'll pay you the compliment of saying that I don't *think* you're a fool."

"Good of you."

"If you were a fool, I could forgive you. Messing around with dirty little doctors in Earl's Court. Borrowing money from Jews. Risking Sally's life. Behaving as though she were a tart in trouble. You ought to be——"

"Listen to me," Philip interrupted. "You are not very sober and you are saying a lot of very silly things. I refuse to argue with you. I will only remind you that you don't come out of this tragic business very prettily yourself. Now sit down and be quiet."

He did not think that he was frightened. He was too much isolated by the drug; he watched Ronald's hand clench and rise.

"No," said Ronald, "it's like hitting a dirty little boy. All right, Meyer, I shan't stay. I want you to know that this is my affair and nobody else's."

"Some people might think that Sally had a trifling share in it, but still."

"Don't be clever with me, please. Sally and I are going to be married immediately. They can't chuck me out. We'll manage somehow. You can take your hundred pounds back to your usurer and save the interest. And you might think a little more next time before you start procuring abortions, unless you want to end in the police court."

"When you said: 'I shan't stay,'" Philip murmured, "I hoped that you were a man of your word."

Ronald looked at him bewilderedly. “My God!” he said. “People of your race are quite beyond me.”

“I should think that was true.”

“Why the hell——? Oh, what’s the point of talking, anyway? I suppose you are capable of realising that I’m disgusted with you?”

“I’ll try and get around to the idea.”

“Blast you! Good night.”

“Good night. Would you mind turning off the light in the hall? I have to pay for it if it’s left on all night.”

Philip heard the footsteps retreating heavily. He thought: “Now why in heaven’s name must I be sorry for him?”

He went back to the fire. He found that he was shivering; that the blood sang in his head. He sat there for a long time, staring straight in front of him. In the mood of reconstructing a battle he could at all times exaggerate his own victory. This time it seemed that there was no need to exaggerate. The shape of Ronald, rude and drunken and unjust, demanded his pity. Behind Ronald there was Michael Davies, who might be pitied also, for his strenuous attempts to think himself into a fine figure. And behind Michael Davies the little doctor in the dingy consulting-room. It was too long a day.

The only hour of it that he could value, the hour with Victoria, was short and wasted; he might not have seen her at all.

The thought gave to his whole existence so precarious a look that now he went in with Ronald, with Michael and the doctor, to be pitied for his small stature. He hid his face in his hands.

“At least,” he thought, when he had taken his temperature, “I can miss the office to-morrow. And avoid Lowenstal.” He remembered that he had told Lowenstal’s secretary a lie about visiting his doctor. “And now I really am ill: which is very lucky. Things like that do happen to me. I don’t know why, but they do.”

He boiled himself another hot-water-bottle and curled up round it. He was not unhappy. He remained half awake, dozing, thinking of Sally married, wondering whether she would have a daughter or a son; until in the last dream before morning he saw the child laughing with a face like an angel and in the dream the child was his.

CHAPTER FIVE

I

IT was good to be ill; to wake and leave the lazy message with the studio; to drowse again.

The morning brought a letter from Hamburg. He saw the grey envelope with the thick handwriting and the familiar stamp lying beside his plate. He told himself that he was feeling too ill to think of Joseph. At last, remorsefully, he opened the letter and read the ponderous, dutiful words. Joseph's form of address did not vary:

"*Mein geschätzter Bruder.*"

There was no news and he took four pages to say so.

Victoria telephoned and was reduced to a melancholy frenzy. The studio telephoned in the person of Montagu Rivers. "That you, old boy? I say, I'm awfully sorry to bother you, but there's a conference this afternoon on 'The Savage Saint' and nobody's got a copy of your script."

"Seeing that only twelve copies were made, that doesn't surprise me at all."

"Why, you sound quite chirpy! What's the trouble? One of your bilious attacks?"

Philip disliked the allocation of terms, and said No, it was influenza. "Montagu, the script is in my left-hand top drawer. Tell me something. Who has called the conference?"

"Jacob. He's got the author to come along and meet Gage."

"Damn."

"What's the trouble? I should have thought you were well out of it."

"I don't want Gage to get away with that imbecile version of hers."

"Oh, you'd better tuck up again now and forget it. Left-hand top drawer, you said? Take care of yourself. Bye-bye."

"Montagu, wait a minute——"

Rivers had rung off. Philip lay sulkily staring at the wall. He wondered what was Lowenstal's idea in bringing Ralph Broughton to the studio. He thought that he could prophesy the result.

Ralph had made his own attitude clear. He did not care what alterations might ruin the story of his play. He had professed to like Gage's version.

The present script stood a fair chance of being thrown out altogether. Broughton might get the job of treating the new version under Gage's command. The only doubtful factor in such a readjustment would be Jeremy French. Philip wondered whether he should telephone French. He could guess how much his letter had irritated Lowenstal, who must now be saying: "Damn Meyer's impudence," and damning French's obstinacy at the same time. Meyer and French in agreement would carry no weight. He had often heard Lowenstal arguing against French's omnipotency as director. If French refused to consider the new version, Philip thought that Lowenstal would say soothingly:

"All right, Jeremy, all right—— You needn't touch it. I'll give it to somebody else."

"Then he'll get some second-rater like Brown," Philip hazarded, "and that's the last I shall hear of the picture until they turn it out looking like 'The Sign of the Cross' gone wrong. Oh, well, why should I care?"

He drifted away from the thought. The next voice on the telephone was Sally's.

While she asked him questions about his health, he decided not to tell her that Ronald had visited him last night. She said: "Everything has got different. Can I come and see you, or are you feeling too rotten to see anybody?"

"Come as soon after five as you can, darling."

"What shall I bring you?"

"Nothing."

"Would you like some flowers?"

"Stop it, Sally."

"There are lovely ones on the barrows. Have you got anything to read? I could pinch some review copies from here."

"I can't read, love, because my head goes round. You come along and tell me all about it."

Victoria raced into the room at lunch-time, carrying a long box of roses, two new novels, a jar of meat jelly from Fortnum and Mason, an enormous bottle of eau de Cologne. When he was ill she ceased to be careful about money.

"You must be well by Monday. The opening won't be anything if you aren't there."

"Of course I shall be well by Monday."

She sat on the end of the bed. "I wish I knew who had done this to you."

"Darling, my stomach can do these things perfectly well for itself. No outside assistance is needed."

"Didn't the sleeping stuff help at all?"

"For a couple of hours, yes."

She frowned. "It is very selfish of me," she said, "but when you are ill I think you go farther away from me and I can't get at you. Don't you want the jelly?"

"It's heavenly."

"I will come back at six. Could they give me some dinner here?"

"Of course. I shall get up later and have a bath and shave."

"I don't mind your not having had a bath or shaved."

He thought that the converse of her remark held good: when he was ill, she came nearer to him, more obviously loving and vulnerable.

After she had gone, he slept, waking at four to feel giddy and inconsequent. He managed the bath and the process of shaving. He put on clean pyjamas and a summer dressing-gown, sitting by the fire until Sally came. She brought a bunch of blue iris and a detective story. There was no more shadow upon Sally; she looked as though she wanted to dance and compromised by springing to the arm of his chair.

"Now what?" he said.

"We are going to be married next week. I am so sorry you have had all this trouble for nothing, Philip."

"Ass."

"Well, it seems so ungrateful."

"Darling, you talk as though I had arranged an abortion for you because I thought that you would like it more than anything else in the world. Tell me why you can suddenly be married like this."

"I'll try to begin at the beginning. Ronald found out; he guessed; I couldn't go on saying 'No.' I am so bad at telling lies. I told him what an angel you had been to me. But he wouldn't hear of my doing that. He was cross."

"Is he going to ask permission to be married?"

"We haven't entirely decided. He had to get the midnight train back to Brodrick. We shall have to live at Brodrick. In rooms, I suppose. It's quite nice, Philip. It is Yorkshire. And moors."

"What about the money?"

"Ronald gets fifteen shillings a day now that he is Flying Officer. He won't have any marriage allowances until he is thirty or a Squadron-Leader; whichever happens first. Two of us can't live on five guineas a week, obviously. That has been the snag all along. And he's only served just over two years since he left Cranwell, so there won't be any more money for ages. And there are the debts."

"You had better start married life on Michael's hundred pounds."

She giggled. "He must have it back. I wish you hadn't had such a hateful time with him."

"I've forgotten it. I still don't see how you are going to manage, darling. Can't he be moved or something? What squadron is he with now?"

"A.C. An Army Co-operation Squadron."

"Aren't there any better ones?" Philip asked vaguely.

"No, silly."

"Then what?"

"He can either go and ask permission again; in which case they may easily refuse. Or he can do it without saying anything to anybody. But either way we must have some more money. I am going to ask Michael if he will make me an allowance until after the baby is born. I can work again then."

Philip was silent. He was surprised that he should want to laugh. "Does Ronald know that you intend to do that?"

"Oh, yes. We agreed that it was the only thing to do. Michael is my guardian, after all. I am going to dine with him to-morrow. I shall have to tell him about the "baby." She looked dreamy and speculative. "It is quite different, Philip, now that it is a baby; not a thing to get rid of. I was being sorry for it all the time."

"Which do you want?"

"I want a son. Ronald wants a daughter."

"You look quite smug."

She kissed his forehead. "I shan't like not living in London; not seeing you."

"When I come to Bradford I can make a detour via Brodrick. You won't be there for ever, will you?"

"No. Ronald wants to take a conversion course, anyway. He hankers after the Flying Boats. I don't know if he will get in."

She sat silently; spying upon her future until he felt that she might be gone already. He looked at the head, lifted on the neck like a deer's head; at the large, untroubled eyes. His mind abandoned its cynical comment upon Ronald, who was content to take his chance of marriage from Michael Davies. ("Borrowing money from Jews.") The memories of yesterday evening made a dirty mark; this did not touch Sally.

"A happy ending," he said thoughtfully. "I don't believe I have encountered one in real life before."

II

Monday morning obeyed its convention whole-heartedly; with squally winds, cold rain; a temporary revival of winter; with the crowd in the Underground and the inertia that made him feel as though his mind were yawning. Scurrying through the door of the Studio building he prayed only that he might avoid encounters and inquiries on the way to his room.

He dodged Montagu Rivers at an angle of the corridor. While he arranged his hair before the mirror he saw that he had the pale, shiny look of one who had in fact been ill and wondered why this should surprise him.

A note upon his desk informed him that Mr. Lowenstal would like to see him as soon as he arrived. He rang through to make the appointment. The pile of letters and manuscript intimidated him; he flipped through the letters with one hand while he held the receiver.

"Could you come along in about ten minutes, Mr. Meyer? Mr. Lowenstal has somebody with him now and there's a conference at a quarter to eleven, but he could just fit you in between."

"I didn't ask to see him," said Philip offendedly. "I found a message here."

"That's right, Mr. Meyer. If you come along in about ten minutes he could just fit——"

Philip said: "All right," and rang off. He sulked. He polished the top of the inkpot as though he were wringing somebody's neck. After eight minutes he went into the corridor.

"Better, Mr. Meyer?" said Lowenstal's secretary.

"Yes, thank you."

"Touch of 'flu?"

"Yes."

"You look rather pulled down."

"I feel like hell, thank you."

The inner door opened and Leslie Gage emerged from Lowenstal's room. She wore a grey suit and a blue shirt. She said: "Hullo, Meyer," in the kind of voice that might have been described as breezy. "Better?"

"Yes, thank you."

"*Grippe?*"

"What?"

"'Flu?"

"Yes."

She passed on, humming. A noticeable change of atmosphere there, Philip thought. A victorious superiority: officer to man. He went into Lowenstal's room.

"Good morning, Meyer. Are you better?"

"Yes, thank you."

"What was it? 'Flu?"

"Gastric 'flu, yes. May I sit down?"

"Do."

The thick black eyebrows lifted toward the white hair. Lowenstal's imperial profile was bent over a letter in his hand. Philip recognised the letter.

"Well," said Lowenstal. "Here's the note you sent me. According to your —er—instructions the conference on 'The Savage Saint' took place last week. It was a pity that you couldn't be present. There was, as you know, a certain amount of urgency. I just want to tell you what we have arranged."

("More amiable than I expected, so far. 'Instructions' was meant to be sarcastic.")

"Thank you."

"I had the author up here; young Broughton. He has agreed to work on the revised version under Miss Gage. I think this will be the most satisfactory solution. Then you won't be obliged to do a job that you don't feel capable of tackling."

"My dear Mr. Lowenstal, it wasn't a question of feeling capable. It was a question of whether the alterations suggested by Miss Gage were necessary. In my opinion they were not."

"No, Meyer. But I happen to have placed Miss Gage at the head of the scenario department because I want *her* opinion."

"Perfectly." Philip attempted to keep his hands still. "But as this script was my original work, and nobody else's, and as Mr. French——"

"Mr. French will not be directing the picture."

"Because he doesn't like the new version?"

"Never mind why. I am telling you what has been arranged." The red was mounting to Lowenstal's forehead.

"As I understand you, my script has been abandoned without any reference whatever to my views."

"You were absent."

"Then——"

"Listen, Meyer. I don't want to lose my temper with you. You had every opportunity to work on this script with Miss Gage, according to the normal rules of the new department. At her first suggestion of any alteration, you refused to discuss the matter further. You marched out of her room and wrote a complaining letter to me. Well, I have settled the question. It is entirely your fault that you have no further chance of working on the script. I don't imagine that if you had been present at the conference you would have shown yourself any more sympathetic to Miss Gage's ideas."

"Certainly not. But I should at least have had the chance of giving you my views. I presume from the fact that I am paid a salary that they are still of some interest."

Lowenstal was crumpling the letter in his fingers. "I concede that your absence was unfortunate. But in this business time and money are more important than individuals. It's very sad, but there it is."

"Wouldn't it have been cheaper and more of a timesaver to use the original script?"

"I am sorry, Meyer. I cannot discuss this matter any further. If you want to be sulky and impertinent you can. But please go and do it somewhere else. And may I ask you to make an effort to get on better with Miss Gage? Otherwise I shall have to make a change in the department. I don't want to. We have a very full summer programme. I have a thousand things on my mind. I really can't spare the time to arbitrate in office bickerings."

CHAPTER SIX

I

THE three occasions matched one another. The shop; the Left Evening; Sally's marriage. They matched one another because, each time, he was outside the picture.

Victoria Lloyd At Home. Who were all these people, he wondered; aware of them as a mass, not sighting an individual face. He could remember Victoria preparing the list of guests; he knew the names; most of the names. Their owners came within the circle of the light cast by careful publicity. Some had titles and advertised face-cream. Some went on a steady circuit within range of the divorce-court. Some were known for the company they kept; some for the restaurants where they dined and danced; some for flying their own aeroplanes; some for minding other people's business. The pillars of feminine journalism were there; the cheap beauties and the expensive beauties; the young men about town. The back-scratching, log-rolling, taking-in-each-other's-washing crew.

Those were the names. And these, presumably, were the owners. Victoria made no effort to introduce him. She was somewhere at the centre of the writhing mass: directing a waiter toward the newest need for a champagne cocktail; greeting and replying. On the high white stage at the back of the showroom, the mannequins moved in their absurd slow dance; each step considered and measured. By their expressions of unvarying amiability, they cared nothing for the small attention accorded to them. A head twisting here, a voice bleating: "That's marvellous!", a perfunctory stare, these were all that they earned.

Victoria, he remembered, had prophesied as much. She had said: "I don't believe that they would notice if I put all last year's models in."

She had been persistent in her contemptuous attitude. Now it astonished him to see how skilfully she contrived the easy manner; not the manner of a showman; a manner friendly, confidential and childish. She might have been a young woman entertaining two hundred of her dearest friends on her twenty-first birthday. He pressed near to her in the crowd. She bewildered him by knowing the language of these people who must have little in common with her. He thought of the innate simplicity that ordered her life and her work; he did not see how the neat, hard-working mind could

embrace the need for this kind of occasion. An arm jerked against his wrist and he upset his drink. “I say, I am sorry.” A pinkish young man with a public school tie under his chin; a blonde young woman beside him. Casual, ill-mannered, well-born; owning the earth. For a moment he disliked them so actively that he was obliged to send his thoughts hunting after a flaw in all this. Victoria was the honest craftsman; the straight artist, creating a demand not among the judges of good things, nor the honest buyers. Her trade was with the worthless; the moneyed; the glad receivers of long-term credit; the idle, the imitative, the damned. He thought that she must be wrong; that the artist could not continue uncorrupted; that, in choosing here, she would be obliged to make silly things and follow or create silly fashions.

He saw her as he knew her; with the blasting glare of the daylight lamp showering upon her desk; with the white paper and the busy pencil and growing design; her face above was pale, ugly, her hair rough; the whole head throwing a troubled shadow on the wall. That was work; the first and honourable stage. This was the mean trick of the middleman; the seller; the knowledgeable snare set for the knowledgeable feet.

One of the knowledgeable feet stepped on his toe.

Above the pack he saw Lowenstal’s white cresting hair and the forehead interrupted by the thick black eyebrows. Lowenstal was looking annoyed. “Which is odd,” Philip thought; “because he hasn’t noticed that I am here.” He watched Lowenstal carving his way through to Victoria. Behind him two gay voices observed:

“Look who comes.”

“Would you have thought it?”

“Is that all on again, do you suppose?”

“No, darling. Not a hope. She’s got a lovely Jewboy now.”

“Who?”

“I don’t know. Sara saw them at an hotel together somewhere.”

“Is he paying for this excursion?”

“Who?”

“The lovely Jew boy.”

“Don’t know. Lowenstal took his money out a long time ago, anyway. In more senses than one.”

“What’s happened to Harrison?”

“Haven’t seen him in months. Waiter! Here. Grab me one, darling.”

This was not the first time; nor the first echo. Better to keep quiet, to empty his glass and go in search of another. As he shouldered his way, there

returned the images that once had been nightmares, now flat, familiar company.

He knew that when he was alone with her again the shapes would fade. She was of the stuff that inspired rumour and speculation. There was only a small sediment of doubt in his mind lest, after all, he had learned but little of her in the adventure that was their love. He thought of all the minutes in the day when he was not with her; when from the moment that she turned away from him to walk alone, she became the person whom he might never see.

"Hullo, Philip. This mob affects me with loathing," Broughton said.

"Hullo, Ralph. I thought you weren't coming."

"I went back on my word. Can we get out of it or must you wait for Victoria?"

"I must; if my survival takes place, which seems remarkably unlikely."

"Lot of bastards," said Ralph. "What time do you leave your studio, anyway? I went down there at five to confer with Leslie and looked into your room. But your hat was flown."

"I left early. There was nothing to occupy my attention but the hundred and fiftieth story submitted for Mimi Blake. If we don't get one soon the child will have gone clean through adolescence into happy motherhood. How was my exquisite friend Gage?"

"Bottled," said Ralph, "but full of ideas."

"Lord Lowenstal gave me the benefit of his bile this morning."

"Careful; he's just behind you."

"Good," said Philip. "Extraordinary how much store he sets by that particular mistake. Gage, I mean. He is like a woman come back from a bargain-sale having bought the wrong thing; persuading herself all the evening that it is the right thing just because she bought it. By the time she has bankrupted the company and died of a stroke in the typists' room——"

"Do shut up."

"By that time," Philip persisted, "he will have learned that a showy dramatic critic isn't necessarily a potential head of two scenario departments. Good evening, Mr. Lowenstal."

Philip grinned, rocking on his heels against the wall of elbows, shoulders and haunches. The April sunshine through the plate-glass made these people ugly, grabbing and mouthing below the immense canopy of their voices swung upward against the ceiling.

Victoria would not accompany him to Jennifer's Left Evening. He went to Kensington Square alone, wearing a dinner-jacket. He was distressed to find Jennifer in a coat and skirt.

"It doesn't matter at all. You will add tone and distinction."

"I am so sorry, Jennifer. I hope your husband won't mind."

"Simon?" She grimaced comically. "You don't imagine that Simon patronises the Comrades."

"Are they really called that?"

"They like it," said Jennifer, "and it does no harm." She was sorting bundles of leaflets and encompassing each bundle with a rubber band. She did not offer him a drink nor a cigarette, continuing to bend over the leaflets with her mane of hair hiding her face.

"Lawrence will be back in a minute. Then we'll start." She stacked the bundles in a corner of the sofa. "What happened to your friend?" she shot at him.

"What friend?"

"The girl who was going to have a child. Did Marriott do the job?"

"No. She is going to be married this week."

"How lovely. And how unusual. Lawrence said you were ill."

"I was. I am all right now."

"Office all right?"

"Yes, thank you. Why?"

"I wondered how badly the slump was hitting you. Things are going to get very much worse under this Government."

"I thought you supported this Government."

"We shall have enough of politics for the next three hours," Jennifer protested. "Let us enjoy the disadvantages of being private citizens for a minute. The City is terrible. Simon is very worried. Lawrence is in a state of adolescent gloom; how tiresome children can be. Ever wanted any?"

"Children? Yes."

"Your race generally does. I shouldn't get married yet, though. The state of the world doesn't justify it."

"If I did want to get married," said Philip, "I don't suppose I should consider the state of the world first."

She stared past him. The slam of the front door appeared to agitate her. "There is Lawrence, now. I'll go and get my coat." She scurried out of the room.

Lawrence opened the room and stood where he was. He had grown suddenly; he looked thin and vague.

"Hullo, Philip," he said, as though he had been woken out of a deep sleep. "Are you better?" His voice had completed the process of breaking. This gave him a disguised effect.

"My God, you've grown."

"I know. I began all at once. It was most surprising. It is very good of you to come to this thing."

"I want to come."

"Do you really?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

Lawrence looked at his feet. "Shouldn't have thought it was much in your line."

"He's shy," Philip thought. "And he was never shy before."

Lawrence remained silent, playing with some money in his pocket. Presently he said: "This man Farr is supposed to be rather good. He was three months in Moscow."

"I hope to be converted."

Lawrence glanced at him sideways, under his lashes.

"Why shouldn't I be?" Philip teased.

"I don't know." The boy blushed. He turned away his head.

"How is your father?"

"Very well, thank you."

"Have you discovered who the Physiocrats were?"

"Yes. Philip, is my mother in or out? I mean, we ought to start."

Jennifer rushed down the stairs. She had made up her face carelessly. She said: "Hullo, my child. You're very late."

"Sorry."

"Does the London Library stay open till eight o'clock?"

"No. I met a person there from Oxford. I went back to his house and we talked."

"All right. Come along now. The car's waiting. Carry those leaflets, there's a good lad."

Philip sneered inwardly at the thought of proceeding towards Communism in a car. He was, for the first time, uncomfortable with Jennifer and Lawrence. They were all silent. The chauffeur drove them swiftly, beyond Kensington, past Olympia, turning up a side street and braking before a nondescript hall with coloured posters at each side of the door. Jennifer fled in ahead; Lawrence slouched at Philip's side. At the lighted entrance to the lecture-room two people stood; a girl wearing a belted tweed frock and flat shoes; a man with spraying dark hair whose shirt-collar was laid open at the neck.

"That's Farr," said Lawrence, while Jennifer greeted him. Philip peered past the group and through the doorway; he saw the chairs arranged in half-circles; the heads and shoulders; the hot yellow light was dimmed by smoke. The assembly disappointed him when they walked in behind Jennifer and he got a closer view of it. The comrades in the mass did not look particularly formidable. A beard here, a red tie there; a crazy pair of eyes, a high-necked sweater obeyed the convention in his mind.

There was no platform. The inmost half-circle left a piece of floor clear and Farr took his stand on it alone. "Don't let's sit in front," Lawrence whispered urgently, pulling Philip back from following Jennifer. They found two chairs at the end of a row.

Farr spoke at first primly and without inspiration as though, Philip thought, he were giving any second-rate travel talk to an audience eager for instruction. He lingered upon descriptions of the train journey, which he found "surprisingly comfortable"; the appearance of the countryside; the buildings; he lingered by the side of Lenin's tomb; he went into meticulous detail of the clothes worn by the workers; his voice vibrated when he described the harvest; he was proud to have worked in the fields; he became lyrical about tractors and burned on the subject of the new Underground railway. Suddenly he began to pour out figures; wages, the cost of living, statistics of production, the price of food, army estimates. He never referred to a note. Philip's natural inability to grasp the significance of the simplest mathematical statement made this part of the speech very dull.

Farr speeded suddenly; his large hands began to move, his pointed face under the elaborate dark hair became pale; he sprinkled Russian words. He shouted: "Go there! Towards the dawn," and a smell of cocoa drifting through the smoke encouraged Philip to the belief that the lecture was nearly ended. Farr, having gripped his audience, appeared unwilling to let them go. He turned from that picture to this; to England where unemployment figures rose; where the only possible government had no working majority. Where the bourgeoisie formed the backbone of a country fed on illicit Empire

revenues. He was not melodramatic now; he was quiet and bitter; his arguments were humorously phrased, every sarcastic reference to Great Britain was received with a cheer. Philip wriggled. He glanced at Lawrence who was leaning forward with his chin on his hands. Lawrence wore a careful expression; he might have been trying not to look embarrassed. Philip dug him in the side and received a fluttering smile.

Farr's voice dropped to a whisper. He stepped suddenly away from the space on the floor to sit beside Jennifer. The noise of the applause ended with the scrape of chairs, general talk rising tumultuously as the crowd mixed and clotted. A shutter thrown up in the wall at the back of the room disclosed a counter with large urns and plates of sandwiches. Philip confronted Lawrence, who blinked at him.

"What happens now?" Philip asked.

"Some of them will come to Kensington Square. Would you rather go home?"

"No, of course not."

Farr accompanied the three of them. Others followed in a precarious-looking two-seater. Philip had no time to identify them. Lawrence surprised him by his refusal to join in the conversation; Farr, obviously taking trouble, asked his opinion more than once; he grunted short replies and Jennifer spoke shrilly to cover his rudeness. All ignored Philip. He saw Farr's profile sharp on the light window; Jennifer's hair and forehead in silhouette; Lawrence hunched on the opposite seat; they meant nothing to him in this two-dimensional picture; the talk of Russia was outside his mental grasp; he could not understand why they were so deeply moved by Russia. He noticed that Farr made the positive statements and that Jennifer punctuated his speeches with assent, query or denial. "It is possible," Philip hazarded, "that Mrs. Flood does not know as much as she pretends she knows." He was ashamed of himself for spying on her.

They reached Kensington Square and he was glad, feeling less disorientated. When they were in the drawing-room he became self-conscious about his clothes, anticipating the arrival of the other comrades. Farr was at once a friend, his luminous stare and his shirt familiar landmarks. "Do you think," Philip said nervously, while they hovered near the lavish sideboard, "that the present Government will last?"

"Last? No. How can it?" said Farr, helping himself to a whisky and soda. Lawrence stood with his hands dug in his pockets, staring at the carpet. Jennifer was shrilling instructions from the landing to the butler.

"Why should it?" Farr added, fixing him with an innocent, angry eye. "How can it? Like asking a race-horse to run on three legs. Isn't it?" He fired his words. There was the noise of arrival on the stairs. The comrades came in with Jennifer.

There were only four of them; the girl in the tweed frock whom Philip had seen standing beside Farr; a plump spectacled woman, a young man with an advanced Adam's apple, and an older man wearing his grey hair *en brosse*. Philip did not hear their names. They all accepted drinks and the cold food.

Lawrence, with a sausage-roll and a glass of lemonade, removed himself to the sofa. Philip would have liked to join him. The girl in the tweed frock would not let him leave the conversation.

"And in Germany," Farr was saying to Jennifer. "What do you think of the situation there?" Philip looked at him apprehensively. She said easily: "Oh, we need have no doubts there."

"You are optimistic?" Farr asked, surprised.

"Of course I am. *C'est mon métier.*"

"But not to the extent of believing in the Social Democrats, surely?"

Philip saw Lawrence's head turn attentively, the sausage-roll abandoned. Lawrence now looked plainly agonised, as though he were waiting for a weak pupil to give the correct answer in an oral examination.

"That I don't do, no," said Jennifer, laughing.

The young man with the Adam's apple broke in violently: "But the National Socialists, Mrs. Flood?"

Jennifer set her head on one side. "Well, at least they're Socialists, aren't they?" she said, her voice level and considered.

All the comrades began to speak at once. Philip was not listening; he saw Lawrence swallow the rest of the sausage-roll at a single gulp. Lawrence's face was scarlet. Philip sat down beside him. The uproar of argument at the other end of the room made it possible for them to talk unheard.

"You appreciate that, I suppose?" said Lawrence, having emptied his mouth.

"It seems to have caused trouble," said Philip cautiously.

"Well, can you imagine a more idiotic thing to say? The *Nazis*. You see, she doesn't even read a paper now. *God*, it's all so bogus."

"All of it?"

"Yes."

"But I thought you believed in it?"

The boy looked as though he were going to cry.

"Aren't you a Communist any more?"

"Of course I am. But not like her. She is just *playing* at it. I think she always has."

III

Sally's marriage took place at the Paddington registrar's office. He had attempted to explain to her that it would be better for him not to come, adding feebly: "I don't think Ronald likes me much." When she laughed and protested he knew that Ronald had kept silent about the visit at midnight. He wrote her a cheque for five pounds because he could not think of a present. Afterwards he wrote a cheque for a hundred pounds to Michael and posted Michael's cheque to his own bank. He did not know why this process should satisfy him so greatly. He could have purred.

Saturday morning was in the tradition of the light-hearted April weather. He arrived early at the large pillared door with its flight of majestic steps. He loitered on the shabby pavement, reading the notices on the wall, thinking that this was a strange place for Sally to find her heart's desire. He saw the Davies's car, huge and shining, with Clare carrying a bouquet. Michael in a morning coat greeted him: "You're coming back to lunch? Thanks very much indeed for your letter." The note of surprise was loud in his voice.

"Did I remember to put the cheque in?" Philip asked irritatingly. "I so often don't."

Michael looked at him with shrewd, calculating eyes.

"That business all right?" he asked, aside.

"What business?"

"Your girl friend's little trouble."

"Oh. Yes, thank you."

In the room, with a bunch of cheap flowers on the business-like table, with the sunshine emphasising the dingy background, Philip stood apart from the group. Sally smiled at him, ending the smile in a childish grimace. Her clothes were new; carefully chosen clothes that would be useful a long time ahead. She wore a small spray of brown orchids; he remembered the other orchids that she had worn, saying: "I got them at the office; good, aren't they?" He remembered their adventures in childhood; the portrait of Sally was suddenly complete in his mind. From that far-off day in Bradford

when Aunt Frieda had joined their small, unwilling hands, as far as to this present, he saw her walking beside him.

(Ronald's stiff collar was unbecoming. Ronald had greeted him with a chilly bow. Ronald looked taut and nervous. Michael's nose caught the light. Clare wore a pious expression that did not match the tilt of her hat-brim.)

The brief, gabbled words ended. Sally leaned across the table to sign the book. She was not walking beside him any more. She was going out of sight, radiant and preoccupied, losing him a friend. He thought that he had not valued her enough. He thought of the child within her body; Ronald's child. Already she had the future. He, only the past and the precarious present. Then he thought that he would never be at peace with Victoria as Sally was now with Ronald.

His throat ached. He followed the others down the steps into the sun. She kissed him lightly. The voices faded on his ear. He dreamed. He felt alone, waiting in emptiness until Sally waved her hand. The car took them away.

"That's that," said Michael Davies. Michael's day. Michael had made it possible. Money could do anything and Michael was money and money was Michael. Philip stared at the space of empty street. Michael endowed the future, the private means by which Ronald had received grudging permission to marry. Bastardy was off. Legitimisation triumphed. Thanks to Michael. For Michael, Sally was gone with his practical blessing. For Philip, Sally was gone.

"What are you looking so blue about?" Michael asked.

He said dazedly: "I don't know. It was so quick. I thought it would take longer."

BOOK III

"*. . . I Do Not Want*"

August, September: 1931

CHAPTER ONE

I

FROM the road, the cottage in the garden behind the stone wall looked as squat as a cake; framed by the wild garden with its tangled bushes, its creeper and stooping trees; a cool, green hollow of a garden that would be dark and damp in winter.

This was August. Two hundred yards down the road, over Burnsall Bridge, the cars and the bicycles crowded at week-ends; the plain inn on the river-bank was loud and lively; the wireless played. When the wind carried the noise and the smell of petrol as far as to the cottage garden, Philip and Victoria would climb the steep little orchard at the back, lying in the long grass under the shade of the highest trees. On other days they walked by the river; they bathed and ate picnic meals; they loitered among the ruins of the Abbey; they came home with their eyes dazzled and their faces burned.

Inside the cottage, civilising influences had provided one long room, where the beams were lately uncovered, the open fireplace restored; a stage-set for a country cottage, with the square, comfortable furniture, the cream walls and the pickled wood gramophone; a corner cupboard revised to become a bar. The front door opened into this room. On the first floor there was one large bedroom with one large Italian bed; a modern bathroom and a small slice of a room where the servant slept. The servant was old and rude; they liked her Yorkshire accent and her cooking.

Victoria had borrowed the cottage. It was theirs for three weeks. Beyond the moors, where the mill chimneys began, the film unit on location in Bradford worked from early morning until night. Philip spent odd days with the company. Victoria had hired a car to drive him there and back. She was careful not to meet any member of the company; refusing even to risk a cocktail at the Midland Hotel for fear of encountering Jeremy French. When Philip tried to persuade her, she said: “No; because then we should never be alone. They would want to come over on Sundays and in the evenings. And now we are so beautifully alone.”

He thought that she was right. This was a thing which had seemed impossible for them; the sharing of night and day. With the knowledge that no telephone would ring, no obligations call, no strange faces look in on them. It was the sensation of sudden quiet after a long noise.

On the first night he said to her: "Will you stop me if I start to get up and dress at two in the morning? The custom is not lightly broken."

It was a time of many weeks since they had been able to escape for as much as a night in the country. When he woke on these mornings with the bird-song outside and the childish colour of the sky, he would look back luxuriously upon the other life. That was not an easy summer for either of them. Victoria had the anxieties of the new shop; overheads, credit, the steady slump in trade. She spent hours of the week-end with her accountants; she was caught in the large mesh of her adventure. On the surface, it was a successful adventure. Her name and her ideas were all over the shiny pages of the fashion-magazines. Long cars drew up at the doorway in Bruton Street and long elegant women emerged from the cars. They called Victoria by her Christian name. They were impressed by her intelligently alarming prices. They were of the breed that must have clothes whatever the financial weather. Not one took advantage of the cash discount. All ignored the rule of one month's credit. She was invited to penetrate their world; Philip went with her, surprised at the scurrying Mayfair turn which their existence had taken. He was ashamed because it pleased him that some of these people had titles.

In his own working day there had been difficulties of another kind. Since declaring war against Leslie Gage and provoking Lowenstal, he had lost ground increasingly. He did his routine jobs and little more. He blamed the short-sightedness of the company; saying that new ideas were wasted on them. Meanwhile, he was amused to find that on the fringes of the smart world the mere words "film-studio" endowed him with a magic power. "Couldn't you get me a job on the films?" "Couldn't you get me something in the scenario department?" "I am sure I could advise them on clothes." "Don't they want somebody to do research work?" He was courteous to the questioners and gave them introductions until Montagu Rivers complained.

Now, his mistakes, his carelessness and unwary impertinence, his failure to establish the position which he had won with promotion, assumed small stature. However harassing the months since April had been, they were all touched with the flame. This year would endure, beautiful in memory. Victoria and love had not failed him.

II

He sat up in the large bed, hugging his knees. Victoria slept, curled in a small mound, quiet as though she were dead. He wanted to wake her as he would have wanted to wake a puppy or a kitten, teasingly for the sake of

seeing it stretch and yawn and blink. He laid a hand upon her shoulder. She did not move. Beyond the window, he saw the thick green leaves and the veiled sunshine. The early morning here gave him a pleasant melancholy; its self-indulgence reminded him of crying in his sleep. With this mood, he let his complaint advance; his only complaint against Victoria.

He had watched himself carefully through the phases of love; from the first bright pain to the comparative calm. It was a bubble calm that could be broken in an instant; by a word of hers rousing jealousy; when a quarrel threatened; when her thoughts were away from him too long; when she kept him waiting. Afterwards the bubble would be blown again; delicate and still looking as solid as glass.

That had been for the months in London. Here there was already a change. He turned from watching himself to watching her; enchanted with the miracle of time on his hands, he could stare at her all day; and be astonished because it was she who accompanied him. She and not some other with whom he must pass the span of her absence until she came again. It had been hard at first to accept her in this constant frame. He was so broken to the manner of their life; to the telephone and the meeting-place; to the short periods into which he must pack his last energies of love, his swiftest powers of speech. He had been afraid, in the first long days, that he was wasting her; taking her for granted because now there was time to talk of ordinary things; or not to talk at all; most alarmingly, time to have nothing to say. Self-conscious by the hour, he had wondered whether they had learned the way of farewells and separation too thoroughly to appreciate any uninterrupted rhythm. He could not say "I love you" often enough and said it too often, lest he should catch himself out in placidity.

And that first clumsy apprenticeship to peace was ended. He had the measure of it. Undismayed he let pass the minutes of the day when love would not be spoken between them; he saw that the silences of companionship were as vital as the words; he was content to drift; to forget her at his side. This was love with a larger horizon; different; dangerous only because he would have to shake off its habit and return to the other way.

He would not look ahead when he could help it. At this hour of quiet morning the prospect of return stretched before him, as plainly agonising as ultimate separation would be. In each other's arms they had said: "Let us never go back"; they would say it again. He thought: "And if we were married? It would not be like this. It need not be. This is holiday and honeymoon and this does not last. But, oddly, this is peace where our normal existence is more hectic and harassing than any honeymoon. I am not meant to live that way. I suppose I am the typical Jew who wants home and

children. Or perhaps I have too highly developed a sense of guilt to stomach lies and latch-keys and getting up to go home at two in the morning. No. It is neither of these things. It is the same certainty of her that she has now of me. And we are wasting it. Behaving like two irresponsible people who do not know their own minds. Why?"

She stirred; he leaned cautiously above her.

"If you could be persuaded out of that sleep we might bathe before breakfast," he murmured.

She woke obligingly. They took their towels and went out, bare-legged, through the misty garden. The road was deserted; there was nobody on the bridge; they walked across the grass and turned along the river path behind the inn. The lifting voices of the birds, the water, and their own soft footsteps went with them. Their deep pool was half in shadow. Victoria said: "It will be cold."

"It will. We can run back."

"You go first."

"I am in no hurry." He watched her, tip-toeing carefully; the white bathing-suit made her look naked. She paused at the edge, crinkling her toes in the grass. He ran boastfully and dived; when he came up, swearing with the little breath left to him, she was still on the bank.

"Come on, coward; I shan't stay five minutes," he called. She sat down on the edge, with her legs dangling.

"I am not going to bathe at all," she said. "Are there some cigarettes in your coat-pocket?"

"Don't smoke before breakfast, darling. Come on. Be brave."

"It is too cold."

He waited. She found the cigarettes in his pocket and leaned comfortably on one elbow, blowing rings upon the air.

He swam into the darkest green where the branches leaned out across the water. A fish flicked away under him. He stared at the dim reflection of the tree; whose shape he disturbed as he swam; he turned on his back and kicked his way into the sunshine. He floated, calling: "Come along, Victoria. It is lovely."

"I have told you I am not going to bathe."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

He lingered a moment longer and then turned for the bank. He hauled himself out beside her. He shivered and the towel was too small.

"Have mine as well, Philip."

"Aren't you really going in?"

"No."

"Nothing's happened to you, has it?"

"No."

"Just didn't feel like it?"

"That is all."

"Astonishing strength of mind."

"I should have thought just the opposite."

"Oh no." Philip pulled his coat over his naked body and peeled off the wet trunks. Dried and covered, he lay beside her. "Just because I said I was going to bathe I had to. And I didn't really want to at all." He lit his cigarette, remarking how blue his hands were. "I was only keeping up appearances. You did exactly the thing you wanted to do. It never occurred to you that there was anything silly about putting on your bathing-suit and walking as far as the edge and then sitting down to smoke a cigarette."

She turned her head, coolly surveying him. "Well, who was there to think it silly, besides you?"

"No, no; that is not the point. It isn't a question of having an audience."

"Your conscience is your audience every time, isn't it?—I am sorry."

"Do you think I am a stupidly conscientious person, then?"

"I think you *mind* things more than I do," she said evasively. "We had better run back. Your teeth are chattering."

He rose, wrapping the coat decorously and absurdly. "Now is not the moment," he admitted, "but would you say that it is because you '*mind* things less' that you don't want to marry me?"

She looked shocked. "Oh, darling, what a very odd piece of reasoning before breakfast."

"All right." He felt that she took his hand for consolation.

III

They shared the same astonishment that they could each be greedy for breakfast. In London, Victoria pointed out, a small piece of toast exercised choking effect; tea tasted of soot and the combination was only an excuse for the first cigarette. Here when they had eaten largely, the cigarette with the last cup of coffee had almost the dignity of a cigar.

Having applied the two matches solemnly, Philip laid the London newspaper flat and rested his elbows on it. He felt a little afraid to launch the subject here; the colours and shapes in the room were the background for peace. He saw Victoria's pale hair, her skin faintly brown; the collar of her blue cotton shirt spread open at her neck; in this likeness she also was qualified for peace. He said: "To go back to the question of minding."

She raised her eyebrows; he knew that look.

"No. Please, Victoria. Can we talk about this for one moment?"

"About being married?"

"Yes."

She surprised him by saying vehemently: "You do know I love you? You must know that by now."

"I think I do."

"But that isn't enough," she said, her voice light and reminiscent as though she were quoting.

"Is it enough for you?"

"In a way."

"Don't be silly. Either it is or it isn't. You see," he said when she did not answer, "I think you may have been right to refuse at first. We didn't know each other. I was ridiculously inexperienced for my age. You—weren't. We had different lives and different ideas. You were going through a crisis in your work. You had Harrison hanging about. You hadn't much spiritual leisure to decide whether I was just the next adventure or a love that would last. So, because you are braver than I, you took a risk with the experiment. I wouldn't have taken it on my own judgment. I followed you because I thought that anything would be better than nothing; I would rather have had you for a few weeks than not have had you at all. And I was afraid at the beginning. At the beginning," he repeated, "I am not sure yet whether I have stopped being afraid. But isn't it time now to admit that we are through with the experiment? We aren't so very young. We are both serious people. We know what we want."

"My love," she said.

"Don't you get tired of lies and the telephone—and saying good-bye—and meeting at restaurants?"

"Yes."

"It is an inefficient way to live—when there's no need. If one of us were married already——" he had lost his first coherence; he looked at her helplessly. "I do want children, Victoria. I can't help it. I want them so

much. And I want to live with you in a house of our own. That might be why my work has ceased to mean anything lately; it isn't important, as long as I am alone. It was, before you came. It can't be now. It is only a means of pushing time out of the way until I can be with you. There is too much uncertainty in every day. I can't settle down, I can't take my job seriously. I have worked badly all this year."

"My fault."

"No. Mine. I ought to be able to detach myself when I'm working. Other people do. It should be possible to be as much in love as I am and to keep another part of the mind for work. But I think I never could separate my mind into compartments. I used to be able to concentrate, whatever the noises off, when I shared that loathsome little room with Montagu. I still can; provided the distractions come from outside. But these don't. They are in me."

"It is the thing I said to you before," she murmured; she might have been talking to herself. "You put so much energy into everything you do; you must be a hundred per cent yourself all day."

"Even now? Darling, that plunge into self-analysis wasn't the point of the discussion. If——" he felt his lips trembling, his nostrils stiff with the sudden effort not to weep, "if you don't want us to be married, could you tell me why? Once and for all. So that I need not ask again."

She came to him and held his head against her shoulder. "You must wait. Please wait. Please don't talk to me about it too much." Her voice was now so muffled and painful that he might only take her in his arms to comfort her for a sorrow which he could not understand.

IV

The letter from Sally was written on paper with a military heading.

Dearest Philip,

You must be nearly at the end of your three weeks. Are you coming to Brodrick on your way back? Friday or Saturday? I could meet you at Darlington. The spare room is quite comfortable though very small (and I am quite comfortable though very large). I hope you are happy. Do come. Ronald is away all day and it would be lovely to have you here.

Reading it, he wondered why Sally should have so strong a claim upon him. All others in his world could go to hell so long as he and Victoria were left. But not Sally. For her now he would be obliged to sacrifice their homeward journey together.

"But that is our last week-end," Victoria said.

"Darling, of course I shan't go on Friday or Saturday. But you have got to travel home on Sunday anyway. I can start with you and find a connection to Darlington."

"You ought to be in your office on Monday morning."

"I need not. Things are bound to be slack till the middle of next month. I'll have a word with Jeremy about it this evening."

She drove him through the shimmering heat of the afternoon to Ilkley, where the unit was camping temporarily for the exterior shots to be taken along the bed of the Wharfe. The motley company was abroad in the little town. Honest Yorkshire faces gaped at the mounted cameras, the yellow grease-paint, the surprising clothes; a runnel of children pursued the actors upon their private occasions. Philip found everybody very hot and very ill-tempered. Jeremy French alone, wearing a white silk shirt and cream-coloured trousers which gave him the appearance of Humpty Dumpty, remained equable. Philip found him at the Middleton Hotel, in a room overlooking the river. Having started at five a.m. he had taken his habitual siesta from four till six and was now preparing with whisky and a large pail of ice to work all night.

"Come in, old boy. Have a drink. I only want you to look through this one scene again. I've a strong inclination to cut it out altogether. No hurry. Take the drink first." He spread his short legs and rolled farther back into the arm-chair. "Lovely life," said Jeremy French, "I've just had a telephone call from Jacob reminding me that we are scheduled to finish here on the eighth of September and that I must be prepared to leave for South Africa on the thirtieth."

"South Africa?"

"The Boer War picture. Don't think you were in on it. 'Men of the Veldt.' Brown was directing originally. He swore we could do it in the studio. Do you think you could rewrite the script in three weeks?"

"On my head."

"O.K. I'll give it you. As I think you know, I'd far rather have you working with me than anybody else in the scenario department. We ought to be able to make a decent picture at that distance from Wardour Street."

"Do you mean that I should come to South Africa?"

"Pre-cisely."

"But why?"

"It's an idea I've had for some time. You aren't doing much good where you are at this minute. Writing reports on other people's rubbish and revising old scripts. Jacob's so much in love with the Gage department that he can't give anybody else a break. Or perhaps, to be fair, he's only trying to get his money's worth out of her before the slump reaches rock-bottom. Anyway, you come along with me."

"Jeremy, it is extraordinarily kind of you."

"——" said French and tilted his throat for the last of the ice whose lump he sucked before adding: "I want you because you're useful; not for your lovely eyes. Nor because you're not enjoying yourself at the studio. You are such an ass that you're quite capable of getting yourself sacked while I'm away, and that wouldn't do Jupiter Pictures any good." He cocked his head on one side. "Easiest way for me to manage it is to take an extra fortnight here; which God knows I shall need, then when I get back to London make the dramatic discovery that the present script's lousy. And inform Jacob that its only hope is for you and me to work on it together on the voyage out."

Philip rose from his chair; he stood by the window, looking out upon the bright river and the moorland.

"How does the idea appeal to you?"

"It appeals all right," he said slowly; "I must have a couple of days to think it over. I mean, there are things here——" He was dumb before the thought of leaving Victoria. "My aunt's not at all well—I——"

"No hurry," said French. "You might take a look at that scene now. And give yourself another drink."

They worked and argued for an hour. Then Jeremy, entirely sober after drinking three-quarters of a bottle of whisky, departed to dine with his actors. Philip found Victoria at the Hydro and they drove on into Bradford to dine at Aunt Frieda's house. Victoria had been explained to Aunt Frieda as one of the party with whom he was spending his summer holiday. It amused him to see the two together. Victoria instantly assumed the protective plumage of the decorous young woman. She discussed cooking while they ate the German dishes in the small cave of a dining-room with the red curtains, the dresser and the Dresden plates. Aunt Frieda, contrary to Michael Davies's gloomy prognostications and Philip's recent excuse, was livelier than ever. She wore absurd purple silk; a wide lace collar; dripping garnet ear-rings. She abandoned her glass of stout to drink Rudesheimer in

their company; her eyes brightened. She teased Philip on the subject of marriage, shooting a coy glance at Victoria. She agreed to sing; they drank their tiny glasses of liqueur and listened to the thin voice that could never again capture the top notes. She accompanied herself; the wiry yellow fingers with the heavy rings sprang briskly, plucking the chords out of the piano as though they were obstinate flowers in the earth. Her small shape bounced. She was enjoying herself. The slow dusk in the room that he remembered made Philip illogically home-sick for his youth. There was the same landscape; of chair and curtain fold; of cuckoo clock and china stag and glass-topped table with the silver toys inside. In the search for lost time these things were not reassuring. They emphasised only the absence of the child whose sight had created them otherwise. He would not wish the child back, save only for childhood's one divine privilege; the privilege of not making decisions.

It was decision that troubled him now. Since French had spoken of Africa there was no peace. There was only the war between one kind of wisdom and another. The practical wisdom, the argument in favour of going, would have been unanswerable to that Philip who had never met Victoria Lloyd. That young man had seen love as the bright and brittle moon for which it was human to weep. He, however much the parting hurt him, would have broken from its lovely bonds with the assurance that he would forget; he was nursed, that young man, upon the stern philosophy, whose clichés were: "Hearts will mend"; "A clean break"; "Getting over it." Before Victoria love had been always the dangerous convention of his time; lineage by despair out of a saxophone.

And now. He looked across the small room. On the sofa Victoria sat with the family photograph album across her knees, Aunt Frieda leaning above to point and explain. He could not see the look upon Victoria's face for she bent her head; he could see her hand delicate in the dusk, turning the pages; the taut interested curve of her neck. Without watching her, he knew her black dress and the way it hollowed below her breasts; he knew her body beneath the dress and it pleased him to think of her as far as he might. That was half the argument of the other wisdom. He thought: "And these two shall be one flesh." Not because of this alone he was certain in love. He had seen their two minds also embrace and tolerate and desire each other. The thing that they had made of their love was absolute. It had its own positive value. No one possessed of this would throw it away.

"Oh, God—how can I leave her?"

His thoughts, coming to this rhythmic point, scattered abruptly. Victoria had closed the photograph album. Aunt Frieda's voice rose aloud, careless of

the English language as always when she was excited.

"But I say to you, dear child, there must be a 'alt. The pound falls. Exports fall. Unemployment raises; raises all the time. England will be bankrupt in a month."

Victoria, Philip guessed, was casting a rueful glance toward the corner of Bruton Street and Berkeley Square. Aunt Frieda went on chattering: the St. David's Committee; the growing debt; the shipping of gold to France and America. ("How does she *know* all these things?" he thought irritably.) At least she was not scraping his private nerves with talk of Germany.

"And Philip—there he sit!"

"Well, what do you suggest that I should do?"

"I suggest you go home. Bed!" She clapped her hands. "Already when I talk you yawn five times."

"I love her," Victoria said in the car.

"She is a pleasant bore. You love her because of me, bless you."

"I liked looking at the photographs."

"I saw you liking that. Don't go fast on these tramlines, darling. She is a little depressing about the economic situation, isn't she?"

"She is right. It can't go on."

"What will happen?" he asked childishly.

"I am thinking of what will happen on quarter day."

"You aren't seriously worried, are you?"

"No. I can carry on till the Spring. But it isn't what I meant it to be." She gave the short heavy sigh that he was accustomed to connect entirely with the shop. "Let's forget it. What did Jeremy say about your taking two days' overtime?"

"Oh, Lord," said Philip, "I completely forgot to ask him. Something that he told me put it clean out of my head."

"What was that?"

He began to tell her.

V

Brodrick after Burnsall was uncompromising as the awakening from a beloved dream. Sally and Ronald had taken rooms in a small Victorian villa that looked as though it were detached only by accident from one of its neighbours. Six Victorian villas stood in a line. Their tiny front gardens

edged on to the main road. On the other side of the road, traces of the old village were visible; the ragged green was planted with the inn signpost; the local shop and the local garage shouldered the inn; farther up the road the town began; with the Brodrick Bridge Hotel where the young men, all looking a little like Ronald, escaped from their military duties after dinner. Philip kept Sally company and refused to join them.

Ronald's apology was made abruptly within ten minutes of Philip's arrival. Philip, having driven out from Darlington with Sally in a taxi at six o'clock, was unpacking immediately according to his habit, which permitted him no respite. He had hardly begun to dispose of his possessions in the small oblong room whose window was blocked by the dressing-table, when Ronald entered. Ronald wore uniform. His face was bright brown and his hair bleached.

"Hullo, Meyer. Glad to see you. Will you be all right in this cupboard? Why not come down and have a drink before you do that?"

"Thank you; I'll just finish unpacking first."

"The only decent wardrobe's in our room, I'm afraid. Can I take some of your things in?"

"Thanks. I haven't got very much."

Ronald said: "I've been meaning to write to you. I am afraid I behaved disgustingly at your flat."

"That's all right," said Philip, lowering his eyes.

"I was in a bloody temper and very tight. I must have said quite unforgivable things. I am so very sorry."

"Please forget about it. I have."

Ronald looked like a worried golden retriever. "It isn't as easy as all that," he said, picking up a jacket and waistcoat from the bed, "I ought to have been grateful to you for trying to help Sally. I can't imagine that I would have relished the job, particularly asking Mr. Michael Bloody Davies (but for whom my marriage would not have been possible) for a hundred smackers. Instead of which I behaved like a cad and a Jew-baiter."

"Jew-baiter?" said Philip, stifling an inclination to giggle. Ronald was so desperately solemn. He sat down on the edge of the bed and lit a cigarette. "I said some filthy things about your race, didn't I?"

"You may have done. I assure you that I am quite used to hearing them."

"And you don't mind?"

Philip placed his brushes and bottles in orderly alignment on the dressing-table before he replied. In the glass he saw Ronald sitting still,

apparently absorbed with the problem of his own behaviour.

"I think one minds less as one grows older," he said cautiously.

"I never expected you to come here. I haven't told Sally anything about it, of course, but I thought you would refuse. I would have done, in the circumstances; and probably written a stinking letter explaining just why."

"But you aren't a Jew."

"What difference does that make?"

"Quite a lot."

"How?"

Philip was again near to laughter. The hot, cramped bedroom, Ronald's shape in the light-blue uniform crumpling the coverlet, the stern endeavour towards apology, the half-emptied suitcase, the threatening discussion of Semitism, mixed oddly. He said: "My race doesn't fight; it has got what it wanted by a policy of acceptance tempered with denial for two thousand years. It excels at turning the other cheek. Which, when you come to consider its profile, is a deliberate instance of self-depreciation."

Ronald giggled obligingly. Then he became serious once more. "But what beats me is my complete swinishness. I'm not a swine, you know. Sometimes I think I am quite nice."

"Oh, shut up and forget about it. You had your point of view. And you're sitting on my socks."

Sally admired his appearance, his semi-Riviera clothes and the change in him which she saluted by saying: "You are so much more placid." He thought that she looked well; she seemed quite unembarrassed by the heavy shape of her body; he worried because she rose abruptly at the end of each meal to stack their plates on the grim sideboard; because she helped the scarlet Yorkshire servant with the bedmaking; because she wrenched at the obstinate corks of sherry bottles; because she insisted on walking every day. The departure of Ronald in the morning obliged her to wake at seven to make tea, to descend in a dressing-gown and keep him company at the breakfast-table. He needed various attentions. From boot-polish and brilliantine, the care of his mess-kit, the counting of his endless laundry, the mending of socks, to the typing of mysterious Air Force notes. Sally was hunched at the typewriter every evening. Manuals and technical books overflowed the inadequate shelves in the sitting-room. Outside, the perpetual drone in the sky, the marching columns, the lorries with their khaki drivers, uncomfortably suggested war. Sally pointed out the Atlas biplanes flown by the Squadron. She never let a machine go over without identifying it. She would talk endlessly of regulations, of developments in civil aviation, of

bombers and flying-boats and auxiliaries. She was disappointed that Philip refused the first flight which Ronald illicitly offered him.

"Two reasons," Philip told her, "I dislike being frightened and I dislike being sick."

"You won't be either. Do go, Philip. You'd love it."

"Don't badger."

He stayed a day and another day. Once Ronald was out of the house, he had not before his eyes the spectacle of two persons married and loving each other peaceably. He was content to be alone with Sally. Outside the house there was little to do. In the afternoon they would idle by the moorland path beyond the village. Once the crest of the moor hid the main road there was solitude, the brown stretched land, the great width of sky, the aeroplanes silver in the sun. Sally could only walk slowly. The white terrier which Ronald had bought her for company pranced ahead. While Philip accommodated his step to hers, this substitute for his wanderings with Victoria was not unpleasant. Her condition made him feel that he was doing her some service in being here, that this was not time wasted. He restrained her from throwing sticks for the dog. He kept watch for loose stones that might trip her feet. His solicitude amused her.

"You are sweet, Philip. Ronald never bothers at all."

"Well, I think you do too much; and I shall tell him so."

"Oh, darling, don't. He has enough to worry about."

"So have you."

"I don't bother about the baby. Except to pray that it will be a boy."

"Which I am sure it will be. These masculine and military surroundings can hardly have any other effect."

"Don't you like them?" Sally asked innocently.

"I like them. I think they must be a little overwhelming."

"Is that why you won't go and drink with the chaps at the Bridge Hotel?"

"Partly. The chief reason is that I like to keep you company."

"That's kind. I would go there, but I think it looks stupid to see somebody of my size in a bar. I do all the things in the book," she added vaguely, "Philip, it *must* be a good baby, mustn't it?"

"Why should it not be?"

"All those things I took—you remember."

"Darling, I am sure that they have no effect whatever."

"I asked the doctor; and he said no," she said, still not sounding reassured.

"Put that out of your head now. It is a ludicrous idea."

"I didn't think it would be so important."

"What? The baby?"

"It matters so much to Ronald. In a way I was right when I thought that a child was the solution. He never talks about anything else."

"Naturally. He is a very decent young Englishman. Therefore he wants a son more than anything else in the world."

"Are you laughing at him?"

"No, of course not."

"You sound as though you were."

"I envy him," said Philip and would not talk about Victoria. He changed the subject to ask Sally's advice about going to South Africa with Jeremy French. She said: "I should go, Philip. Better than staying at home."

"Anyway I must make up my mind this week. Hell, how I hate making up my mind."

"Why doesn't Victoria marry you and go too?"

He was refreshed by Sally; the simplicity of her approach to life was like a neat broom that travelled through the crooked corners of his mind clearing away the dust of prejudice.

After tea they would sit in the small patch of back garden. High fences walled them in; one apple-tree leaned over their heads. Ten yards of grass separated them from the asphalt, the shabby, ashamed back of the house, the line of washing. By arranging his deck-chair scrupulously he could see only the apple-tree, half a row of hollyhocks against the angle of the fence and Sally as she sat sewing beneath the tree. This gave him the illusion of a larger garden. Here the noise from the main road sounded less urgently. There was a thrush that came to the tree.

"Charles Ronald? Does that sound all right? I like Charles," Sally said.

"It is a good name."

"October is a horrid month for him to be born in."

"From the point of view of the horoscope or the weather? Where will you go, to have him, Sally?"

"Darlington."

"But supposing he arrived early?"

"I shall go in a week before. And anyhow, it is only eight miles. Ronald could easily get me there in time." She held up the minute frock whose yoke she was embroidering. "He will be much better dressed than either of his parents," she said. He did not hear the noise of the aeroplane until she began to stretch her neck and search the sky.

"Atlas. I wonder if that's Ronald," she said and resumed her work, adding suddenly: "I wonder what chances he has of being one of those very intelligent little boys who makes things."

"He'll have an eighth of the blood in him."

"Just enough," said Sally. He watched the leaf pattern on her hands.

"Don't you want a drink or anything, Philip?"

"No, thank you. I am perfectly happy."

"So odd," she said, "to have somebody who likes sitting still. Ronald never sits still unless he is asleep. I wish you could stay longer."

"So do I."

Her eyes grew larger. "Do you really? Isn't it dull and uncomfortable? I was so afraid you would hate the house."

"Oh, Sally."

"Well, it isn't much of a house."

He looked at the blaring shapes of the hollyhock flowers; at the raw fence and the redeeming apple-tree; at the sun's polish on her dark head; upward at the sky that was beginning to be gold. Ronald would be home within half an hour; to race upstairs and splash in the shabby bathroom, to come down and help Sally lay the dinner-table. After dinner, if Ronald did not go down to the hotel the three of them would listen to the wireless, argue abstracts and laugh and drink beer. Sally would go first to bed. She was very tired and heavy by nine o'clock; her day, he remembered, began at six.

This was far removed from his own restless programme. He could join her in patience as she waited for Ronald's child.

CHAPTER TWO

I

FOR five days after his return to London, Philip swung between refusal and acceptance of French's offer. If he had ever expected Victoria to decide for him, these five days proved him wrong. She argued as two-sidedly as he. She said: "The one thing I will not do is ask you to stay," and when he urged upon her the thought of six months' separation, she would not add by a word to his hope or his despair.

On the sixth day, Monday, August the twenty-fourth, the fall of the Socialists and the formation of the National Government drove the private issue from his mind. As always in a time of political crisis his vague terrors began. He was uncertain of everything. He left unanswered Joseph's letters from Hamburg asking for newspapers and a summary of general opinion; Joseph analysed likenesses between the situation in England and the former situation in Germany, until Philip lay awake at night imagining another inflation on the German scale. For no reason that he could ascertain, these things seemed to excuse him from decision. He still woke dreading to find a peremptory letter in Jeremy French's handwriting; the letter did not come. Victoria asked him gently at intervals whether he had made up his mind. She could not understand his agitation.

She told him little of her own business problem beyond the fact that she could carry on without particular difficulty. He thought that this sudden diminishing of confidence might be for his comfort. He did not dare to ask.

The only person who occurred to him as a reliable judge of the present economic conditions was Jennifer Flood. He telephoned her house.

"Mr. and Mrs. Flood are in the South of France. We expect them back on the second."

He wondered whether Lawrence were with them. He had not seen mother or son since April. Jennifer had made a lecture-tour in Central Europe; Lawrence had written occasionally from Sutton Courtenay, short and uncommunicative letters, expressing the hope that they would meet during the summer holidays. The clearest memory of Lawrence in Philip's mind was set upon the background of the Left Evening. It was not a reassuring memory. It was perhaps a temporary phase. "Growing up and seeing his mother as a person instead of a parent for the first time," Philip

had decided, adding: "And I imagine Lawrence is intelligent enough to know the difference between true and phony Communism, which I am not."

By this time Lawrence was, in all probability, enjoying the sweeter benefits of Simon Flood's capital on the Riviera coast. Philip recalled a remark made to him at a party by the poet Delroy: "When you are under twenty-five nothing matters; neither love, death nor money." Lawrence was heir, by a wide margin, to the comfortable estate.

This week at the studio was slack. Since Lowenstal and Gage were both on holiday, he could be at ease with idleness. He would leave early, give his evening paper agonised attention in the Underground, and emerge into the West End at five o'clock, wasting time at the shop-windows until he turned towards Bruton Street.

It was on August the thirty-first that he walked into the showroom carrying a spray of orchids in waxed paper. This was an evening for dinner at Monseigneur's given by two narrow, noisy persons who were a baronet and the baronet's wife. Philip had heartened himself with the acquisition of a new white waistcoat; he enjoyed the prospect of the evening; childishly he liked to think of Victoria as a dawning celebrity. The rest of the projected party was a former racing-motorist who looked like a pat of bad butter and an actress whose hair was grown to her shoulders. Both the women were Victoria's customers and neither had paid her bill.

The showroom was empty. He stood for a moment in the centre of the pale carpet; looking about him. This was very spacious, very expensive, very quiet. The curtains were drawn across the stage where the dress-parades began; the shallow white steps came down from the stage to the floor.

He looked into the window from the back; at the single tall evening frock arranged upon a wooden model in one corner, the trail of the skirt drawn out across the remaining space. He heard modulated footsteps behind him.

"Good evening," he said to the head saleswoman who discomfited him with the nakedness of her face; the cropped black hair gave it no frame; it was a shiny face and the paint upon the lips looked purple.

"Bon soir, Monsieur Meyer. Miss Lloyd is in the office. Would you like to go through?"

"Is she alone?"

"No; she has somebody with her, but I think it is only a friend."

"Right. I'll go through. How's business, Madame Gina?"

Her purple mouth became a violent half-moon in reverse. She said: "Things must go better soon."

He went through the door beside the stage; Victoria's office was on the left of the passage that led to the work-rooms; a small space plainly furnished with a birchwood desk and one white arm-chair. He had the trick of deliberately remembering the room before he walked into it; placing Victoria at the desk or by the window; guessing at her clothes and her first words to him.

He knocked and opened the door without waiting for an answer. He saw the man in the room before he saw Victoria. The man was sitting on one arm of the chair. He was large, fair, and aggressively bronzed; wearing a light grey suit. Philip recognised him as he rose. He was John Harrison. The tooth-paste smile flashed. Victoria, leaning with her back against the window-sill, said: "Hullo. You do know each other, don't you?" He handed her the orchids silently before he shook hands with Harrison.

"Have you just got back?" he asked vaguely, releasing his hand from the heavy grip.

"Got back to-day." Harrison, Philip decided, was too large for this room. He stood as though he were in a glass case at an exhibition. "I was just telling Victoria about Spain."

"I thought it was America you went to."

"So it was. But I went down to have a look at Rio when my job ended and took a month's holiday in Spain on my way back." He appeared to think that this called for comment. He stood smiling and waiting. Philip said: "Oh." Victoria beside the window stared dreamily in front of her. John Harrison picked up his pale grey hat.

"Well; are you both coming to have a drink with me?"

"Wait; I must wash," Victoria said.

"Cigarette?" Harrison made the offer as handsomely as though the case were a five-pound note.

"Thank you."

A prompt gold lighter snapped under his nose. "Very magnificent, all this, isn't it?" Harrison shrugged at his surroundings. Philip wondered how he managed to sound a proprietorial note. Perhaps with the deprecation of the shrug; he might have been a man appealing for compliments upon his wife's scheme of house decoration. At this point Philip's mind registered the fact that he disliked Mr. John Harrison more than anybody whom he had met.

Drinking cocktails at the Berkeley, he recalled a remark made long ago to Victoria: "I shall never believe that he didn't go to America to shoot big game." If Harrison had indeed left England in the heart-broken tradition, he was patently cured. His amiability filled the air like steam. He made no attempt at any dialogue with Victoria; as the drinks went down, his attitude to Philip became more avuncular. Their influence on Philip was kindly; he began to be sorry for John Harrison; the decent Englishman gallantly performing the process known as taking his gruel.

When they rose to leave he observed that Harrison, who had swallowed four Bacardis, was approaching the luminous and uncertain condition more nearly than he.

"Good-bye, children," Harrison said. "I'm going to the Bath Club, so I leave by the other door. See you soon," he directed at Philip, and left with a swagger.

"Tight, isn't he?" Philip asked.

"A little, I think."

"More than a little. He didn't say good-bye to you at all."

"I didn't notice. Philip, we shall have to take separate taxis. There is only three-quarters of an hour and we must change."

When he stood at the door of his taxi she said: "You do know I love you, don't you?"

II

Lowenstal returned to the office on Wednesday. When Philip heard that he was wanted at once, he saluted the approach of doom. Apart from half-hearted efforts on rewriting "Men of the Veldt" with an eye to Jeremy's requirements, he had been magnificently lazy for more than a week. The wire basket overflowed.

"Come in," said Lowenstal unnecessarily. "Sit down." Philip sat down, thinking: "Now he dislikes me so much that he can't look straight at me; his eyes slide off."

"Did you have a good holiday?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you." The cold voice might have hinted that the remark was an intrusion. Lowenstal had a letter in his hand; he did not raise his eyes from it. Philip thought it curious that of their many dialogues he should remember only two before this. One in January when his salary was raised and life looked large; one in April after he had declared war upon Gage.

"This," Philip decided, "will be the sack. Tactfully tendered with references to bad times and cutting down."

"I've a letter here from French, which seems to concern you."

"Yes?"

"I gather that you did a certain amount of work with him up in Yorkshire last month."

"Yes."

"You were on holiday there?"

"Yes."

Philip made the persistent monosyllable as irritating as possible. Lowenstal waited again for him to say something further; then shrugged and continued:

"He hopes to finish up there by the fifteenth. As you know, he is leaving for South Africa at the end of the month. I understand that you want to go with him."

"No," said Philip.

"No?"

"I mean, he suggested it to me and I am considering the matter."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said Lowenstal ominously; "and have you come to any conclusion?"

"Not yet, no."

Lowenstal said: "Well, it isn't entirely for you to decide."

"No?"

Lowenstal gave him an exasperated glance and returned to the letter. "He says here that he has never been satisfied with the present script, that he has asked you to rewrite it, and that he wants you to take some part in the production. That seems to me in the nature of a compliment," said Lowenstal, leaning back. "How do you feel about it?"

"I feel complimented."

"Is there anything the matter with you, Meyer?"

"Not that I'm aware of. Why?"

"Your manner is very odd."

"It wasn't meant to be."

"You know," said Lowenstal, still looking at the letter, "I don't think this is a bad idea for you. I haven't had much out of you lately. That may be your fault; or it may be mine. Anyhow French says here that in his opinion you are being wasted. He accuses you, among other things, of having

imagination." Philip grinned. "I'm prepared, on the strength of your past work, to back his judgment. So you can consider that settled. I had intended the unit to leave next week, but French, as usual, is behind with his schedule. In this letter he tells me that he may want you again up there before the fifteenth. So stand by." He looked at the calendar. "I am now making arrangements with the shipping company for the thirtieth. That suit you?"

Philip gulped. He had the sensation of being immersed in cold and sudden water. "How soon can I let you know?"

"Let me know?"

"I am not sure that I can start so soon."

"Private affairs? Relations or something?"

"Yes."

Lowenstal now looked at him for half a minute without speaking.

"You see——" Philip began.

"All right, Meyer. It would be more convenient if you could travel with the others. But if there's a really serious reason against it I dare say I can stretch a point. Meanwhile, what about the script? Have you done anything on it yet?"

"Yes. I—Mr. Lowenstal."

"Well?"

"Supposing I find that I am unable to go at all at any time. I hope you won't think that I am ungrateful."

"Can you give me any idea of the reason why you might not be able to?"

"No, I am afraid I can't," said Philip miserably.

Lowenstal's black eyebrows drew together. "Before we get farther I had better tell you that this is a job, not a pleasure trip conferred upon you by a benign board of directors." Philip felt the blood in his cheeks. He said nothing.

"I don't want to sound tough, Meyer, but I must remind you again of six months' very unsatisfactory work. Before French suggested this—this way out to my mind, I was wondering whether I ought not to let you go elsewhere. I was, really. Do you understand?"

Philip nodded.

"You are now presented with a real opportunity. I should jump at it if I were you."

Philip remained silent.

"So remember two things. One that you've had your—er—sailing-orders. And two that you're lucky to get 'em. Unless you can give me an absolutely cast-iron reason against your going, I am afraid that I shall not be prepared to accept your refusal."

"You can't make me go."

"Not to Africa, my dear boy," said Lowenstal, smiling for the first time; "but think that over. I'm not holding a pistol to your head. You run away now and behave like a sensible being. Put your home affairs as much in order as you can and let me know by the end of the week whether the date suits you. I shall hope to hear that it does. Would you mind telling Miss Heron on the way out that I'd like to see those contracts at once?"

Philip sat for an hour at his desk, scribbling idle patterns on the blotter. The future had shaped itself clearly. He knew now that if he stayed at home he stood an emphatic chance of losing his job altogether. By placing the matter in Lowenstal's hands, Jeremy French had made all personal objection impossible. Lowenstal was right; these were sailing-orders. He sat ruffling his hair and blinking because he wanted to weep. "If she would only marry me before I went. Perhaps she will now. It would be hell enough being parted for six months. But marriage would be a security. She must. It is the only thing. If it weren't for this slump I could say no and start looking for another job. But there couldn't be a worse moment. Damn his eyes. Why has he done this?"

He did not know for how long he had sat in the vexed stupor when his telephone rang. Vaguely hopeful of a reprieve, he answered it.

"Mr. Meyer? Reception here. There's a Mr. Nash asking to see you. He doesn't appear to have an appointment."

"Mr. Nash?" Philip remained unenlightened. "What's his business?"

"He says a private matter, sir."

"Nash? Nash? Oh, God, yes, Lawrence. Is he rather young? He is. Very well, Saunders. Ask somebody to bring him up." Philip went to the mirror and combed his hair flat. He returned to set the wire basket before him and give an appearance of concentration before the door opened.

Lawrence, in his surprising and belated upward growth, had lost the look of compact serenity. He still wore his gold hair neatly brushed; his complexion was sallower than Philip remembered it; the elfish features were now too small in the bone structure of the face; his nose was a ridiculous button; the forehead looked too heavy for the eyes; the legginess and the awkward shoulders were enhanced by a thick tweed jacket and shapeless flannels.

"I am awfully sorry to disturb you," Lawrence began.

"You don't. You surprise me a good deal. You must have grown six inches."

"I don't know exactly how much I have grown," said Lawrence seriously.

"Well, take a seat. Would you like some tea?"

"No, thank you very much. Are you sure I am not disturbing you? I ought to have let you know in advance."

"That's all right. I've nothing particular to do."

"Oh, good." Lawrence knotted his fingers together and sat staring at his knuckles. "As a matter of fact I couldn't very well let you know because I had no idea I was coming. I suddenly saw a train with London on it and got in."

"You haven't run away from somewhere else, have you?"

"Only from George," said Lawrence with a grin. "He won't mind."

"George?" Philip asked, forgetting.

"My father."

"Aren't you on holiday now?"

"Yes, I am. With him."

"Where?"

"Well, we went to Austria for three weeks and now we are staying in Sussex."

"I rang up your mother. I thought you might be in the South with her."

"I went to see her before I came here. I expected her to be back." He whistled through his teeth and continued to look at his knuckles. Presently he said: "I am supposed to be joining her at the end of this week. Simon has taken a house on the Scottish moors for September."

"You sound as though you didn't think that a good idea."

Lawrence lifted his head. "I don't, very."

"What's up?" Philip asked.

"Up?"

"With you? You're worried, aren't you?"

"M'm. A little. It doesn't matter. Could you possibly have dinner with me?"

"I can't, I am afraid." Lawrence looked so dejected that Philip added: "I am dining with Victoria Lloyd. You had better come too. You'll find her a sympathetic person."

"No, I had better not do that. Is there anywhere we could go and talk? What time can you leave here?"

Philip looked at his watch. "It is ten-past five now; I have to fetch Victoria at six. Come along by all means. But this is our only chance of talking alone."

"I won't come along," Lawrence declared, shifting his feet: "I don't want to be in the way." He rose suddenly and marched to the window where he stood with his back to Philip, looking out.

"Could you give me a piece of advice?"

"I will try."

Lawrence twisted round and said over his shoulder: "If you were me, I mean I, how would you tell your mother that you didn't want to come back?"

"Back?" Philip repeated. "Back where?"

"Back to live with her. Ever again."

"I see," said Philip slowly.

"I don't know if you do see."

"You want to live with your father?"

"Yes."

"I see," said Philip again and added: "That's the trouble, is it?"

Lawrence returned to the chair and planted himself. "I meant to tell her to-day. That's why I came up. I thought suddenly that if I could do it on the spur of the moment it might not be so bad. But the servants had had a telegram to say that they wouldn't be home till to-morrow."

"So you came to see me."

"Well, you were the only person I could think of. You know them both. You can see the difference."

Philip was silent, remembering the luncheon in George Nash's rooms at Oxford; the cross-currents there; afterwards Lawrence saying feebly: "We have some things in common." He must have known already, Philip thought, that the childish person with the flexible brain was casting a determinate shadow upon his future.

"Have you told your father what you want?"

"No. Not yet. I thought it would be fairer to tell my mother first."

The memory of George Nash persisted with Philip; the slight figure and the strong voice; the irreverent knowledge in the eyes. Over that memory he heard Jennifer's voice saying: "I shall miss him so much."

"Do you think," he said, "that your father will agree? Won't it involve his moving out of college?"

"Oh, yes. He wouldn't mind at all."

"How do you know?"

"George," said Lawrence, "doesn't worry about that sort of thing. He is the least material person I ever met. So long as the room is tidy and has the right books in it, he doesn't care what room it is. He sort of floats. And thinks. And reads. I don't mean that he is one of those awful absent-minded professors who forget their meals and think they've lost their spectacles when they've got them on. He's just cosy and detached. I used to think he was too detached."

"Is he detached where you're concerned?"

"Oh, completely. I mean, he likes me. And he enjoys teaching me. We get on very well. Austria was good. But I can't really imagine that he would notice if I weren't there."

"In that case," Philip said gently, "are you quite sure that this is a good idea of yours?"

Lawrence looked over the ridge of his knuckles. "Do you mean that you think he wouldn't want me?"

"No. I am sure he would. I mean that a person like your father, a brilliant man who has lived nearly all his adult life in donnish surroundings, particularly a man with the sort of detachment that you describe, might be rather inhuman company. After all, you've only had a few weeks holiday under the same roof; you have spent the rest of the year with your crammer. You can't really know how it would work."

Lawrence said: "I know it would." He unclenched his hands, leaning forward and drooping them between his knees. His head bent lower until Philip could see only the top of it, hunched between the awkward shoulders. His voice was muffled.

"I have been such an ass," he said, "running away from school and carrying on and trying to be grown-up. Learning snippets of Communism from my mother. Going to those silly Left Evenings and thinking that they were the real thing. Travelling about on Simon's money; pretending that I hoped I'd settle down and get on well with Simon when it's utterly obvious that he is one of the greatest clods on earth."

"Lawrence."

"Well, he is. And no true Communist would marry that sort of person. The capitalist system is the only thing that could have produced Simon. She doesn't see it. She's a parlour Communist, that's all. She plays at it. She

plays with this child-education piffle. She doesn't really care what happens in the world. She *thinks* she cares. But she simply hasn't got near any real problem; ever. She can't think straight. That's why," he said, lifting his crimson forehead a little, "she made such an awful mess of my upbringing."

Philip lit a cigarette; his principal emotion was one of embarrassment. He watched the flush subside on Lawrence's face before he spoke.

"Listen. I imagine that you are serious about this, but your mother is a friend of mine. It's a little difficult for me to hear you running her down."

"Sorry," Lawrence growled.

"Did your father point out any of those facts to you?"

"George? No, rather not. He never talks about her. Philip, they are true. Honestly they are. And I can't go back. I've never worked hard before. I have never been really happy before. It's so lovely to be in a place where there are never rows; and nothing is untidy. Nobody interferes. And there aren't awful tough business friends of Simon's coming to dinner. There is just work until the week-end. Then there is Oxford and George."

"Aren't you perhaps being rather selfish?"

Lawrence flushed again. "She doesn't need me. She's got Simon."

"I wouldn't be too sure that she doesn't need you."

Lawrence said: "The trouble is I know you're right. Otherwise, why should I have got cold feet about telling her?"

"You are still fond of her, aren't you?"

"In a way. I don't respect her at all."

"Whose idea was it that you should spend half your holiday with George?"

"Hers. But that was only because Simon didn't want me in the South."

Philip thought: "How extraordinarily brutal he has become."

Lawrence said violently: "I *must* work. I am miles behind most people of my age, thanks to her. And I shall never get anywhere if I don't catch up. I mean to put all my life into Communism; real Communism, using brains, not idiotic emotions."

"Yes, yes. But living at home won't stop that."

"Oh, won't it?" Lawrence's lashes flickered; his lower lip advanced. Suddenly he said: "You couldn't live in a house with somebody you despised, could you?"

"Lawrence, it is unforgivable to say that you despise your mother."

"I can't help it." He stood up suddenly, pushing back his chair. "You want to go, don't you?"

"Not for a minute."

The boy shrugged his shoulders with the resigned gesture that Philip recognised; the gesture of one taking a palpable weight. He stood for a moment looking upward at the ceiling.

Then he mumbled with an unexpected return to shyness: "Sorry if I've been a nuisance. You can't do anything about it. I'll go."

"Well, I am going, too. Where are you aiming for?"

"I suppose I had better get back to the station. George will expect me for dinner, anyway. I should have had to telephone him." He held out his hand formally: "Good-bye, Philip."

"Look here, Lawrence. I think you ought to give this thing a chance to sort itself out. You will be able to judge your own feelings much better after you come back from Scotland . . . after you have been with Jennifer again."

The boy said nothing.

"Will you please not do anything in a hurry? I know it's no business of mine; but I'm trying to see it from Jennifer's point of view. She has done all she could for you since you were a baby. Your father never saw you for years."

"That wasn't his fault."

"Shut up. You owe her much more than you owe him. Don't do this to her without thinking it over very seriously. If I were you I should talk to your father about it first."

Lawrence looked obstinately away.

"Do you understand?"

"All right. But I can't go back."

"You never know what you can do till you try," Philip assured him, attempting a wholly foreign heartiness. Lawrence continued to glower. He showed no interest in the studio building as they went out together. He walked with a slouch. Philip found his silence exasperating. In the Underground the noise and the crowd made conversation impossible. There was no further opportunity. Presently Philip shouted: "I get out here." Lawrence grinned and raised his hand. His lips formed the word "Sorry." For a moment, between the crowd-faces and the crowd-shoulders, he looked out, straining after Philip as though he would have said something more. The waiting crowd swept through the doors and engulfed him. The doors slammed.

On the pavement Philip gradually remembered his own urgent problem. It drove him unhappily seeking Victoria. He walked fast, seeing this street dissolve, these London skies change with the threat of the journey; to become a foreign place where he went alone and did not find her.

Already September touched the evening. He could feel that the hour had struck for him especially; that his short summer was ended.

CHAPTER THREE

HE ended his speech tamely: "So you see, I shall have to go."

"Yes."

He was looking at their two reflections in the glass upon the wall of her room. The glass gave him his own head, the lacquered hair and the three-quarter view of the face; smooth, honey-coloured, Jewboy's face with the interruption of the white teeth, the large dark hollows for the eyes. His hands moved upward into the reflection and he was ashamed, letting them drop quickly to rest upon his knees. In the glass he saw Victoria turn slowly until the full view made her pale and compassionate as the Madonna.

"Perhaps it will not be for so long," she said.

"And perhaps it will be for longer."

She drummed her fingers on the desk. Before she spoke again the door opened and the head saleswoman intruded a perched hat with a feather.

"Good night, Mademoiselle."

"Good night, Gina."

"Do you want to lock up, darling?"

"Not for a minute. I want to get used to this." She frowned as though she were adding a column of figures. He did not mean to say abruptly: "Will you marry me before I go?" After he had said it, he wished that he had led up to the question carefully.

"Oh, Philip, how can I?"

"Why can't you?"

"What difference would it make, if we have to part immediately?"

"It would make a difference."

"How?"

"We should have something," he said. "Without that, we shall have nothing."

She was still drumming her fingers on the desk; this irritated him. He leaned over to take her hand; she drew it away.

"No, Philip. It isn't possible. I am sorry."

"Why isn't it possible?"

"Darling, the shop."

"What harm would it do to the shop? I'm not asking you to come with me."

She looked past him and said nothing.

"That's not a reason, Victoria."

"You don't understand how difficult things are here at the minute. I haven't told you because I didn't want to worry you. But the position looks absolutely hopeless."

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean that it has come to a question of closing down?" He was so sorry for her that he forgot his own grief, remembering only the beginning of the venture and her plans for it.

"Can't do that," she said. "Wish to God I could."

"Why can't you? It's your money, isn't it?"

She was silent.

"Isn't it, Victoria?"

Her face wore its peevish, invalid look. Her voice was dull when she said: "Not all of it, no."

"You told me that it was."

"Did I?"

He knew that there was something larger in the room than this. He heard the little tap of high heels going down the corridor; the little drumming of Victoria's fingers: their little words.

"Whose money is it, then?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because I can't see why you lied to me."

"Oh, Philip." He had seen the weary movement of her head when she became impatient with her mother, with a servant. It had never been for him before. He was chilled with wonder, thinking: "How quickly this happens." The change had happened to him also; that was not his true voice saying over and over again: "Go on—tell me."

"Very well, if you will keep on badgering, it is John Harrison's money." After she had spoken he saw how pale she was; the cords of her neck were stretched and ugly.

"Harrison's."

"Yes."

"I see."

"Philip." She spoke entreatingly as though she would tell him that she felt ill. He said: "We might as well hear all of it. Was he your lover?"

Again there was the weary movement of the head.

"Was he?"

"Oh . . . *yes*."

"And Jacob Lowenstal before that, I suppose? He had money in the shop, didn't he? Answer me. Didn't he? Wasn't that what the row was about? Or have you forgotten? I haven't. On the first night I came to your house. You and Lowenstal and Harrison." Her face did not change; she folded her hands together with a grieved and nun-like movement that choked his throat with laughter. "Go on!" he shouted. "Say it all! Other people have said it—but I didn't believe them."

She looked up at him as viciously as a tortured cat. "Stop making that noise. There are still people in the work-room."

"You tell me now. It was like that, wasn't it?"

"Yes. It was."

"First Lowenstal. Then Harrison. Did Harrison take over the shares along with you?"

"You can't talk to me like this."

"Does Harrison know about me?"

She kept her eyes toward the desk.

"Why was he so bloody nice to me last week?"

"What do you expect him to do? Behave as you're behaving?"

"Not quite quick enough, Victoria. What a fool I've been." He sat down abruptly in the chair and rested his forehead in his hand. He heard her weeping.

"That's right, isn't it?" he asked, without looking up. "That he doesn't know. That you never told him. All the time he was away. And I thought he had gone because of me. That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"No wonder you can't marry me."

"Don't."

"I was just a temporary adventure. Until he came back."

"No."

"Yes."

"No."

Her weeping stopped. She said: “I love you. That is the only thing that was not a lie.”

He lifted his head and looked at her. Her eyes were ready for his. She said quietly: “You must believe that.”

“How can I?”

“Because it’s the truth.”

“How can I believe anything?”

“I love you. Philip, do understand. You were unlike anything that had been in my life. The first love that wasn’t just a—a business enterprise. The first person near my own age. The first person I could play with. It was like being let out of school; taking hands and running away together. I love you so.”

“Why did you lie to me?”

“I always lied. All my life. Till now.”

“And now?”

“Forgive me. Only forgive me. And love me again.”

He whispered: “I think I never loved you.”

He rose wearily, glancing round the small room with the daylight fading out of the window; at the desk and the figure on the calendar cutting off this day from the other days. He laid his head on one side to look at her. She had returned to weeping and her face was hidden.

“Good-bye, Victoria.”

“Are you going?”

“Yes.”

“Shan’t I see you again?”

“No.”

“You can’t. Philip, you can’t throw everything away.”

He said: “There was nothing to throw away. We have had nothing. I am a stranger now and so are you. Remember that. We did not meet.”

He shut the door.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE same again, waiter, please."

"Go down to it," he said:

> "You need no longer fear
> The agonising day. The night is here."

So much of apprehension had gone to make the dream; now he might sit back and be relieved by the waking. That was the first thing.

The difference between knowing with a question-mark and knowing with a full-stop was the difference between the knowledge of a man dying and the knowledge of a man dead. Better the full-stop than the whispers, the doubts. That was the second thing.

He had only a little way to walk alone in the place where he had been accompanied, before he left the place on the long, new journey. Africa. That was the third thing.

He looked about him; at the marble-topped tables, the red sofas, the movement of the crowd. He did not know why he had come here, to the Café Royal where their story began. Perhaps in the hope of seeing her with Harrison again; across the tall gold glasses, a strange woman a little dingy with tiredness; as though nothing since had happened to inform him of her. Could he see her like that, he would know that the miracle had taken place in his mind and that he could walk out of here light-heartedly.

This mood was easy; it would not let him wake. If he performed the process in his mind that was like turning his head suddenly, he must find the other mood. And that would be unbearable.

He said: "It hasn't happened. It can't have happened."

He said: "If I thought I would never see her again . . ."

He said: "It was all right when I was angry. The drinks have stopped my being angry."

He set down his glass and stared into it. To build all that, he thought, and to knock it down. To have everything and then nothing. To dig one's own grave.

He remembered her saying to him before some trivial separation: "I shall go now. Because as long as I stay here I am going to part from you. But the moment that I walk out of that door I am on my way back to you."

Pretty phrase. (But I am on my way back from you, my dear. As long as I stayed with you I was going to part from you and now that I have walked out of that door, I shall never see you again. There is the difference.)

"Even this is bearable, you know, ladies and gentlemen. Because I am still anæsthetised. I have no reason to be unhappy. I am warm. I have money. If I like I can get up and go. I can telephone to somebody; or buy a stall for the theatre; or go home to bed. Unhappy people are those who cannot do as they like. I can do everything—except the one thing that I want to do. Which means that I am dead. Here I am sitting; quite dead."

"I beg your pardon?" said the man opposite him.

"Waiter, the same again, please."

Behaving like all the silly people who fell in love. Alone and drinking, while beyond the stupor the pain shouted gleefully: "I'm here! Just you wait!"

CHAPTER FIVE

"*Yew!*
You're driving me crazy!
What did I do?
What did I do?
My tears for *yew*
Make everything hazy,
Clouding ther skies
Of *blew*!"

"For God's sake," Philip said, "can't they turn that thing off?"

"Everybody likes the music in the canteen," said Julius Cohen gloomily.

"And ther friends who were near me
To cheer me,
Berlieve me, they knew
That *yew*
Were the kind who would hurt me,
Desert me,
When I needed *yew*!"

He ran up the stairs, thinking: "Now it will be in my head all day."

He cut a scene from "Men of the Veldt" wherein a Bible-carrying Boer attempted the virtue of an Englishman's wife. Some reader of the original script had already recorded his doubts in pencil on the margin: "Query Boer dangerous. Suggest a Zulu."

He dictated a memorandum:

Dear Mr. Lowenstal,

Regarding our conversation of Wednesday, I am glad to be able to tell you that I shall be ready to leave England on the thirtieth of this month.

"Clouding ther skies
Of *blew*."

He made a list of the clothes that he would need. Montagu Rivers came in to say: "Lucky boy. Nice trip. What are you looking so down in the mouth about? I'd give my eyes to go."

"Hurt me,
Desert me."

The telephone rang. He told himself that he had no hopes of it. Jennifer's voice brought his thoughts back to Lawrence. He said confusedly: "How are you? I rang you up earlier this week."

"Have you seen Lawrence, Philip?"

He hesitated: "Only for half an hour. One day this week. Wednesday. He came in to see me." (A long time ago.)

"Did he seem all right?"

"Yes, Jennifer. Why?"

"I've had a letter from him that I can't quite understand. Could you look in for a drink to-night?"

"Ye-es, I think so." (Why the hesitation? Habit, only. This was Saturday; there was nothing now for Saturday night; nor for Sunday; nor for the days after.)

"All right," she snapped. "Six o'clock."

"*Yew!*"

It was unexpected to emerge thus from the blindness of three days, to see another sorrow on the way. Jennifer and Lawrence, as trees walking.

("I am not going back to her. Ever.")

He felt as guilty as though he, not Lawrence, had betrayed Jennifer. He thought: "Damn the child. Why did he have to tell me?" It would be easier to lie at once, to say that Lawrence had told him nothing. He could imagine Jennifer's needle-voice puncturing that lie. "But why did he come to see you? What? No. I don't understand."

"Of all the gratuitous impositions," he thought. "The task of breaking it to a fond mother that her son hates the sight of her would quite inevitably fall on me."

(Why not? Your own life is temporarily suspended. You have nothing to do.)

"I feel," he said to Broughton, "like an innocent bystander to whom the anarchist has handed the bomb while tying his shoe-lace."

"Is it such a bomb?"

"You don't know Jennifer."

"Give you something to think about, anyway," Broughton said; "and there's always a kick to be got out of other people's troubles."

"I wish I were half as tough as you."

Jennifer was in the hall at Kensington Square, arranging sprays of shiny green leaves at ferocious speed. He stood by her awkwardly. She said: "You look rather wilted."

"I have had a wilting week."

"How?"

He said wearily: "It isn't worth talking about."

Simon Flood was in the drawing-room. Philip felt relief out of proportion to his estimate of Simon. His presence diminished the chances of a scene. Simon's natural lack of sympathy toward Lawrence would make Jennifer wary. At least Philip hoped so. While they sat making conversation, he thought that Simon improved upon a nearer view. The light suit and the brown colour left on his skin made him more human. His solid slab of a face assumed a sudden look of understanding when he said: "That place Eden Roc is just a Mappin Terrace. Only I prefer the animals at the Zoo. They are a better sort of animal."

Jennifer's skin was tanned also. The lion wave of her hair had bleached with the sun; she sparkled at Simon affectionately.

"Now why, on this day of all days," he wondered, "must I find them both so sympathetic?" Perhaps because any two people, man and woman who loved each other, could fill him with sad envy. Perhaps because always before he had seen them under the shadow of Lawrence.

He tried to keep his thoughts off Lawrence, superstitiously afraid that they would make telepathic communication with Jennifer.

She glanced suddenly at Simon, who met the glance with a half-nod.

"Here we go," Philip told himself.

"Philip, I really asked you to come to-day because I wanted to know about Lawrence. We have had such a peculiar letter from him. I will show it to you." While she searched for it with papery noises in a desk at the end of the room, Simon Flood said: "How did the boy seem?"

"Quite all right."

"Enjoyed his Austrian trip?"

"Oh yes, I think so."

"Here it is."

Dearest Jenny,

I hope you had a good holiday and do not mind the end of it too much.

I came up to town to see you and found that you were not coming back till the next day. So I went to see Philip Meyer instead.

Please do not expect me on the date agreed. I have made a decision which I will write to you in detail over the week-end.

Lawrence.

"With no address, as you see," said Jennifer. "Do you know where he is?"

"In Sussex somewhere. He didn't tell me the address."

"That," Simon said, "is the first letter that he has seen fit to write his mother these holidays. He sent her two post-cards from Austria."

"I am so worried."

"Has the kid got some bee in his bonnet?"

"But what is this absurd pomposity *about*?" Jennifer cried.

Philip was silent.

"We were expecting him home to-morrow."

"Did he say *anything* to you?"

"Did he," Simon asked, "spill the beans to you and ask you not to tell? In that case it might be easier for you if I beat it."

Jennifer laid her hand on his. They smiled at each other. Philip said: "Well," and gulped.

"Okay." Simon rose to his feet. "I'll go and get a breath of air." He patted Jennifer's head. "Back in half an hour. If you still don't want me I'll go and sit upstairs." He nodded to Philip. The door shut behind him.

"What is the trouble?" Jennifer snapped.

Philip lit a cigarette and drew upon it carefully. "I think," he began, "that I had better tell you everything. And make my peace with Lawrence afterwards."

"Doesn't he want to come to Scotland?"

"No."

"Because of Simon?"

"Not exactly."

"Did he say he hated Simon?"

"He said that Simon bored him."

"Yes." Her voice was vague and light. "Yes. Well, in that case, I suppose he wants to spend the rest of the holidays with George. Why can't he *say* so?"

Philip hesitated.

"I don't know that I can allow it. He must be with me for half the time. A fortnight. I think that's reasonable, don't you? I have wired to Oxford for George's address. I shall write to the little ass and tell him that he must compromise." He saw that her eyes were frightened. He said nothing.

"Is that all, Philip? Was there anything else?"

"He talked a lot."

"You are trying not to tell me something. What is it? Is he unhappy? Philip, you've got to tell me. You can't keep it back. Don't you see? It isn't fair. Lawrence isn't old enough to load confidences on people. On other people. He ought to have come to me. Please——"

Philip squashed out the cigarette. While she waited he saw the colour departing from her face; her lips beginning to shake.

"He didn't say that he wanted to spend every holiday with George?" she whispered.

"Yes."

"He said that?"

"Yes."

"Oh, God . . . and never come back to me?"

"No."

"He isn't coming back?"

"He said not."

She began to sob instantly and noisily. "Why? Why? Oh, God, this isn't fair." She did not hide her crumpled face with her hands.

"Did he say he hated me? He couldn't hate me. How can he be so brutal?" She sobbed: "Oh, *tell* me. Don't sit there saying nothing. What? I can't understand. I can't hear."

She scrambled to her feet; she was gnawing her knuckles. He tried to grasp her shoulder and she plunged away like an animal. She screamed. "He can't! He must come back! I'll never live without him! What did I ever do to make him hate me?" Her hands now tore the hair back from her face; the

tears dabbled her nose. “I can’t bear it! I won’t! George did this! George who humiliated me. George who laughed at me. George who made my life hell!” He had to hold her so that she did not beat her head upon the wall. He wrestled with her absurdly; she was as strong as he; it was like struggling with a small bull.

“Jennifer, sit down. Try to be quiet.”

“Lawrence used to love me. He used to want to be with me. I did give him nice things when I could. We had a cottage on the river one summer. He liked it . . . He said he liked it.”

“Jennifer, please. Listen to me for half a minute.”

“No, no,” she sobbed, as though she were alone and talking to herself; “he won’t come back. And it’s my fault. I gave him to George. My fault. I was only trying to help him. I meant him to be happy. That’s all. Always. Ever since he was a baby.” She sat down suddenly, sobbing and staring straight in front of her. “Now there’s nothing,” she whispered. “Nothing at all. He doesn’t want me any more.”

Philip said: “Listen, Jennifer. This is only a phase. He will come round to sense. It is a matter of waiting. And you aren’t alone. Being alone is the worst thing. I do know that because I am alone now. You have got Simon.” He wondered why he could talk in convincing phrases at any time save a time of crisis when he longed for words. “You have got Simon,” he repeated.

“That isn’t the same thing. You don’t know. It isn’t the same as your own child.” She ceased to weep entirely for a moment; she looked old and bewildered. “All our things. We believed in the same things. He can’t have changed his ideas so suddenly. Can’t have become a Tory just to please George, can he?”

She giggled and the giggle turned to a sob. Then her voice steadied and she spoke normally. “I thought he didn’t seem to enjoy the last Left Evening as much as usual. Was it beginning then, do you think? Oh, no, not then. . . .” She began to moan, hiding her face against the back of the chair.

Philip found that he was trembling; his hands jerked at the wrists when he held them out to her. He thought that he had never seen so switchbacked a grief; there seemed no period to it. It mounted, subsided, checked, left her calm for long minutes, then stormed afresh. He had walked in many wide circles to keep pace with her. He watched her sobbing shape and wondered whether the worst of it were over. Timidly, he stroked her hair.

“Did he say that he loved George?”

“No. Not once. He only said that he respected him.”

"I suppose I wasn't always very tidy, very well-dressed. What else did he say?"

Watching her uneasily, Philip murmured: "He wants to work. He feels that he is behind in his lessons and that George can help him."

"You are trying to make it sound better. It's no good. No good."

Philip thought: "If only Simon would come. It must be more than half an hour." Seeing her lie back exhausted, with her eyes shut, he said: "Are you faint? Do let me get you something. Brandy or sal volatile. Just tell me where it is and I'll get it."

"No. I couldn't take it. I don't want anything. Only Lawrence." The tears ran out under the drooped eyelids. The light was cruel to her; to her face that was shameless with weeping; to her body that tumbled like a doll. The liveliness had left her hair; it was a dull red tangle against the cushion.

"Come back," she moaned. "Oh, please come back."

The door opened very gently. Simon's bulldog face intruded through the aperture.

"Jenny dear. Jenny old girl. . . ." The deliberately cheering voice reached the ears of Philip, who had spun round to look out of the window. "There, there. There, Jenny. . . ."

"I'll go," Philip muttered. He was out of the door and half-way down the stairs when Simon caught him. Simon's face was chilly and uncompromising as a cliff. He halted Philip on the landing.

"What has the boy done?" he snapped.

"Wants to live with his father," said Philip, copying the tone.

"That's damn nice of him. What did you say?"

"I told him to be sensible and think about the whole matter very seriously. I thought——"

Simon interrupted him. "Meyer, this will kill his mother. I am not thinking of the boy. He doesn't matter. Nor do I. He's been nothing but a trouble and a nuisance to me ever since I set eyes on him. But that's beside the point. Jennifer is the only person who matters. I may sound like a fool but I am entirely single-hearted about Jenny. Nobody else in the world is of the least importance to me. I won't see her hurt. I could kill anyone who hurt her. Do you understand?"

"I do. Better than you imagine, perhaps. I mean I understand about caring only for one person."

"The boy must come back."

Philip nodded. For all the square red face, the truculent eyes, the brown boots and the barking voice, Simon Flood was suddenly admirable.

"I'll go and fetch him back myself. Not the sort of job I care to tackle, but it's got to be done. I refuse to let that little fool or anybody else stand in the way of Jenny's happiness. I must go to her now. Poor little woman." He held out his hand. "Thanks, Meyer. You did the right thing. Even if it was a damned cruel thing for Jenny to hear."

She came out of the drawing-room. She had combed her hair and painted her mouth. Her eyes were half shut with the swelling of the lids.

"What are you doing, Simon?"

"Hullo, dear; just seeing Meyer off. Hang on, I won't be a minute." He patted her hand. She said vaguely: "I will come," and he held her with his arm round her waist, saying: "All right; you come," as though he spoke to a child.

"I am sorry you have had all this, Philip," she said.

"Please."

He turned helplessly on the steps and saw them stand together. The look of two people who were not alone in any trouble moved him to tears. He watched the plump, absurd face of Simon bent tenderly downward; Simon's protective arm encircling her. He said: "I will fetch him if you would like me to——" and before the door slammed he heard Jennifer crying: "No, no, no! He must never be made to come back."

CHAPTER SIX

I

JEREMY FRENCH fulfilled his threat of needing Philip in Yorkshire. The summons arrived on Friday the twelfth, and Philip went north on Saturday.

Autumn weather. The Wharfedale shots were finished and he was glad not to go that way again. He had hoped to get away after twenty-four hours. Jeremy at the Midland Hotel disposed of the hope. "As our guide to the district," he squeaked, "you'll be wanted all Monday for the town exteriors. And if it rains on Monday you'll be wanted all Tuesday. And so on."

"You haven't forgotten that we're sailing on the thirtieth?"

"No, my son, I haven't. You're as bad as Jacob. Now take that script and see just how much you can cut out of it. At the present rate the thing's going to run for four hours."

He could rewrite the script; or cut it; or forget it; this person who worked to order was only the half of Philip Meyer.

In his aunt's room he looked at the corner of the sofa, remembering that Victoria had sat there. Aunt Frieda, sewing placidly, said: "You have heard from Joseph?"

"Not for a few weeks."

"Then you do not know his news. Katrine is dead."

Katrine, the nurse and housekeeper, remained unpleasantly alive in Philip's memory. He contrived a sympathetic grunt.

"I show you his letter. I wrote to ask him to come here. He will not come."

Philip took the usual four grey pages and read obligingly, translating the words into English for his own satisfaction.

> "*I feel already an old man. Though I should dearly like to see England again, and be with you, my dearest Aunt, I do not feel that I am justified. I should be only a drag upon you. The new nurse was a friend of Katrine and she will make me comfortable, though I must necessarily miss the mental sympathy of my dear companion.*"

"He is a noble fellow," Aunt Frieda said.

"Yes."

"You never go to see him."

"No."

She looked sad. "Well, you will not see him for a long time now."

"I'll write to him to-night."

He felt that her eyes through the bright spectacles read him and his weakness. She said gently: "You should telephone Sally to say good-bye. You have not asked after Sally."

"I am sorry," he said listlessly. "How is she?"

"She gets near her time now."

He rose and stared out of the window; at the blue darkness and the street-lamp beyond the lace curtains.

"Go on, Philip. Do as I say. Telephone."

He waited in the hall while the mysterious sounds went on. After a quarter of an hour that was punctuated by the word "Darlington" spoken in a high, questioning voice, he heard another broader voice.

"Hullo," Philip said. "Is that Brodrick one four? May I speak to Mrs. Arthur?"

"Mrs. Arthur's not here. I'm sorry."

"Is she out?"

"Will you hold on?"

"Half-wit," Philip muttered. Through the open door Aunt Frieda was calling: "My love, Philip. Not to forget to give her my love!" The broad voice began to speak again in the receiver and he shouted: "Quiet; one minute! What? I can't hear."

"Mr. Arthur has taken Mrs. Arthur to the hospital, please, sir."

"When?"

"This afternoon."

"For the baby?"

"Yes, sir. Mrs. Arthur, she fell."

"Fell? Is she hurt?"

"I don't think she's hurt, sir. She was getting something off the top shelf of the cupboard, Mary says. I wasn't there."

"Can you give me the number of the hospital?"

"Will you hold on?"

Aunt Frieda bobbed into the hall, saying: "Is it already, Philip?"

"Yes," he said, "but it oughtn't to be. She fell. Hullo? Yes? No. All right; we'll look it up." He dropped the receiver back. He said faintly: "How bad is it when they come like that?"

He thought that the beating of his heart muffled her words; she was saying that it was not always bad; her small hands fluttered; when he sat down on the stairs she stroked his head. She said: "*Ich bin hier*, Philip; *ich bin hier*."

He did not know why he should be so frightened; why he felt as small as a dwarf, as small as the child Philip sitting on the stairs. It was a comfort to look up and see Aunt Frieda stand under the hall light, thumbing the telephone-book, with her reading-glasses crooked on her nose.

II

Finally they said: "We will ring you to-night if you do not mind how late." Philip took the receiver from his aunt's hand. He said: "Ring me. Mr. Meyer at the Midland Hotel. I don't mind how late."

"Philip, you must not worry so. She is all right. They say she is all right."

"I would rather know as soon as possible." He walked, saying: "She did too much. Always making beds and clearing the table and looking after Ronald's stupid things. Top shelf of the cupboard. Standing on a chair. He has no right to let her stand on a chair."

"Now, be good boy. Go to your bed and sleep."

"Fat-headed, unimaginative Christian fool."

"Philip, is not kind, what you say."

He thought that if he did not go to bed until very late, the call might come through before he left the lounge. To sit alone was to think of Victoria; to descend again into the grey fog. He stayed in an upright chair, drinking black coffee, smoking and regretting that the door of Jeremy's suite was ornamented with a card proclaiming: "Please do not disturb."

He sat on until the lounge was empty. A man came to turn off the unnecessary lights. After he had finished his novel, he read an illustrated guide to British hotels. At one o'clock he procured a ham sandwich from the night porter and at half-past one he went to bed.

The black coffee kept him awake. He lay in the dark waiting for news of Sally's child. Occasionally he switched on the light and looked at the

telephone, exasperated because it did not ring. He remembered dreaming once that the child was his. He wondered how Ronald Arthur passed this night. He tried to imagine the pain and he could not. He saw that Sally would be patient with it; he imagined the large, pathetic shape of her lying under the bedclothes in a white, ugly room. The vision changed and it was Victoria who lay there. This picture sent him chasing after the hopeless wish until he slept and dreamed that he stood by Sally's side; in this dream the child flew over their heads, a small fluttering shape who cast a bat shadow. "*Look* at him!" Sally's voice cried, so loudly that he woke.

He stared round the bedroom; the shadows were solid and unfamiliar. He thought of the dream. "I am sure that is a good omen," he said aloud, and heard his own voice thick with sleep. He turned on his side. This time he sank deep, beyond all dreaming. It was with difficulty that he fought back, urgently summoned. He heard the bell close to his head.

"All right. I'll take the call."

"This is the hospital."

"Yes?"

"It is all over. Mrs. Arthur is quite all right. The doctor is very pleased with her."

"And the baby?"

"I am afraid they couldn't save the little baby."

"Do you mean it is dead?"

"I am afraid it was stillborn. Very sad, isn't it? But then Mrs. Arthur's the chief thing, isn't she? She's wonderfully well, considering."

"Can I see her to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? Yes. I should think so. Will you telephone first?"

"What is the time, please?" he asked abruptly.

"Just after six."

"Then I mean can I see her to-day?"

"I couldn't say that. Will you telephone later in the morning?"

"No. I shall come."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she said, sounding surprised and a little offended.

Until he arrived at the hospital he did not think that it was so bad. He resented the lump in his throat while he tried to eat his breakfast, the astonished sorrow asking: "Was this all that we waited for?"

Jeremy said: "Oh, bad luck," and ordered kidneys. "They'll have another," Jeremy said.

Another. Vulgar comfort. Plenty more where that came from. This small lost thing should be of no importance. Aunt Frieda, visited for a moment before he caught the train, said: "Thank heavens she is well. They say she is very well."

The journey, with the change at York, took him two hours. This was the same train by which he had travelled a month ago, and when he reached Darlington he remembered Sally waiting for him on the platform. He bought flowers for her. He kept on telling himself that this grief was curable, this was not so much. He was still treading down his own doubts when he arrived at the large red house in the garden.

The hall was as he expected, with uncompromising oilcloth and a dried, clean smell. He was taken into the waiting-room. He tried not to recall a former waiting-room of Dr. ——. He went to the window.

He heard the door open and then no sound. He turned. Ronald Arthur was standing by the door. Ronald Arthur looked as though his eyes had been smoked into slits. Philip looked from the gilt stubble on the chin to the narrow, red-rimmed eyes.

"Hullo, Meyer. I didn't see it was you. Good of you to come. Got a cigarette?"

"Yes; here."

"Thanks." Ronald sat down creakingly in an arm-chair. "That's good. Can't smoke up there. She wanted me to sit with her and they didn't object. Been there all the morning."

"How is she?"

"Had a hell of a lot of chloroform. The doctor came again just now. He's quite satisfied." Ronald's eyes shut and he breathed evenly before he opened them again.

"Want to see her?" he mumbled. "I expect they'll let you. She won't sleep, anyway. Doesn't seem to want to sleep."

"Have you had any?"

"Any what?"

"Sleep."

"Me? No. Such a waste, isn't it?" said Ronald, suddenly. "All that time. Boy, too."

"I am so very sorry."

He looked at the tilted, unshaven face; the lips shook as he had seen Jennifer's lips shake.

"Poor old baby," Ronald whispered.

A nurse's white-curtained head appeared. "Mr. Meyer?" She saw Ronald and laid her finger to her lips. "Let him sleep," she said outside the door. "I'll tell them to take visitors into the small waiting-room. I told Mrs. Arthur that you were here and she wants to see you. Only five minutes, I'm afraid. Matron wouldn't have agreed to that if I hadn't told her you'd come such a long way specially."

"How is she?"

"Oh, fine. No complications at all."

The staircase led on to a bare landing. The smell here was as he had expected. The smell was pungent in the long corridor. There were trolley-tables; trays; echoes and sunlight and the noise of water running.

"Why did the baby die?"

"Well, it was born prematurely. Her fall brought it on." She did not explain further. He listened to the trifling noises made by her shoes and by the wings of her cap. Then there was a door. She stood back. "Go in," she said.

He came past the screen and saw Sally lying in the high bed. He moved with infinite care. She did not turn her head, so that she saw him only when he was beside her. The curve of the cheek was flattened; her white mouth drooped at the corners. She said: "Hullo, Philip," and her voice was light, not so weak as he had imagined that it would be.

"Hullo, sweet. I brought you some silly flowers."

"Lovely flowers. Did they tell you that the baby was dead?"

"Yes."

"It was my fault. I oughtn't to have got on the chair, do you see?"

"Darling, you are talking nonsense. The doctor has just told me that had nothing whatever to do with it."

"Oh." She looked indifferent; it was a plaque of a face on the flat pillow.

"I expect it had," she said after a time. "Remember the beginning?"

"Yes, I remember."

"It's funny," her voice continued, "funny looking at it from the beginning. Such a long time. And now nothing at all."

"Dear Sally. Please go to sleep."

"Can't sleep," she said. "Don't want to. Ronald ought to go to sleep. Will you tell him?"

"He is asleep now."

"Oh, good."

Presently she said: "Where do you think it has gone?"

He waited beside her a little longer, then bent to kiss her because he heard the nurse opening the door.

"Good-bye, Philip. When will you come back?"

"Very soon."

He held her hand. She said: "I wish it had been all right."

In the corridor the nurse said: "She's still very dopey. You mustn't worry about her."

"Will you say good-bye to Mr. Arthur for me, please?"

"I will. When he wakes up. Bye-bye." She looked at him shrewdly. "Cheer up. It's very disappointing, but they've got each other. I expect they'll have lots of babies."

Got each other. ("And now nothing at all." Jennifer had said that.)

He saw loss and defeat angrily. They were for him; for Jennifer; now for Sally. He wept without thinking that he must look funny walking through the streets and crying.

His rage went with him. He thought: "Why couldn't she have what she wanted? She never did anybody any harm. Why not just this? Not much to ask. Very little for a mean God to withhold."

CHAPTER SEVEN

RALPH BROUGHTON lived above a greengrocer's shop in King's Road, Chelsea. The hall smelt agreeably of fruit and flowers, a nostalgic bouquet that faded before the visitor reached the top of the stairs where the green door hiding Ralph's territory stood on the latch. Philip pushed it and walked in.

The bedroom looked on a tangled back yard; the sitting-room looked on the King's Road. Between the two there was a deplorable bathroom with a cupboard-kitchen facing it from the other side of the passage.

This place emerged as a sanctuary from the slow tunnel of the days. Philip welcomed it now with the accustomed relief from solitude, that would change in half an hour to restlessness again.

Ralph was stooped over his new desk, bought with the proceeds of the option on "The Savage Saint." He was to be paid no more until the film went into production; so that the curved modern shape of the desk was at odds with shabby mahogany, dark brown paint, featureless wallpaper and a ceiling that sagged.

Philip thought that it was strange to come here at last without pitying Ralph; to come even with envy. Ralph had nothing in his life but his working-programme; self-imposed and merciless, allowing no outside force to disturb it.

There was a fan of typewritten sheets spread on the floor round the desk. Ralph had his empty pipe clenched between his teeth and his yellow hair on end. The solid, childish face at this flushed and shiny stage would always remind Philip of the faces in an examination-room when time was short. The thumping chatter of the typewriter did not cease. Ralph said: "Hullo; drinks in the cupboard; shan't be a minute." After ten minutes he bent to collect the typewritten sheets. He emerged from behind the desk, wriggling his shoulders.

"'Struth," he said, "the old girl had better like that. How are you?"

"All right."

"Only two more days and you're out of this perishing country."

"You would think," said Philip, "that I might have sense enough to welcome the prospect. But as yet another example of my supreme imbecility, I would now give anything not to go."

"I am afraid there is only beer. What did you say? Of course you don't want to go. You don't want to do anything but beat your head against the nearest wall." He poured out the beer, watching it thoughtfully. "You must get married next time. Choose a virgin of sound stock. Don't glare at me like a snake. You must breed, my boy, breed. We all must. I shall have to breed soon," he added wistfully. "If I could only find somebody to do it from. There is Gage, of course. But it's most unlikely, even if she would, that she could. Never mind. Feeling low?"

"A little. I think I ought to drink something more radio-active than beer. Let's go and find it."

"If you'll pay for it," said Broughton.

It was not yet six o'clock and the ragged golden daylight belonged to autumn. In the shop window under Broughton's flat there were the flowers of autumn; white sheep-dog chrysanthemum, tight bunches of aster; gladioli and dahlia; tall dark leaves in the background; below the flowers, red apples and yellow pears. There was a smell of autumn; smoke, petrol and blown dust. The wind was rising. Philip thought that Royal Avenue, with its sad, dramatic trees, might have led not to the river but to the sea.

"Look around," he said to himself in the shop. "Get interested. Think about the thing that you are doing." He made this effort every day. Now he stared at the bottles on their shelves, the biscuit-mosaic in the open tins, the chocolate slabs, the boxes of dates. He considered mauve soap and green candles. He watched the machine cutting bacon. It was a careful exercise of the mind, requiring concentration.

"If I were a strong-minded person," he said, "I should never drink when I was unhappy."

"I can easily drink the lot," Broughton assured him.

They had spent every evening together since Philip's return from Yorkshire. Ralph was now so substantial a part of this imprisonment that it might never be possible to be happy with him again. He belonged here, where the air was as thick as a wall and the sensation of deep burial persisted. Yet for comfort he was no nearer than the stranger in the street. All the people who were not Philip Meyer were strangers. Philip Meyer alone knew the meaning of slow time, of grey colour, of solitude.

"Where do you want to dine?" He had known that Ralph would ask the question at exactly this minute.

"Café Royal?" Philip said, making the question casual. He thought that Ralph remained undeceived.

"If you like."

"No reason," said Philip, "why she should be there."

"None whatever."

Past the potted palms and the bookstall, into the noisy heat, the illusion of company; through the scrimmage round the marble-topped tables to the neater ranks beyond. There would be a future from which to look back upon this moment. As well to see it clearly; to glance about him bravely as though he noted the positions of the fieldsmen on his way to the wicket. Ralph said: "She isn't here."

The white table-cloth; the menu; the settling into a mould of patience. Now there began the game of watching the two doors; of looking upward to the balcony. He watched a girl wearing a red cap; the red cap shifted above the balcony rail. The people round the tables up there were hidden, so many of them, that it was idle to peer and search. She would not come. The band played the "Londonderry Air."

"Aren't you going to drink anything?"

"No."

"Just water?"

"Just water."

"Listen," said Ralph, "I don't want to be tough. I know that you would willingly change places with any corpse underground at Kensal Green. But there are some things which one doesn't do; even in the pangs of departed love. For example, drinking water."

Tune and time and place would soon be gone. There was no need to value any one of them. There was no need to cherish the small hope of seeing her; the absurd hope that could be defeated with easy logic asking: "And then what?" ("And then nothing. Only I should feel better if I saw her; this exile from her is ignominious; as though she and not I had ruled it. I want her to become aware of me because I cannot bear the thought that she is forgetting me with Harrison. I want her to remember me until she dies.")

"You must drink something, Philip. I insist."

"Oh lord," he said, reaching wearily for the card. He laid it down again at once.

"There they are, now," he said. He heard the rapt note in his own voice. He had not known that his ribs would ache suddenly with the plunge of his heart. This was like covering the right number at roulette; a second of inspired disbelief wherein he remembered the chances that had been ranged against him. He blinked and opened his eyes again. Quite correct. There they were.

He watched them. Victoria walked ahead, hatless; he knew the black frock with the scarlet thread woven into it; that had never been a favourite frock of his. She was turning to speak to Harrison. He saw the tooth-paste smile. Harrison was drunk. So much the better. (For what?) Her hair was colourless in this loud light.

He leaned forward, chin on hand. He felt as ugly and attentive as a gargoyle. The "Londonderry Air" was too sweet a tune for this moment. They were walking to it; coming nearer; passing between the tables. They should have walked to a grimmer tune because they were on their way to Philip Meyer.

"Don't glaze upon them like that," Ralph said.

As though, Philip thought superstitiously, his voice snapped the string that was drawing them nearer, they halted and seated themselves two tables off. The tune ended. Victoria picked up the menu. Even when another tune began he would hear their voices.

"I think," said Philip, "that I will just go and say good evening."

"You finish your dinner first."

"No."

He felt his nostrils twitch absurdly. He could not draw a deep breath.

"It's nine o'clock," Broughton's voice sounded heavily in his ears, "and I'm hungry."

"You begin. I shan't be a minute."

His knees shook when he stood; they shook as he walked the three steps; then his creaking voice spoke for him.

"Good evening, Victoria. Good evening, Harrison."

It was not comfortable to see the little colour in her face washed away all at once. He thought: "I wonder if I am as pale as that." She did not speak; he saw her hand violently agitated as she lifted the cigarette to her lips. He looked from her to Harrison who gazed at him under drooping lids, sleepy and unprepared. He leaned with his hands on their table.

"How are you?" asked the creaking voice.

Harrison held up the menu and spoke over the edge of it. "Fine, thanks. What are you going to eat, Victoria?"

Harrison knew now. Victoria had told him. Otherwise he would not be embarrassed. All that was required of Philip Meyer was one brilliant, biting phrase. The words were absent. He had not enough breath for them. He remembered nothing more at all until he was back at the table with Ralph. The sawing of the violins woke him.

"Much good that did you," Ralph was saying. "Now settle down and eat your good fish. A lot of little starving children would be very glad of it."

"What," said Philip, "are we going to drink?"

"That's better."

That was better. Gulping thin red wine and watching the grey sleeve, the bulking shoulder; behind these, the black frock with the scarlet thread.

"I'll show you. You thought that you got rid of me then. I'll show you. If this is the last time I ever see you, I'll make you remember it. You flatter me when you sit there eating and drinking within a yard of me; you flatter me because you have not decided to go. You can't take my presence seriously. It is 'inconvenient,' 'an awkward encounter.' But you stay here just the same. And when I speak to you, you say nothing. It is so old, so obvious a situation. Better for us to be silent and gentlemanly. Least said, soonest mended. But you flatter me, because I do not know how to behave like a gentleman. I'll show you."

This for Harrison, not for Victoria. Now, Victoria might not be on in this scene at all. She was the past. He did not love nor hate her. His emotion aimed no farther than Harrison; the large, stupid protector.

"And after a time," Broughton was saying, "one's natural, animal dignity of loneliness reasserts itself. These periods of coupling assume their right proportion."

"I agree."

"You agree."

"What are they playing?"

" 'Les Millions d'Arléquin.' "

"Brandy, Ralph?"

"No. Nor for you. We'll finish the wine with the coffee."

Grey sleeve; black stuff with a scarlet thread. "Give me the words," he prayed, "to say one unforgivable thing. On the way out. I won't stop. I'll say it over my shoulder and walk on."

He had not thought that they would leave so soon. Suddenly there was Harrison standing with indulgence while Victoria attended to her face. Harrison did not look in Philip's direction. When Victoria rose she also kept her head turned; the bulky grey sleeve stretched out behind her with the shepherding gesture. They were walking away.

"Get the bill, Ralph."

"Sit down, you ass."

He went after them, treading lightly, hovering at their backs. Still he had no words. They halted. Victoria stooped towards one of the marble-topped tables. The boy who sat there looked up. Philip observed his tumbled hair, the sweater that he wore. The boy said: "Hullo, Victoria. Hullo, John. Nice to see you."

"Good evening," Harrison said, swaying by the table. Philip was at Harrison's elbow. If he put out his hand he could touch Victoria. He could smell her scent through the tobacco smoke. A scent played unfair tricks on memory; like a tune. He waited.

"Going home?" the boy asked.

"Yes." Victoria's voice was light and kindly. "I am tired."

"Tired of this mob," Harrison interrupted. "The Café Royal appears to be turning into a ghetto." He laughed loudly.

Philip said: "As a member of the ghetto I should like to thank you for that."

Harrison turned. "Not at all," he said elaborately. "Not at all. Oh, it's you, is it?" Victoria said "Good-bye" hurriedly to the boy. Philip did not look at her. "Will you perhaps," he murmured to Harrison's chin, "avoid saying that kind of remark in that kind of voice? Jews," he added, "are on the whole fortunate in being favoured with soft voices. But people like you must be more careful."

The nearest faces at the tables were turned in his direction. He saw them beyond Harrison's shoulder, a string of silly faces.

"If it gives you pleasure to listen to my conversation," Harrison began. Philip barred his way. He could see Ralph hurrying towards him and he remembered Ralph saying: "Me, I like a fight." All the same he was frightened. He went on being frightened until his hand met Harrison's cheek; the cheek felt rough and the slap stung his palm. The tooth-paste smile departed abruptly. The boy in the sweater was on his feet, leaning forward between them. Now all the faces were turned this way. It seemed a very long time, with the sound of the slap echoing and the interrupted view of Harrison's eyes; red, sleepy eyes.

"Get out," said Harrison. "Go on, Meyer. Get out."

"You too," Philip said. "You mustn't keep our mistress waiting."

He saw Ralph's head bob up beside Harrison's shoulder. Somebody caught his arm and he struggled as Harrison struggled against Ralph. The band was playing loudly and he thought that the movement of all these people went with the music; the waiters and himself and Ralph and Harrison. He saw Ralph stagger sideways; Harrison standing alone. He

could not get at Harrison; arms were all over him, pulling him down. He heard a voice saying: “Get him outside,” when the tooth-paste smile flashed suddenly close to him and the grey sleeve rose. This was the last thing that Philip remembered.

BOOK IV

"*I Hope You Care To Live*"

May, 1936 to September, 1937

CHAPTER ONE

I

"I KNOW that to be born a Jew is to be damned. I am not crying against fate. I would not if I could. I have the honesty to admit, where others dare not, that no single man in this world could say now with absolute truth: 'I am glad to be a Jew.'"

The man who was reading said: "You must read the next paragraphs for yourself, I am afraid. I couldn't read them aloud."

The woman took the paper from him. "No," she said after a moment, "I can't. I don't want to see any more."

"I will bowdlerise it where I can. I want you to hear as much as you can stand."

"*Observe the endurance of that profile; of every racial characteristic; down the centuries to the present day. And remember that this is a race without a country, living scattered, with no uniformity of climate or conditions to influence it physically. Dilute the blood with Christian blood and still the child of one Jewish parent is unquestionably a Jew . . .*"

"The rest isn't possible," he turned the page. "Here again:—"

"*The Jew, all through history, has been a spiritual dynamiter. Voicing the eternal 'No,' he is met at last with 'Yes.' The German Judenrein was the beginning of the end. His hour struck with it. By the centuries' sheer accumulation of hatred he is driven to the wall.*

"*I am typical of my race. I resent our doom but I cannot fight against it. The persecutions which I myself have endured taught me one lesson; that I deserved them.*

"*We were all damned.*"

"But who has *done* this to him?" the woman asked. "Who has made him feel like this?"

"The world, perhaps."

"But——"

"Listen:

> "*We suffer; we die. But when I see our hands raised to heaven for pity, I see the palms turn outward and sink until the plea is only the deprecating shrug of the Jew, caricatured along the ages. From Shylock to the music-hall comedian, you know that gesture. It must be the last thing that you will remember of us. We go down to our damnation with a sneer.*"

The man who had been reading aloud folded the thin sheets with elaborate care. He kept his head lowered. The woman watching him thought that he might be about to weep. She had heard his voice shaking on the last words.

"But *why*?" she began to ask, and then interrupted herself. "Where did you get that piece of atrocity? Did he send it to you?"

Ralph Broughton raised his head. It was, she thought, a good head. The broad brow and the thinking eyes pleased her. He was fair-haired and solid. She had hated him for his point of view. Now she knew that she met an honest man and this discomfited her. He sat looking at her silently. He might not have heard her question.

She thought that his dignity was backed by the pompous Edwardian room which he had chosen for their meeting-place; the only room in his club where women were allowed to come. The rainy gloom from the street penetrated here. She saw the marble mantelpiece, the heavy green curtains, the high ceiling, in a fog.

"When did you get it?" Jennifer repeated sharply.

"I am sorry." He shook himself awake. "It made me feel ill suddenly. Philip Meyer offered it for publication to a newspaper: the editor showed it to me as a curiosity. I recognised the name. I've been seeing the name about recently and wondering whether that were the Philip Meyer I used to know. This last lunacy shocked me so much that I went to find him."

"Did you find him?"

"Yes. Living in one room with a typewriter. He threw me out. Called me a bloody Nazi."

"Is he mad?"

"I don't think he is entirely mad," said Broughton. "He looks normal enough. And he talked normally for the few minutes that I spent with him.

He has been travelling abroad for years."

"He was German by birth, wasn't he? Did he get beaten up in Germany?"

"No. He never went back."

"What are the persecutions he talks of?"

"God knows."

Jennifer said: "I haven't set eyes on him for at least five years. Not since 1931."

"Before the age of fear began," said Broughton, grimacing.

"You——" she began violently, then stopped.

"All right." His voice was gentle. "I support the cause that breeds fear. That was what you were going to say, wasn't it, Mrs. Flood?"

"Yes, Mr. Broughton: it was."

He caressed his stubborn chin. "Maybe," he said. "The cruelty and horror of that thing go a long way to convince me that there is a world-sickness and that we can all be infected. You, too."

She did not want to talk about herself. She said quickly: "Oh, let us leave it for the moment. What is Philip Meyer doing, besides abusing his own race on paper?"

Broughton swept a hand upwards and disordered his hair. "I don't know whether you met Sally Arthur; she was a distant cousin of his and his greatest friend."

"I heard him speak of her."

"Sally married a man in the Air Force. Philip now loathes her. He says that she and her husband are 'natural Fascists'—one of his pet denominations. He went down to stay with them and made himself a considerable nuisance. Sally is very unhappy about him, but her husband won't have him in the house again. I wrote to Sally after I had seen him. She says she can do nothing to help. He will talk nothing but Right and Left and appears to hate both sides equally. He has a few other relatives over here. Rich Jewish family called Davies. He offended them by preaching anti-Semitic doctrines. He has got an obsession about perverts which he somehow mixes into the political argument; I've seen an essay he wrote on the subject. Nobody would touch it. Remember he has only been back in England for a few months; most of his stuff he sent over from Vienna. I think," said Broughton, "that he runs a very fair chance of being arrested shortly."

"What made you send for me?"

His eyes met hers readily. “Because I thought that you would have more success with him than I did. I was his friend. He has forgotten that. He can only see what is in fact the truth: that I have politics where I once had none. That my work shows the effect of my beliefs. But you——”

“Go on,” said Jennifer.

“He spoke of you. He said that you were the first person who showed him that the world entire would have to split into two halves; Left and Right. You were the first Communist he ever met. He won’t imagine that you have turned against him; as he thinks that Sally and I have done. He may listen to sense from you——”

“What do you suggest that I should say to him?”

“Show him that he is wrong. That there is still such a thing as liberty of thought. That the world is made up of men and women; not of races. That there is no such thing as anti-Semitism in the mind of the average person.”

“You say very definitely that his convictions are wrong; that he is afflicted with a mania. Where do you suppose the blame lies?”

Broughton lowered his head again, thrusting at the air like a bull; he spread his fingers on the edge of the table and slowly drew them together until the fists were clenched.

“On us,” he said. “On history. On the world that killed Christ. On the devil. The devil who is no stranger. The devil who is a part of ourselves.”

“And you still play with Right politics,” she said.

“And you with Left. We shall find the same two sides in hell, I imagine.”

She rose, feeling as always at a disadvantage when standing because her small size must become more apparent. “I must go now. I will see him. I promise you that.” She held out her hand. “And I take it very gratefully that you should have invited my opinion. It couldn’t have been easy for you.”

He took her hand. “You know, you do me an injustice,” he said. “I only subscribe to Right politics because I believe in Church and State and Monarchy. I respect the old order. I think that there is ultimate freedom in it. But I’m no more a Nazi than I am a Latter Day Saint. Anti-Communist, yes. I cannot see society benefiting by a uniform reduction-scale. I admire the middle-classes. But above all, I believe in God. I abominate a system that does away with the spiritual life. That’s my King Charles’s Head.”

“The anti-God régime isn’t the basis of all Communism.”

“Isn’t it? Wasn’t that where Marx and the Neo-Hegelians began?”

“Marx is hardly the handbook for conditions in the year 1936.”

They were halted in their farewell. While Broughton lit his pipe and planted himself for further argument she thought that this rule of modern life was obeyed everywhere; the pause on one foot to talk amateur politics. Time and place were of no account. The persons involved were unimportant. Only the words mattered. Skeleton dialogue; the stages of it well tried, the tricks of it overheard and half-digested. Currency flung down by two strangers who might never know more of each other than the ability to pay out this worn coin.

She knew little of Broughton. He had written plays and novels; he had lately published his Essays on England with their obvious bias. The man whom she had met this afternoon was still largely hidden.

He must know little of her. When he said: "The party for which you work," she felt the sense of guilt. This was with her often now, for the cause that she had abandoned. Broughton could not know that she had abandoned it. He was confusing the wealthy and middle-aged Jennifer Flood with the young Jennifer Nash, Fabian, Suffragette, Socialist, more than twenty years ago. She would have no chance to enlighten him. They had erected the screen of bare words between them. Each was to the other a fighter on the enemy's side. From the arid dialogue they would retain no memory of any ideas beyond it.

One idea, perhaps. An uncomfortable idea. Being an atheist she shied at the words "God" and "Devil." Broughton's scrap of rhetoric stayed with her, embarrassing as a public confession. She glanced at him while he lumbered down the stairs beside her; he looked unlike a subscriber to religious creeds. A broadly built young man in a hairy suit. *The devil who is part of ourselves*; no new argument; a trite and astonishing reflection for the author of *Essays on England*.

She tried to remember whether Philip Meyer had ever spoken to her of him. Her memories of Philip Meyer were still sharp. He had been a lonely young man with a job in British Films; a friend of her son Lawrence. The thought of him would be always touched with pain; for the time when he had brought her evil news; an innocent messenger. She shut her mind to the memory.

"You must give me his address," she said to Broughton.

"Thirty-one, Belgrave Road."

She said: "I will go to-morrow."

Telling the chauffeur not to wait, she left the car at the corner of Ebury Street and walked down towards Eccleston Bridge. It was a fine afternoon; there were thin plumes of cloud on the sky; a small wind; she felt the sense of adventure that never failed her when she was alone. She was seldom alone. She saw herself reflected in the little shop windows before she came to the bridge; she had dressed in a plain dark suit and she thought that she looked like a hurrying beetle. She had no illusions about her size; she admired her own face and head; the carriage of the head particularly; it was a classic head and the features of her face kept something of their former impatient loveliness. She had been a beauty. She had been Jennifer Nash; the red-haired, intrepid young woman who cried freedom to the political skies.

She crossed the bridge; the straggle of persons waiting at the Green Line Station stared at her. Beyond the bridge Eccleston Square was empty; the trees in bright leaf at war with the dull respectable façades.

Thirty-one Belgrave Road presented a black front door, thick lace curtains at the windows; a neat lodging-house, not depressing in this sunshine. She waited a long time. She rang again. The small servant who opened the door at last looked at her triumphantly: "I *thought* I heard the bell. Who do you want, please?"

"Mr. Philip Meyer."

"That's number twelve at the top."

"Is he in?"

"I couldn't say."

She stood aside. Jennifer, coming from the world where servants preceded and announced visitors, waited in the hall. The girl retreated, then looked back over her shoulder.

"Shall I go up?" Jennifer asked.

"Lord, yes," said the girl, and disappeared. The stairs were steep. Jennifer was obliged to halt at intervals, her hand pressed to her heart. The noise of a typewriter came down to her. She hauled herself by the banisters and arrived on the top landing. She knocked. The noise of the typewriter ceased. He was listening inside. She thought that she was foolish to be afraid. The thought of a maniac typing on a hot afternoon in a Pimlico lodging-house was horribly absurd. She wanted to giggle. She knocked a second time.

Hurried footsteps came to the door.

"Is that you, Florrie?" She remembered his voice, the deep soft voice, pleasant to the ear. She was reassured.

"It is I, but it can hardly be said to be Florrie," she retorted shrilly. She heard him unlock the door. He plucked it open and stood staring at her.

She had begun to forget him. Now she remembered his beauty; the violent, dazzling face with the black hair and the jutted forehead, the large dark eyes; the teeth that were as exaggeratedly regular and white as the teeth pictured in an advertisement poster. There was a scar like a fold on his right temple, that gave one eyebrow a twist. She did not remember the scar. She saw him recognising her. He held out both hands.

"Jennifer, how lovely!" By the time he had drawn her into the room his delight was gone; he looked cold and suspicious. "You haven't been sent here, have you?" he asked, standing as though he were prepared to say good-bye immediately.

"Sent? What nonsense. I came because I wanted to see you. You have been lost for such a long time." The room was small; a dull bed-sitting-room; the divan covered and disguised with a roller-cushion; a table pushed under the window held the machine and the disorder of typed sheets.

"Promise?" he asked childishly.

"Promise."

He said: "People have been turning up lately on missions. I do not require missions. Sit down on the divan; it is the only comfortable thing." He pulled the stiff chair away from his work table and sat in it, stooping forward with his elbows on his knees. He waited, watching her.

"I expect it is a mission," he said.

"No. I wanted to hear what you are doing: do you realise that it is five years since we met? Lawrence is in his second year at Oxford; he is quite an amiable young man now; less earnest than he used to be. He often asks me why you have vanished." She knew that she was indulging the process known as "rattling on." The steady, gentle stare discomfited her.

"You have changed," he said.

"I? How?"

He shook his head and became silent. He smiled at her suddenly. "I am afraid I can't offer you tea. Or even a cigarette. I have had to stop smoking."

"Are you ill?"

"No. Broke," he said.

"Haven't you a job now?"

"No. I had plenty of work abroad; but there isn't very much for me here." He jerked his decorative head toward the typewriter. "I try to teach the world to look at its own ugly face: without success. I've had a good run for Aunt Frieda's money, though. She left me a thousand pounds three years ago. It went. The last of it was ripped out of my pocket in a street fight in Paris."

"I expect I can find you a job, Philip."

"What sort of a job?"

"What do you want?"

"Soon I shall want anything I can get," he said. "Principles breaking down." He wiped his forehead.

"Haven't you any money at all?"

"None. I haven't paid my bill here for three weeks. They don't like that. They'll keep the typewriter," he added reflectively.

"Let me help you."

"No."

"But what will you do?"

"Wait," he said. "That's my only talent. My race has had the habit of waiting for two thousand years. That's why we always stand by the graves of our persecutors. Damn us to hell!"

Behind his sudden fury, denied by the angry mask of his face, she saw the eyes plead as though they were the eyes of another person. She put her hand on his shoulder; she said very gently, relying more upon the caress of her hand than upon her words:

"What have they been doing to you?"

III

Their walk set its definite boundaries, from the black front door to the right-hand corner of the square; round the four sides of the square and back again. They turned automatically. She wondered how many times they had covered the distance. There was the steady rhythm of their footsteps, the sunshine, his quiet, bitter voice. She could only listen.

He said: "I have been persecuted since I was a child. At school. At Oxford. At work. It was no more than my due, the world being what it is. There is nothing new in the story."

He said: "In my work. They all hated me. Lowenstal got me sent abroad because of Victoria. Broughton and that messy creature Gage stole my job.

They were typical then, but I hadn't learned the name of the type. He religious and she a pervert—the Right incarnate. Sterile as hell; ready for State discipline to make their emotions for them. Bullies because adolescents. God or a Dictator, either arch-bully was good enough for them."

He said: "And in love. That silly Aryan slut thought that she could make a fool of me. She and her fat blond lover. Laughing their heads off. They got the laugh all right when he beat me up. Easy to beat up the Jews. Best joke in the world."

He said: "Ronald Arthur came to beat me up too; but he hadn't the guts. He seduced Sally and killed her child, and he is the salt of the English earth because he was born to a public school education."

He said: "And still I know why that sort of swine is better than I am. I have only to look at Cousin Michael Davies; he took it out of me. He's a louse, but he always has a last sneer up his sleeve; the money-sneer. 'Do what you like; I've got more than you.' No wonder they loathe us."

He said: "And you were the first pointer to show me which way the world leaned. But I didn't believe you. I thought you were playing a game. Your Left stuff. Your Russian paradise. Your imaginary 'workers.' You and Lawrence got the infection early. I didn't guess when I met you that soon there would be no more men and women in the world. Only Left and Right. Puppets in different coloured shirts. Broughton talked sense when he called us germ-carriers. The semi-intellectual middle-classes. We spread the germ handsomely."

He said: "When war comes I shall blow my brains out. That is the only thing to do when you can see both sides. There are two sides to my head; that's why it aches."

He said: "Everyone whom I have ever known has hated me. I am not blaming them. I am only sorry that I was born with the taint at this moment when there is no escape."

IV

There was no problem here that she could solve. She might have been faced with a crossword puzzle from which all the clues had been omitted. He was walking more slowly now. The sharp light showed her the thinness of his cheek. She could see that he was starving himself and that he would take idiotic pleasure in this, in refusing help.

The quiet square with its showering green leaves had become a foreign place; the corner of a dead city. He survived in it because he was possessed by his past. His incomprehensible jig-saw of words defied her. She did not know whether the random accusations were true or whether they came from the disorder in his mind. She wondered who had planted the seeds of pain. She had known pain. And that was over. Over too long ago to hurt her any more.

She was luckier than he. The pain that was old hurt him still. He had translated his sufferings into a world allegory. He saw his own sickness reflected on the face of all things.

They had reached the black door again. This time he did not turn. He held out his hand. He said: "Good-bye, Jennifer."

"I am not leaving you, my dear."

"You must."

"Why?"

"Because I choose to be alone."

"Oh no, you don't, Philip. It is very difficult to choose to be alone. If you had chosen it you would have refused the world."

"Forty days in the desert?" he asked lightly.

"Perhaps."

He looked at the pavement. He muttered: "Refusing the world. The soul's last unshakable argument."

"But you are not doing that. You are preoccupied with the world; what was it you said? 'Trying to teach it to see its own ugly face.'"

"So?"

"So I think you might do that just as easily elsewhere. At my house, for example. The disadvantages of wealth might interest you. In case you had forgotten, we are very rich. My husband is quite dull 'with it,' as they say."

She had not expected him to laugh. When he laughed she knew that he would come. She thought: "He is young still. He can be cured. If only one could know what happened to him."

It was possible that nothing of importance had happened. It was possible that his memory juggled with true ordinary facts, building from them this pyramid of doom.

CHAPTER TWO

I

IN the house, he reminded her of a cat. He moved as though he were feeling his way. At times he was so quiet that she would forget him; looking up suddenly to observe his decorative presence and guess at his thoughts. He went out alone; he reappeared without telling her where he had been. His manner remained polite and subdued. Simon approved of him.

Something that reminded her of Lawrence returned to her with him; a spirit gentle and solitary. She wondered how much he was holding himself in check. He let no trace of his mental illness appear during these first days. His careful speech might have been that of a foreigner.

She had become used to a comfortable privacy in her life with Simon. Because the whole territory of her mind had never been within his slow grasp, she kept secrets from him easily. She was glad of this now. The time was accompanied by the bird-song and the green leaves beneath her window. There was the long daylight; the nostalgia of all early summer; in a striped sun-blind or a barrow heaped with strawberries. She clung closely to the mood of June. Illogical happiness, the stirring in the blood invited her to examine her heart and she put off the examination from day to day; as though it were a bill that must be sent in presently with a more urgent demand.

She looked in the glass. Her hair was carefully encouraged to preserve its colour. The modelling of the face kept its strong lines. During the last years she had learned the dressing-table tricks so thoroughly that they became a routine; massaging with the finger-tips, mixing the creams, powdering the creamed skin until the mask was level, painting her mouth smoothly; the tricks which leisured women did not forget.

She bought her clothes intelligently, letting the woman who designed them judge the lines and colours best suited to her shape. She paid the alarming prices with a nod of reassurance towards Jennifer Nash, who lived in Oxford, fought to reform the world and made one frock last two years. When she confronted her past self frankly, she had the sensation that this sophisticated middle-age was a disguise, that soon she would throw it all off, to begin again in youth armed with Karl Marx and resolution.

She could not confront her past self in the looking-glass. She studied the reflection, applied the aids, pondered upon the result, with an aim that was obvious. Philip was in the house, and Philip was a handsome creature.

The thought of the physical relation was always less embarrassing to Jennifer than the thought of love. She had called herself "a crude animal" for years. Since her second marriage, she had gone into her adventures with as determinedly masculine an outlook as possible. Love was mere surrender. She dreaded it and scorned it. The physical relation, sanctioned by all her doctrines, was a necessity. Entering upon it without scruple, emerging unhurt, she would avenge the young, tormented self who had been betrayed by love.

It was true that Philip excited her physical curiosity. She watched his hands, the movement of his head, the attitudes of the narrow body. She thought of him intimately. She went into his room when he was not there; removing the cap from the bottle of brilliantine and sniffing its musky scent; standing still to study the neatness that was foreign to her; kicking one morocco slipper out of line and pushing it back; fingering the raised monogram on the brushes.

She had spied upon Lawrence in this room, reading his childish letters and diaries. She found no letters belonging to Philip, or she would have read them; and would have told herself that this was necessary to understand his state of mind. In the top drawer of the dressing-table, between the two square piles of handkerchiefs, linen and silk, she found a crucifix; a black wood cross with an ivory figure. She would have liked to know why he kept the crucifix. It was irritating that she could not ask him. It was irritating that he locked the drawer in the desk where he stored his papers. He would type for hours; she never saw the results. A fortnight gave her little opportunity to learn more of him.

II

She observed at breakfast that he was sullen as a cloud. The morning's post brought him letters which he thrust unopened into his pocket. Jennifer had studied the envelopes before he came into the dining-room; they were readdressed from Belgrave Road; two long envelopes bearing printed names on the flap; she knew the names. They identified similar magazines, Left and literary in character. She could guess that they held returned manuscripts. The third letter came from Germany.

He ate no breakfast; he drank a cup of coffee and hid himself behind the newspaper as soon as Simon left the dining-room. She stayed, watching his

finger-tips that dinted the sides of the newspaper. A curl of cigarette smoke, transparent in the sunshine, rose above his head. Beyond the window she saw the cloak of the green leaves in the square; their flecked light and shadow.

"Philip," she said softly.

He lowered the paper. His face was fragile, smudged under the eyes. She forgot her intended question to ask: "Didn't you sleep?"

"At intervals. I was working late. Have you read this article about Austria?"

"No," said Jennifer, allowing her voice to become peevish. "I haven't had a chance. No," as he handed her the paper: "I want to talk to you."

He folded the paper and removed the cigarette from his mouth.

"It is just fifteen days since you came here."

"I realise that. Do you want me to go?"

"Idiot. As far as I am concerned, you can stay here for ever." She looked at him steadily until he lowered his eyes. "Stay as long as you like. I persuaded you to come here because I wanted to help you. But you tell me nothing."

"Only because there is nothing to tell."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing whatever, dear Jennifer. I am writing. And earning a very few guineas in other directions."

"What directions?"

He smiled. "You might be embarrassed if I told you."

"Never mind." She drank the cold dregs from her coffee-cup quickly. "Go on," she said, surprised at the sharpness of her voice.

"I go to a photographic agency and pose for advertisements," he said. "Collars and ties. Full-face, my nose doesn't worry them. Why are you looking relieved, Jennifer?"

"Was I? I was wondering what made you decide to do that."

"Money. I can't come to you for every penny."

"You can."

"No."

She pushed the cigarette-box nearer to his hand. She was afraid that he would make his excuses suddenly, rise and go, according to his habit. He took another cigarette.

"Are you trying to get a job or not?" She remembered guiltily that she had promised to find him work, that she put off the effort from day to day. With a regular job, he might leave the house.

"I am trying," he said. "There doesn't seem to be much doing in the film trade."

"Is that what you want to do most?"

"It is the thing I can do; and where Jewish blood isn't a disadvantage. I made a good picture in Vienna," he said, "at a cost of about fifty pounds. Did I tell you that I was there when they murdered Dolfüss?"

She headed him back. "Are you happier?"

"I am not unhappy. I want to get my book done."

"I didn't know that you were writing a book. What is it?"

"A study of Anti-Semitism. But I should think that by the time it is finished there will be no more need for it; and nobody to publish it either."

"What nonsense," said Jennifer.

"It is coming," he said. "How can you doubt it? Communism or Nazism. In either case they won't want my book."

"You cannot seriously think that it will come here so soon."

"Here. And everywhere else." He appeared to wait for further contradiction. She watched the light on his chair.

"Which reminds me," he said at last, "I might as well see what my brother has to say." He put his hand in his pocket. She saw the letter with the German stamp.

"Your *brother*?" she snapped.

"My brother Joseph."

"But I thought that you had no relatives living."

"He is the last," Philip answered casually, reading from the German script.

"But he is still there? In Berlin?"

"No. Hamburg."

"Is life tolerable for him?"

Philip grunted. She let him finish reading the letter. He said: "That doesn't tell one much. They've cut a bit out at the end." He held the page to the light. "Can't get any of it. They are very thorough."

"But can he stand being there? Why does he stay?"

"They don't do him much harm. They can't. He was decorated in the war; he lost his leg. He is years older than I am. He has lived there all his

life, remember."

"But——"

"But what, Jennifer?"

"Surely——" she began. His eyes were mutinous; he thrust out his lower lip. She said: "His friends; his liberty; everything must have gone. Why do you leave him there?"

"I have no choice."

"How long since you saw him?"

"Ten years. More. The moment the Terror started, he wrote telling me to keep away."

"And you kept away."

"What could he do if I brought him over here? He has the tiny income my aunt left him; nothing else. He would have to leave it there. He is in no danger. They search his house occasionally; and watch him. That's all. He says that he is getting used to it."

"Philip, I could probably arrange with the Refugee Committee to bring him in."

"What's the point? He is quite unfit for any work."

She said: "I don't understand you."

"Why not?"

"One would think that you didn't care for him at all."

She saw his face turning paler; the lips tightly pressed together; his hand trembled.

"He is your brother."

"Oh, for God's sake be quiet!" he shouted suddenly. He pushed back his chair. "Do you think I don't *know*?" he flung at her before he slammed the door.

She sat, looking after him. For the first time she thought him contemptible and was surprised that she should want him none the less.

III

They had left him alone for two week-ends, and it was Simon's suggestion that he should come down to the cottage. Simon had the habit of calling it "the cottage"; a deprecation which Jennifer found irritating.

The house stood on the crest of a hill in Buckinghamshire. It was a farm-house rebuilt. Its own long stretches of grassland spread away beyond the

foot of the garden. There were roses and clipped yew-hedges; a hard tennis-court; a rhododendron bush like a great scarlet parasol at one angle of the grey stone. Inside the house they had added four baths and knocked the two ground-floor rooms into one long room, whose fourth wall was entirely plate-glass. Incongruous and comfortable, the place served them for week-ends. Jennifer had urged Simon to buy it because it was not too far for Lawrence to come from Oxford. He came only occasionally. Perhaps his threatened presence at this particular week-end drove Simon to suggest inviting Philip. Simon might, she felt, say something about "the young 'uns" if she did not interrupt him. So she said hurriedly: "I will ask him. He may not care to come."

She was happy to have him there. On Friday evening, changing for dinner, she thought that any country house at the week-end encouraged the shape of drama. The week-end was hackneyed in its divisions on the London stage. Act One. Friday evening. Act Two. Saturday Night. Act Three. The Following Morning. She welcomed Act One.

The scents of summer came up to her window from the garden. She would have leaned upon the sill if her self-consciousness had not forbidden her. She knew that the quiet here was sudden only because it contrasted with the London noises. Still it gave her the waiting sense. When she went down to the long room and saw Philip with Simon beside the window, she tricked her mind into the belief that this was, in fact, a triangular situation. Simon barked, " 'Lo, Jenny"; Philip, glass in hand, smiled at her faintly, as though it were she who compelled him to hide his thoughts. She drank the glass of sherry standing between them. They looked towards the dusk that took the colour from the farther hills. She was conscious of Philip brooding at her side. A man drove a herd of cows across the grassland. A bat skied past the window. "England," Philip said, with a sneer. "Twilight of a tradition." He lifted his glass as though he drank to it.

Lawrence arrived after dinner, heralded by his car's loud sputtering noises on the hill. The curtains were undrawn; they could see the car climbing the last gradient of the drive to disappear and become quiet. Jennifer said: "Would you turn off the radio now, Philip?" He went obediently to the cabinet, so that he was still stooping when Lawrence entered.

Always now she braced herself for the sight of Lawrence; the shrugging movement of mind and body had grown automatic with the years. When he was absent she could think of him resignedly. In that wise state, he represented the fulcrum for her lost energies; the stimulus withdrawn. Had

he stayed, she would still be fighting for the impossible revolution; the Marx Millennium.

Communion with his youth had once deluded her, might have continued to delude her, that she had work in the world. From the first pain of her betrayal she had retreated within the padded walls that Simon's money could provide. Afterwards she had headed purposely for laziness; for the life of a wealthy, idle woman. She was established there. Lawrence alone had made the transformation possible. So the thoughts ran; when he was away from her.

Now she could neither judge nor blame him; she could only summon and hoard all the resources of her soul lest the sight of him should recall pain.

The process was absurd; it might have involved an actual squint; an exaggerated holding of the breath. Simon, snapping, "'Lo, Lawrence," Philip straightening beside the wireless set, could know nothing of it. They did not see her persecutor.

She supposed that they saw Lawrence merely as a tall, thin young man with fair hair; a little more chilly and detached in his appearance, perhaps, than the usual young man at Oxford. They could not see that he looked like George; he had George's baby forehead and old eyes. They could not recognise the inherited mixture of childishness and elegance in his movements. This was something that she could neither analyse nor describe. George had been to her as cruel and transparent as a child. His physical neatness matched the mental peculiarity; he was small, detached, alien, even in bed.

Lawrence, bending politely to kiss her, brought back the memory. When he greeted Philip, she thought: "The first time in five years that I have heard him sound human."

"But it is such a long time," Lawrence was saying. They did not settle to talk; they remained standing, Lawrence overtopped Philip by three inches. She was annoyed when Simon sat down deliberately in the chair opposite hers, grinning towards the two young men. The grin concluded that he and she were out of the picture. She turned away, stretching her neck to hear their words.

IV

There was rain on Saturday. Lawrence and Philip played table-tennis in the barn. Jennifer sat in a wicker chair to watch them. She thought that it

was easier to observe Philip in Lawrence's company than alone; Lawrence gave him a frame and a background. She saw Philip restraining himself when Lawrence laid down his emphatic laws.

Their methods in the trivial game contrasted, Philip playing neatly and steadily, Lawrence asprawl, attempting tremendous smashes, unable to control his body, still contriving to be graceful when he slithered and bumped into the whitewashed walls; he began to be streaked all over with the white.

They talked unceasingly. She did not trouble to wonder whether they would be happier without her. She liked watching them; the result of the yellowish light upon their heads and their bare arms; their differing profiles and their two voices with the little, irritating accompaniment of the celluloid balls. Lawrence clipped every syllable, making Philip's speech sound slower and softer than usual.

Presently they deserted the table because Philip wanted a cigarette. Lawrence dropped into the chair beside her; his shirt was open to the waist and his hair wet. He met her glance unself-consciously, saying: "It is not unlike exercise if you play enough of it," and turning away immediately to ask: "Did you go to Spain, Philip, in your travels?"

"I did."

"I think it is my favourite country so far," said Lawrence.

Philip was flattening the curls of his hair with both hands. "I adored it," he said, "but I found it too uncomfortable. I mind about"—he looked at Jennifer and compromised—"bathrooms." He held out his cigarette-case to Lawrence, who shook his head.

"Don't you smoke at all?"

"No, never."

"You haven't broken that vow yet?" Jennifer asked. "How is the teetotalism going?"

"It continues," said Lawrence.

"And you will observe at lunch," Jennifer said to Philip, "that the lad eats nothing but vegetables. Being entirely modelled on his former object of worship, Mr. Shaw."

Lawrence smiled, the tolerant, adult smile with which George had never failed to exasperate her. He went on talking to Philip. "This year I shall take the car and drive down through France first. Why don't you come with me? My father won't. He says he can't make up his mind whether the car is too old or whether he is. We could have a good time in Spain."

Philip drew on his cigarette; he kept his eyes lowered. “I hardly know where I shall be by then, I am afraid.” His sandalled foot beat a tattoo on the floor. He said: “Why do you like Spain? I should have thought it much too reactionary for your taste.”

Lawrence threw a ping-pong ball at his head. Philip’s eyebrows rose and stayed aloft; his smile became wider; “Well, isn’t it? Beautiful buildings. Quiet. History. Religion. Miles of haphazard, uncultivated country that ought surely to be covered with collective farms. No organisation.”

“I find it difficult to make out just which way you do lean politically,” Lawrence interrupted him. “You have been slaughtering the Tories all the morning. Now you jeer at me.”

Jennifer saw Philip’s chin lift for argument. “I jeer at all of you,” he said, his voice a tone heavier than before—“I jeer at the world.”

“Yet you do not wish to change it?”

“Why should I? It’s smashing itself up quite fast enough.”

“I agree.” That was George’s maddening little bow. “But I hope for some shape to emerge from the smash. Which is what I intend to work for.”

Philip blew a smoke-ring and watched it dissolve before he answered. She saw the trembling of his fingers; his taut attitude beside the barn door. He said: “My dear child, you have my blessing. I have no doubt that you will get a First in Modern Greats and subsequently escape death in the inevitable war by any means that seems good to you. You think that you owe yourself to the future. But the future as such does not concern me. Kindly remember that I am a Jew; my world is being diminished daily and my future with it. I was born a loser. As regards the way that you and the other Christian winners arrange the universe to suit yourselves, I do not care one damn.”

He went out, latching the door carefully behind him.

Lawrence stared after him bewilderedly. “He was pulling our legs, wasn’t he?” The descent from the grown-up conversation to the childish phrase amused Jennifer. She said: “No. He really does feel like that.”

“About being a Jew? It isn’t possible.”

“I can tell you a little more than that.” She was glad to have him attentive and humble; he listened without saying a word. When she finished the story, Lawrence said: “But how could anyone mind being Jewish? I wish to heaven I were.”

“At this moment?”

The boy put his hand to his forehead. “It is all so damnably crazy. It’s a myth; a mania. Everybody knows that the Hitler racial theories are lunatic rubbish. Philip *must* know that. He can’t hate his own people.”

“He appears to.”

“If he does—if any of them do, that’s the wickedest result of the persecution. Worse than the murders.”

He sat silent and rigid. Presently he shook himself. “I won’t believe it. He is perfectly sane.”

“Are you sane? Am I?”

“Of course.”

Jennifer said: “How are we to know?” She looked at him. He was remote from her as always; absorbed with the vision of his half-opened eyes. She said: “Some people might say that you were mad because you refuse to eat meat. That is only showing a difference of behaviour. Philip is showing a certain difference of behaviour when he sees the world entirely in terms of Left and Right.”

“No, no,” he said impatiently, “you are just talking. And if you say that Philip is mad, you give the lie to your own argument. He is behaving too much like too many other people. He is equipped with the views of the extremists on both sides—and of the fools in the middle.”

“Lawrence,” she said, “I wish you needn’t be so pedantic.”

He looked at her reproachfully as he rose to put on his sweater. She thought that his ruffled head emerged and his arms flapped without loss of dignity. “Will you excuse me, please? I am going to find him.”

There appeared to be no quarrel between them. Lawrence had George’s sweet and certain temper. He let Philip deride his lunch to the tune of a forgotten music-hall song.

> “Don’t be cruel
> To a vegetabuel.
> Always take its part.
> If you please
> Don’t split peas.
> Remember that a lettuce has a heart!”

Philip chanted. They went off to walk through the rain. Simon slept. Jennifer sat by the window. She did not know why she should be happy; the mood persisted. By four o’clock the rain was over. The last webs of cloud

dissolved from the face of the sky and the sun shone. She walked in the drenched garden and met them coming from the fields.

"We were thinking that next week-end it might be just as well to bring mackintoshes," Lawrence said.

She began to say: "Come in and change this instant, both of you." The admonition sounded Wendy-ish to her ears. She could not keep her hand from resting on Lawrence's wet sleeve when she asked: "Did you say *next* week-end?"

"Yes. If I may come."

"Do you want to come?"

"Of course," he said, "or I shouldn't suggest it."

CHAPTER THREE

THERE was first the night at the ballet. Simon had a late meeting. Philip returned from one of his unexplained absences in time to change and accompany her. She looked at him as they stood on the steps waiting for the car. The unwelcome word "gigolo" came to her mind.

It might, she thought, have reproached either of them. She wore the heavy necklace of diamonds that had belonged to Simon's mother; the two large rings from the same set were awkward on the fingers of her left hand. The frock was white, falling pleated from the Empire line below the breasts; the coat silver and busily embroidered. She had thought it an optimistic reckoning on the part of the designer and she was not reassured by the result. Philip had said: "That is a beautiful dress," as though this were expected of him.

He stood curving inward at the waist; his clothes were too rigid; the black pearls and the quarter-inch of cuff, the red carnation, the polished hair with its springing curve, were conventionally suspect.

She saw him shrinking when they came among the crowd. He kept his eyelids lowered. She wondered whom he was afraid to see.

"Are they gangway seats, Jennifer?"

"I don't know, darling. Why?"

He looked as though the easy word "darling" surprised him. "Have no fear," she said, "my intentions are strictly honourable. It is only that being with you reminds me of being with Lawrence. Why do you want gangway seats?"

"Sometimes I feel shut in. And then I have to go away."

"Oh, claustrophobia," said Jennifer. "Well, don't worry about it. If you want to go, just go and I'll find you outside afterwards."

"Really?"

"Really. What do you suppose I'll do? Hit you?"

He laughed. He seemed more at ease. He looked round the audience, raising his glance after a time to the boxes and circles.

"Plenty of my race to be seen to-night."

"And of mine."

"All right, Jennifer, I won't be tiresome. Look; there is Mimi Blake."

He indicated a blonde head bound with an Alice-in-Wonderland ribbon and two wings of white chiffon appearing over the edge of a box.

"How old is she now? Child film-stars ought to be exposed at birth, anyway."

"I seriously believe she was fifteen when I first saw her. Perhaps she is subjected to some process. I wonder if Jupiter Pictures have found a story for her yet."

"And there," Jennifer said, "is Leslie Gage. Looking mighty unlike a rose."

She saw Philip's head turn abruptly. The critic, wearing a dinner-jacket and a cravat, a narrow skirt and square-toed shoes, strode down the aisle with a military gait. She saluted all sides of the house. Philip's face had clouded. "Don't look so cross at the poor old thing," said Jennifer. He continued to scowl until the lights were low. She lost sight of him and saw only the ballet.

The music stopped. The hem of the curtain hovered above the heads of the company, then shot upward as though the applause carried it. From the wings at either side, the procession began with the flowers; enormous baskets, hoops and wreaths, pointed chaplets of laurel. All the time the ballet-dancers were bowing and smiling behind the mounting screen of flowers. All the time there sounded the hysterical shouts, the frenzied clapping, aggressive as a machine-gun.

The air was hot and dry with smoke. The crowd, Jennifer thought, would have breathed acetylene and liked it. After the applause, the adjectives. "Marvellous." "Exquisite." "Quite enchanting." "Sublime." "Passionately lovely." The young men willowed, sighed and wriggled their way out for the first interval.

Now on the staircase and round the bars the units of the crowd met and greeted one another. There was, Jennifer thought, a definite satisfaction in this small world because its numbers were recognisable, established, because each could say with delight, "*Everybody* is here." She detected the frenzy of the young men lest any acquaintance should fail to notice them. Their necks turned wildly, their voices grew more shrill, they waved and called in agony, received the desired smile at last and settled for a moment's happiness. They might have been collecting proofs of their own identity.

This mattered. The ballet. The slight and amiable art which had engendered a temporary madness so that solemn books were written about it; the little world swooned nightly in ecstasy; the voices of the young men rose.

This mattered. The interval. The crowd that would have been unbearable in less exalted conditions. The buying of a drink involved Rugby football methods, the trampling and the pushing suggested rush-hour in the Underground. Who cared? The crowd was composed only of glittering pieces. These people were known. Their photographs were public property. They had titles or careers or achievements or extensive social connections. "Who's that? I see him everywhere." "Look, there's ——!" "Isn't that ——?" "*How* much older she looks." "There go ——." "I was just talking to ——."

All was right with the little world.

Jennifer kept her hand on Philip's arm. He greeted nobody. A young man favoured him with a glance and he glared. She said: "You must not let these things weigh on your mind."

"What will you drink, Jennifer?"

"Nothing, my dear."

"Do you mind if I get myself a brandy?"

"No," she said, finding herself a chair, "I will wait for you."

He came back and met Leslie Gage within a yard of her chair. She saw him stiffen. She heard Gage booming: "I seem to know that face. How are you, Philip?"

He said in a dim, sleepy voice: "How are you, Leslie?" They were jostled and hemmed in; Jennifer watched them; the tall, ungainly travesty in the dinner-jacket; Philip looking about as reliable as a tiger robbed of its lunch.

"How are things with you? Last time I heard of you somebody had mistaken you for a liner and launched you with a bottle at the Café Royal."

Philip's profile changed colour abruptly.

"I call that uncommon bad luck," Leslie Gage continued. "Happened to little Gaby St. Lyssac once at the Bal Tabarin. That's how she got her *mêche blanche*. It doesn't appear to have done the same for you."

Philip said: "No," in a muffled voice.

"Are you still in celluloid?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"My dear young man, the language of your craft. Are you still expected to make a complete shooting-script of the Old Testament within three days as the mood takes the directors?"

"I am not in the film-business now, no."

Leslie Gage inserted her eyeglass. "Another wise man. Or did they sack you, too?"

His reply was inaudible.

"Well, they sacked me and I'm not ashamed. Down among the dead men let them lie. The actual cæsura came when Lowenstal instructed me on paper to 'prepare a series of fighting love-scenes' for Paolo and Franscesca. Know what I did?"

He shook his head.

"I sent him a memorandum saying that after mature reflection I had changed the leading characters to Verlaine and Rimbaud. The reply came back 'O.K. Leave it to you.' But unfortunately he got his secretary to find out who Verlaine and Rimbaud were. I believe she rang up Selfridge's Information Bureau. He asked me politely whether I thought that I was funny and I said that had always been my view until I came into pictures, but since then I had found competition too strong. The film was released last month. Title of 'The Seventh Commandment.' Certificate A. The life-story of an artist in modern Paris. Big stuff. They've put the Quartier Latin in Montmartre. You are spilling your *cognac*, my friend."

Philip began to laugh suddenly. He went on laughing. He held out a limp hand. The critic shook it and loped away towards the bar. Philip came back to Jennifer; he tilted the remains of the brandy into his mouth and choked. She slapped him on the back.

"So you decided not to fell her to the earth," Jennifer said when he had recovered.

"How could I? She doesn't exist."

"She isn't very real, is she?"

"I had forgotten how completely unreal. They all are," he added vaguely; the rout was pouring past them as the interval ended—"All this——" he said and stopped. "All these screaming little boys."

"I agree. No more real than the ballet is real."

"When one talks to them," he said, "one feels as though one had gone to a house and found the door on the latch; the fire burning; flowers in the vases; the table laid. All signs of human habitation, but nobody at home. Nobody there, however long one waits. An empty house." He drew a deep breath. "And in her case I can't even dislike the house. It disarms me."

He did not refer to Gage again until they were on their way to supper. Then he said: "I always thought that she hated me. I don't believe she does."

It was she who had suggested supper. They drove to the Savoy Grill. He said while they drank their cocktails in the lobby: "Lovely not to have to go to bed."

"You don't sleep well, do you?"

"Not before two, as a rule."

"And sometimes later than that."

"How do you know?"

"I have seen your light."

He made an apologetic face over the rim of his glass: "Not a comfortable guest, am I, Jennifer?"

"I love to have you with me. Now that you have seen Lawrence again, perhaps you understand why."

"He is a detached creature, certainly."

"Shall we go in?"

She liked walking with him to the table kept for her on the aisle. She noticed that his earlier nervousness had returned; he did not look about him. He picked up the menu and hid his face behind it.

Presently, as at Covent Garden, he began to examine the faces; taking observation of the room in wider circles until he appeared satisfied. The champagne might have made him brave. He said once: "That is a good type of Jew; the old man sitting by the door."

"Yes; a good head. Who is it that you are afraid to see here, Philip?"

"How do you know I am afraid?"

She said: "I know more about you than you imagine."

"I am not afraid," he said. "It would be awkward, that is all."

"Man or woman?"

"Woman."

"Do you still love her?"

"I am still *in* love with her; a difference. And that is no more than a silly souvenir. All love was over for me a long time ago."

Jennifer played with the rings on her hand.

"I desperately want to go and seek her out," he said.

"Why don't you?"

"It would be useless. I was a fool to leave her. I ought to have been content with my half a loaf. What else could I expect?"

"One expects more than that and deserves it. Am I allowed to ask who she is?"

"Victoria Lloyd."

The name was a comic shock to her; she had seen it so often; written flowingly across advertisement pages; above the plate-glass in Bruton Street; on little silk labels under the collars of expensive coats; on theatre programmes; "Miss ——'s dresses by Victoria Lloyd." He might as well have said "Harrod's" or "Molyneux."

"Why do you want to laugh, Jennifer?"

"Only because I have never thought of her as a person."

"She wasn't a person, really. She——" he cut off his speech and cupped his chin with his hands as though to stop himself from further indiscretion. After a time he said: "What's the good of looking back into the dark?"

She laid her hand on his. She said: "It is absurd at your age to talk of love being over."

She saw that through the sad calm on his face there appeared a more private look; a look which he would have hidden if he could. She had seen the look before; it would be found, she thought, on the face of any man who did not find a woman desirable and guessed for the first time that she wanted him.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

SHE could not hate him. He gave her the thing which she would never have thought to ask from anyone in the world and gave it unconsciously. He brought Lawrence back. For six weeks of the summer she watched this happening to her. Lawrence came every week-end to the house on the hill.

She thought that he consulted Philip as he might have consulted a barometer. Perhaps he found in the moods and the melancholy, ballast for his own optimism. Perhaps he found his father too much withdrawn from the world and Philip, wearing its scars, obsessed with its doom, a salutary alternative.

Whatever the explanation, the fact of Lawrence returned was enough for her. She postponed her summer holiday until he should leave for Spain. She accompanied the two of them on their walks and in their argument. Simon appeared to take for granted the fact that he was outside the triangle. Lawrence admitted her to it, at first politely, then with some likeness of his old affection. Philip's attitude never varied; he exasperated her with his indifference; meanwhile the argument continued at her ears.

"All property owners; all inheritors; all snobs and sahibs; all faintly upper-middle-class relics like my one-time friend Sally's in-laws; all Catholics; all people who have made money out of the present system; pro-Fascist and to a slightly modified degree, pro-Nazi. Every one," Philip said. "You can bet on the types as soon as you see them. More broadly, any sap who has something to lose by what he calls 'Bolshevism.'"

Lawrence would take heart until he lashed the Left.

"All under-dogs; Jews; Bloomsbury intellectuals whose genius hasn't been recognised; dim women trying to shine in literary or artistic niches; so-called poets who don't know how to make a rhyme; young men with Cockney accents who work in dull offices and read Left Book Club nonsense in their lunch-hour; cowards; failures; lower-class grumblers; dreaming of Engels' heaven on earth. They're as easily identifiable as the other sort. And why not? The disease is universal."

Lawrence would laugh to hide his anger, run a hand over his neat hair in imitation of Philip and begin to talk, slowly, patiently: "Your trouble is that

you have no political education. You only see the surface layer of these things."

"So does the world; by which I mean the middle-class, your bourgeoisie."

"But you have a little more knowledge than they have. That is why you are dangerous. You can make yourself sound as though you knew what you were talking about."

"Semi-intellectual; germ-carrier," Philip purred.

"You don't know what is the best future for the people. You don't begin to understand the theory of Communism."

"I am not concerned with theories. I am concerned with the middle-class and its ability to catch infections."

While they were playing tennis, swimming or walking the dogs, they gave imitation of ordinary young men. The idea that Philip had planted, the idea of a world diseased, became strong with Jennifer and she would look at them sadly, thinking that they were as surely doomed as the youth of the years preceding 1914. There was war in the air; war on the tongue. She argued against it insistently, not daring to believe that it would happen again.

II

Nationalists; Rebels; Insurgents; Government troops; Loyalists; Reds. The words shot into speech. The map of the peninsula became common property. Jennifer thought that as children asked one another: "Are you Oxford or Cambridge?" so the presumably adult Londoners in the days following July the nineteenth, 1936, took sides. Philip wrote: "Spanish War; Sap's Eye View," reporting current conversation:—

"What's happening in Spain to-day?"

"I don't quite know. I saw a poster. The Insurgents have taken a town; I've forgotten its name. And the Government have taken it back again."

"I must say they're jolly plucky."

"Who?"

"The Government. I mean the others are all trained soldiers."

"Yes, but they're Reds."

"Who? The soldiers?"

"No, the Government."

"Oh. Well, even so, I do think black troops are a bit thick."

"Well, the Reds are torturing the nuns."

"M'm. Don't suppose there's much to be said for either side, really."

"Anyway, we've cancelled our trip to the Riviera."

"I say, do you think it's as bad as that?"

III

Simon moved heavily across the lawn. Philip and Lawrence had come from the hard court and lay beside Jennifer in deck-chairs. Lawrence stopped talking when he saw Simon.

"Is there a chair for me? Don't get up, Philip. Well, Jenny, I have finished those damn' letters. I think we should be off by the fifteenth, don't you?"

She looked at Lawrence before she said: "Wouldn't it be better to wait until this Spanish trouble ends? It can't be more than a few weeks at the most."

Lawrence looked at her with gentle surprise. "A few weeks won't see it through."

"Nor a few years," said Philip, thrusting his head forward and beginning to move his hands. "Germany, Italy and Russia between them have now ensured the beginning of the world-war. Spain was as good a starting-pistol as most. Further outlook, the Dark Ages."

It was not Simon who looked troubled, it was Lawrence. Jennifer saw him scowl and lace his fingers together; hunched upright away from the slant of the deck-chair.

"If you feel uneasy about the holiday, Jenny," Simon said, "why shouldn't we take a trip to Scandinavia instead? We have never seen the Northern countries."

"What are you going to do, Lawrence?" she asked.

"I haven't decided."

"Now he can't have Spain he doesn't want anything," said Philip, "I should go to Leningrad, dear child; or Berlin—if the difference between the two is discernible."

"Please——" said Lawrence suddenly. He rose from the chair. He looked appealingly at Philip. "Could you bear to walk for half an hour?"

"After three sets? Spare my Oriental indolence."

"Then I shall walk by myself."

She did not offer to go with him; he went down the slope of the lower lawn; slouching despondently.

"What's biting him?" Simon asked.

"I am, probably," said Philip. "I always think Jews are worse in hot weather."

Lawrence returned after an hour. She was lying down and he knocked at her door. He looked as though he had heard good news. He came to kiss her and sit on the edge of the bed.

"Sorry if I was gloomy. I walked it off. How dislikeable the person with moods is."

"You don't dislike Philip."

"Philip has only one mood." He beat a tattoo with his feet on the floor; "Which means that he never has any others; the change from fair to cloudy is the sin against society. Nice to make up one's mind."

"What have you made up your mind about?"

"A cold bath," said Lawrence, looking as sly as a goat.

"I suppose you would be bored to come away with Simon and me."

"No, of course not. I should love that. If I can."

"What should stop you?"

He hesitated. "George rather thinks I might go with him now that Spain is off. He would keep me working."

She thought: "I believe he would come, if we took Philip with us." When she spoke to Philip later in the evening, he was vague.

"I ought to be leaving you soon," he said.

"Why?"

"This is too easy."

"Do you want to make life difficult for yourself?"

"Yes."

"Then why not go to Germany and fetch your brother?" she snapped, because he annoyed her.

He went from the room without saying another word.

IV

She had the feeling when they drove down from London that this, the last week-end, would close for ever the period in her life which had been good to her. This was more than a temporary farewell. In youth, she had

sneered at superstitions as she had sneered at faith. While she sat, wearing her careful clothes, holding the unnecessary jewel-case on her knee, she was weary with herself. She saw nothing in her life but the two who did not need her, Lawrence and Philip. They made no plans; they might be coming to join her and Simon; they talked together where she could not hear. Now, when she looked at Philip's profile beside her, she thought that he might be a long way off. She could not speak to him unless of trivial things. She knew the wall about him.

Lawrence's small, pointed car was standing in the drive. She went to find him. He was sprawled on the upper lawn, asleep in the shadow of the rose-bushes. She bent over him, touching his warm cheek. When he woke and smiled at her, she saw for the first time the beauty beginning in his face.

"Hullo, Jenny. Did you mind my coming over early? I was so tired. I only wanted to sleep in this garden."

"Were you working late last night?"

"Not working. Arguing with George."

"What about?"

"I'll tell you soon," he said lightly. She lowered herself on to the grass beside him and he laid his arm across her shoulders. "You'll spoil your lovely clothes, Jenny."

They sat silently, watching the wide sky.

When at last she turned to look at him, he came from his dream to grin childishly, as though she caught him unaware.

"And what were you thinking?" he said.

"Thinking that I am happy to have you back again."

"Oh, Jenny. I'm sorry." He played with the fingers of her hand.

"No need to be now."

He leaned his head on one side; his hair was in disorder; this and the long throat gave him a rare, impractical look. She wondered what his secret was. Something had changed and puzzled him.

"No need at all," she repeated. "Most of it was my fault anyway."

Now he was looking so sad that, though she longed to hear them, she felt compelled to spare him the further words. Self-recrimination would not suit him. "Come in and watch us drink," she said, "I told Philip to make champagne cocktails. Abandoning a principle. I was feeling my age. Then you can tell me why you were fighting George." She did not allow her hope to sound in her voice. If she had been accustomed to pray, she would have

prayed ludicrously: "Let him have decided to come back to me for always; let them have been arguing about that."

She had travelled far in these few minutes. Lawrence might have been a child again and her wounds unhealed.

They came into the long room. The sight of Philip jerked her back to the present. He was stooping over the cocktail glasses and he called to Lawrence: "I *look* like a barman, don't I? Go on, say it, 'Sheeny.'"

"It's a word I never use," said Lawrence.

Philip carried the glasses. She watched him, thinking: "How much of yourself you put into every action; you invest even the making of champagne cocktails with your own imaginary sorrows. Wearing your gaberdine under the motley." She thought that she was tired of his desperate capering. Remorsefully, she saw that she had done nothing for his mind in these two months. She had given him only charity; his place in her household was the place of a valet or gigolo. His secret life continued where she could not follow him.

He bestowed himself gracefully upon the arm of her chair. Lawrence poured a glass of lemonade and drank it at a gulp. He set down the glass. The evening sun filled the room with gold, watery air. She was conscious of Philip sprawling beside her shoulder, of Lawrence gazing at them; he looked monkish, as though he pulled a hood over his face and his feelings.

"Jenny," he said softly.

"Yes."

"I must tell you something before Simon comes down. Something exciting. Philip knows already."

Philip began to slide off the chair. The boy made a gesture with his arm. "Please. I would rather you were here." He stared from one face to the other. She thought: "Sometimes he is very childish."

"Jenny, I am going to Spain."

"Darling . . . you can't very well take a holiday on the site of a war, can you?"

"It isn't a holiday."

"What is it, then?"

"I am going to fight for the Government."

She stared at him.

"Volunteers are leaving all the time. There's a journalist, a brother of one of the men at Wadham, flying over on Tuesday. He'll take me to Barcelona."

She could not find a word to say. He waited before he spoke again; then he moved a step nearer. "Jenny, you do see that I must, don't you?"

"I see nothing of the sort." She was surprised to hear her voice so cold and light. "What has Spain to do with you?"

"Jenny; how can you ask me that? This is more than Spain. This is the Left against the Right. Germany and Italy are pouring troops in for Franco. Not only men. Aeroplanes and tanks and guns."

"Lawrence, there is no need for you to give me a first simple lesson on facts which can be found in any newspaper."

He flushed. "I'm sorry. You asked what had Spain to do with me."

"And I am still asking."

He spread out his hands. "You must see. *You* must see."

"Suppose you tell me, darling," she said comfortably. It was a relief to her that his usual compact certainty had left him; that his words were halting, ordinary, the words of any boy who pleaded. She felt herself in command of the situation.

"It is our world," he said bewilderedly, "everything that we have ever believed in is at stake. You wouldn't want me not to fight. You couldn't."

Beside her Philip was so still that she could forget his presence.

"Aren't you being a little melodramatic, Lawrence?"

"No. It's a simple issue." He sat down opposite her, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. "Even George admits that."

"This was what you were discussing with George last night."

"Yes."

"Does he want you to go?"

Lawrence shook his head. "It's easy enough for George. He won't see what is on his doorstep. He doesn't believe that the time has come for the world to decide. He doesn't believe that it ever will; if people keep their brains in a cool place—and think. That's his panacea; contemplation; withdrawal. Meanwhile," said Lawrence, staring at the floor, "there are men and women dying in Spain for the freedom he hopes he will never have to defend. Their time has come. And ours."

He folded his arms and put back his head as though he had spoken his last word. "Lawrence," she said, "George can't forbid you to go. But I can. You aren't twenty-one yet, remember."

"You—would—do—that?"

"Certainly."

He was silent for a minute. Then he said: "Jenny——" and looked away from her. "George said you would. And I told him that he was talking nonsense. I relied on you."

The door shut behind Philip. Lawrence did not appear to notice his departure; he kept his head lowered; he looked sick. She went to him; this was easy, after all; she laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Don't work yourself into a state about this. I want you to see it reasonably. What made you think that I would let you go?"

He knotted his fingers together. He raised his head with an effort; pulling himself away from the touch of her hand.

"You taught me what was right for the world," he said. "You planted my views. I think I would always have come to them in time; but you saved me the time. I realised as I grew older that the whole sociological question was far less serious for you than I had thought. I took that badly to begin with. I got over it. Things aren't as mathematically simple for women as they are for men. Life never went easily for you till you married Simon and you were perfectly justified in taking a rest."

"Thank you, Lawrence." She stressed the irony in her voice.

"But you were still sincere about your beliefs, even if you didn't do much to further them. Oh, I know there were the Left Evenings. They were only playtime for you really."

"Are you perhaps rather impertinent?"

He caught her hand. "Jenny, don't talk like that. It isn't you. You have been angelic to me always. When I decided to live with George, you could have stopped me, but you didn't. I'll always remember that. And this summer has been so much better. I thought you and I were all right." The tears swelled on to his lashes and he did not blink them away. "Don't, please, please don't tell me that we are all wrong. Our things. You brought me up to do exactly what I want to do now. You were the one person I could rely on to understand."

"Lawrence——"

His fingers on her wrist tightened: "You do understand?"

She twisted free from his grasp; she walked to the window. "No, Lawrence. I don't understand. I only know that I must forbid you to go."

"Will you please tell me why?" he whispered.

"Certainly. You are far too young to know what is the best way to work for the creed that you believe."

"Don't you believe it any more?" The whisper was desolate.

"Yes, of course. To a certain extent. I have had to modify my views a little. So will you." She was amused to hear herself taking this line; the line of the parent reasonably putting down some conventional rebellion; as though he had come to tell her that he intended marrying a chorus-girl. "And when you come to my age——"

She heard him laugh softly: "No, Jenny. That won't do. Try again."

"This isn't a funny argument. I refuse to try to be clever with you. You have heard my last word on the subject. No. And now I think we had better change for dinner."

She smiled at him as she went past him to the door. As if she had been listening to music, she knew the slowing of the tempo; the curve towards silence. That was over. He would sit motionless, staring, long after she had gone.

The noise of his chair falling, the two hands clutching her shoulders, turning her round, made her heart beat painfully. His face was calm, looking down into hers.

"Dearest Jenny. I think I shall never know when you are bluffing and when you are sincere. Perhaps you don't know yourself. But you mustn't ever think that I am bluffing; because I do not know how to play that game." Now he was smiling, the small, private smile that she dreaded. "I am entirely single-hearted about this. I am flying to Spain the day after to-morrow, and neither you nor anyone else can stop me. I know my job, darling." He bent to kiss her forehead. "I know the thing that I am fighting for. So do you, really. Now run and change for dinner."

Twenty years off, another voice sounded its light, cruel echo. This was the way that George would have chosen out of argument, when pleading had failed. Lawrence, pretending to be grown-up. She should laugh at him. She did not know why she should feel small and helpless, beating her hands. It was a long time since she had screamed: "No! No! No! You can't! You can't leave me. You can't go and kill yourself like this. You are all I have in the world! Lawrence, for the love of God!"

And that too was foolish; she had no God.

V

She must look at it calmly. She must see that all her life with Lawrence had shaped and pointed only to a moment in a long room dusted with the evening sunshine; to the words spoken there; to the pressure of his hands on her shoulders when the words were ended.

Outside the room there waited his further destiny and hers. This, the first act, was over. For him the curtain would rise on Spain; on death for an idea, sacrifice for a theory. This was the way that she had chosen for him. And if the way now seemed narrow and terrible, she had at last no choice.

For herself she thought that there could be no second rise of the curtain. This was too simple a defeat. Perhaps he had spoken the truth and even the long-ago Jennifer Nash had been a bluff; a fake figure, fooling the world that she was strong enough some day to die for her faith. Well, that was fine. Lawrence, her son, would now do it for her. He had absorbed her theories, had he not? Highly satisfactory.

He had absorbed them; filtered them; strained off the lies and the absurdities; swallowed the true draught which she had never drunk.

She was a fool not to have seen that it would come; not to have known that the despised God had it in for Jennifer Nash. She was persecuted of man. Lawrence was man. For an instant she saw his small and dedicated shape in youth. She could pause to wonder how she had bred him honest.

Honest to all things save to her.

"They bare him up.
They bare him down.
Thief— —"

Another thief in the line of thieves. Man had robbed her and spoiled her always. She would never escape him. For this reason, though she knew that she was thinking calmly, logically, that her mind worked on its old smooth rails, her voice shrieked outside her head, her hands beat, her tears were cold on her face. Beyond the logic and the narrow theory for which he must fight, she saw the guns; she saw the dark wings in the sky; she saw the ruined land, the dead men and the fragments of the dead men. Humanity, that she had long despised, made this picture of war. The women made it; simple people who did not care greatly for theories or ideas; who cared that their sons should live and that their lovers should live.

Sentimental; horrible. Just as Jennifer Nash was sentimental and horrible, perhaps, when she shouted "Stop the War!" in Hyde Park.

This was not Jennifer Nash. That clear, ruthless brain would have pronounced itself satisfied. There was nobody left to expound or dogmatise, to make the issue clear for good, disciplined brains to judge and understand.

There was only, and this she saw in the mirror upon the wall, a middle-aged woman, with elaborate clothes, screaming to heaven that her son might not be taken from her.

It was after this that she became aware of Philip again. He must have come back into the room without her hearing him. Lawrence stood a little way from her; stiff and pale as though he were gone already.

Philip said: “But this has happened before,” and immediately fell silent. She saw his awe-struck face turn from her to Lawrence, then settle into calm, as though some problem was solved for him. What this scene meant in his mind she could not guess, nor did she care. She knew that it was not reasonable for him to look suddenly sane when she had just learned that her world was mad.

CHAPTER FIVE

I

VICTORIA LLOYD glanced at her watch while she inserted her latch-key. Half-past six. There was an hour alone before her and she valued the hour. She valued the moment when she stepped over the threshold to find her room waiting for her, a quiet and spacious contradiction to the loud, busy day.

The flat was high; at the angle of a building that overlooked Park Lane and the trees beyond. This was a beautiful room; the Regency furniture suited it; the sudden colours were lively; the long flowers laid their delicate shadows on the panelling; she looked from corner to corner, from wall to window. She saw the first green leaves on the trees far below. She walked up and down.

Normally, she did not indulge this restless prowling. The fear, pulling at her mind, had pursued her into solitude. "I need a drink," said Victoria, who was not in the habit of drinking alone. She would rest for half an hour before she had her bath. She said to the maid: "I am not at home until Sir Jerrold arrives," and paused once again at the high window.

It was absurd to lean out, to peer downward. Lower balconies interrupted her view of the pavement. If she had been followed the pursuer would have been ringing the bell by now.

She went into her bedroom. It was white and gold; the wide bed with the white brocaded coverlet suggested a Parisian stage-setting; equally the gilt mirrors, the curling Empire sofa, across whose white surface her silk dressing-gown drooped to touch the heels of her small slippers on the floor.

With her lips to the cold cocktail-glass, she began to lose the image. Certainly it had been no illusion, no mistake. The mistake was only in letting herself be afraid. She could blame her state of exhaustion for that, the state wherein every nerve woke and clamoured at the tired body to go on. Once again she had let herself be harassed by the wild urgency of the season; by Paris and the collections; by orders and fittings; by the women whose wardrobes made the spring a nightmare. "Over-conscientious rubbish," Victoria thought. She set down the glass after one gulp and began to strip off her clothes quickly as though the mere fact of them were a reminder of her trade. When she shut her eyes she saw the pattern of one particular fabric,

pink and gold. "There won't be enough; twenty inches wide at that price. Hell. She must be weaned to the blue. I am not going to think about it at all. I don't believe I told Gina to put the bolero in hand for—really, I will not think about work until to-morrow morning. I will think about Jerrold."

A dark face superimposed the fabric. "Not you," she said to it, "Jerrold."

She folded the white gown over her naked body. She returned to the sitting-room. One of the long mirrors recorded her progress; the swathed, nun-like shape with the pale head. She let the adjective, "nun-like" form in her mind purposely. It amused her. She knew what she was. She had shown no mercy upon her soul, from the time in youth when she made herself marketable, until this moment when she had no financial need of any man. She had seen herself always.

"And why, this afternoon, don't I care for the view?" She did not need to answer that question. She drank again from the cold glass.

"It *was* he, I suppose, the first time," she thought.

The first time had been a week ago, immediately after her return from Paris, when she was standing in the showroom with a customer who talked for a long time. Her fatigue had sent her mind away from the talk and her eyes toward the window. A young man was walking past, a young man whose hat-brim hid his face. He had moved only at that instant; he had been halted at the window until she raised her head.

"Perhaps I am imagining it now." At least she had thought: "That looked like Philip," and let the thought go. She tried now to recall whether the impression had stayed with her longer than five minutes. Probably not. No reason why Philip Meyer should not walk down Bruton Street.

This afternoon there had been no doubt at all. He was standing a few yards from the door when she returned after lunch. He was looking in another window and his back was turned. He wore no hat; easy to recognise the lacquered shape of that head with the sun on it. She had recognised his profile with one flying sideways glance as she entered the doorway. He had made no sign that he saw her.

The afternoon obliterated him from memory. At a quarter-past six she had emerged to see him standing on the opposite pavement. He was very noticeable; with his arms folded, motionless in the way of the people who hurried past him. He was staring at her. When she hailed a taxi, he had begun to walk swiftly; he sauntered again as the taxi caught the block at the corner of Berkeley Square. She could have touched his cheek with her hand. It was then that, hysterically inclined to giggle, she had told the driver to take a roundabout way because she was being followed.

"It is silly to be afraid of him. He looked normal enough." She poured a second drink. "Anybody who hangs about and stares and doesn't speak is maddening; like a silly music-hall act."

"Your bath is ready, madam."

"Thank you. Have you ever known anybody who was hit on the head by a bottle, Margaret?"

"No, madam, I can't say I have."

"Would it send a person mad?"

"It might," said Margaret, "my uncle had a ceiling fall on his head and he went quite queer afterwards."

"How queer did he go, your uncle?"

"Oh, they never put him away or anything, madam. He just had fits. What will you be wearing to-night?"

She lay in the bath and was soothed by it to a comfortable sentimentality.

Jerrold had said to her lately: "You lead a hurricane life." Then she should have no time for memory, for haunting, for the past. Five years could lay any ghost.

They had been swift and populous years. The face that endured most steadily from the changing scene was the face of John, whom she had hurt and thrown away. John endured because without him she would not have risen to her success. He had been a solid stepping-stone. That was his whole value in retrospect. "He was always a bore," she reflected. "All of them were, except Philip, and he might have become a bore in time. Only he didn't give himself time."

Before her glass, she deserted the image of Philip and all the images except the face of Victoria Lloyd. When she had adorned the face it was as calm as the sky. The hair was parted at the centre and brushed back in two wings from the smooth forehead; the eyes with the blue shadows at the lids kept their devoted look; the mouth, even when the paint covered it, was a grave, innocent mouth. She wondered for how much longer she would be able to preserve this gift; the deceptive mask of childishness.

She stood before the tallest mirror and thought that her body in the black stuff had the same fortune; she might have been twenty years old, not thirty.

The sound of the bell at the front door interrupted her long stare. She went to meet Jerrold.

"Hullo, my sweet. I am early. I didn't think you would be ready. But then you always are." He stood with his hands resting lightly upon each side of

her waist. He was a fair, narrow young man; narrow all over except for his smile.

"Tired? A long day? Tell me things." He turned her round.

"Tired enough not to want to be very late to-night—I'm sorry."

"You make me laugh when you say 'I'm sorry' as though it were part of the sentence."

"A silly habit. Here is your drink."

"Bless you. We won't be late. I shall bring you back here at half-past ten, make love to you till eleven and leave you by eleven-fifteen. I have done nothing all day. Which induces a certain fatigue of its own. Only you wouldn't know that, my poor sweet." He raised his glass to her.

"Where is your Minister?"

"My Minister is still protracting his Easter holiday. God keep him at it for another week. You know, my beautiful, that when the House sits again, we shall meet chiefly at midnight. Which is why I think you should marry me before July."

"It sounds like a good reason." She was restored. Jerrold suited her. He brought the atmosphere of good fortune with him. She went to stand behind him and lay her arms about his neck while he sat on the sofa. She kissed the top of his head.

"Darling," he said, "were you entertaining a good-looking young man of an Oriental type just now? Because I met one on the stairs and he gave me what might be described as a meaning look."

II

When she returned from work the following evening, she found a page torn from a shiny magazine lying with her letters. It was a full-page advertisement; a young man's head and shoulders surmounting a legend about shirts. The young man was Philip. Victoria asked the servant how it had come there; the servant said that she had found it lying on the mat.

With the morning's post there arrived an old newspaper in a wrapper. It was not a newspaper which she was accustomed to read. She turned the frayed pages and found "Anti-Semitism in England To-day," by Philip Meyer. She did not read the article. She preferred the postal method of attack to the loitering on her doorstep. She was not more than faintly uneasy. This was not the first time that the past had returned to threaten her.

There was little time in her day for musing upon Philip Meyer; he occupied no more space in her orderly brain than would a tune whose melody could not be shaken out of earshot; a passing accompaniment to the active thoughts. Her world was crowded. Since Jerrold, she had been obliged to join whole-heartedly with the group on whose fringe she had hovered before he came. The units of the group saw one another's faces all the year round. They spent their money in Mayfair; at Le Touquet; along the French Riviera and the Baltic coastline; in Budapest; on the Austrian snow-slopes; any agreed and fashionable corner of Europe would find them. Their seasonal movements were as regular as the migration of birds.

She could not feel that she belonged to them. They bored her. They were her chief source of income and they paid their bills eventually. Married to Jerrold, she would still be watching them with a cold and wary eye. Perhaps, after a time, she would be watching Jerrold with them. She was in love again. That was no guarantee. She had been faithful all her life to one love only; to beauty.

Sometimes she thought that she had no other standard whatsoever; that she could overlook any fault for beauty's sake; that the bore and the cad and the pandar need only be decorative for her to condone them. Her eyes never ceased to hunt and snare. When she composed her designs she stole from every beautiful thing that she had ever seen. She might trace the origin of the design to the split water riding back from the breast of a swan that sailed the Serpentine; to the lines and colours of the rain; to the flame's shape or the flower's shape.

There would be, always, lines and colours to filch. And if the name Victoria Lloyd did not always challenge the large names, as now, she could rely upon her genius for discovery to keep her safe. The stage and the screen (with a passing salute to Lowenstal) would need her when the foolish, leisured customers had found a newer name. Just as they deserted their fashionable playgrounds without warning, so they would in time desert her. She knew them. Even without Jerrold, she might have chosen to go their way because they lived for the most part in beautiful houses and moved among the lovelier places of the earth.

"Perhaps, if Philip were not so handsome a creature," she reflected, laying the prim words over the crude thought, admitting that her curiosity was awakened with her fear.

"What does he want? If he is not mad, why should he wish to plague me after five years?"

On the evening when Jerrold called for her to dine with a party at the club in Shepherd's Market, she saw Philip standing a little way from the car.

He looked shabby; she noticed his shoes. Jerrold said: "Come along, my sweet; we are keeping our guests waiting."

On the wall of the restaurant there was painted a backcloth representing the Riviera coastline; an absurd lamp-post by the doorway carried the sign "Juan-les-Pins—300 m."; there was a kiosk covered with French advertisements. Dummy windows with balconies decorated the walls. The band played in a gallery under the roof. The room was as small as a box.

Afterwards she remembered the exact moment when Philip came into the room; it seemed that she could talk of nothing that was not connected with him. When she said: "I like this place because I like anything that is French," she felt herself obliged to add, "Used you ever to eat at a restaurant called the French Horn? It is closed now."

She saw Philip halted beside the toy lamp-post, looking thoughtfully about him. His eyes found her and stared without a sign of recognition. He sat down at a table near the door. When the waiter brought him the menu, he shook his head.

She kept herself turned attentively toward her left-hand neighbour; she could hear that her voice was uneven. The young woman opposite her said: "That is such a lovely frock! Is it one of *yours*?" A young woman from Jerrold's world; as silly and charming as a daffodil. "If only I could afford your prices."

"You must come and see the new models. Don't worry about the prices." She wanted to look at Philip and she did not dare. She chattered and it was not her habit to chatter. The room was too small for that silent presence; she felt as though he were close to her, touching her. She saw her hands shaking. She giggled. Jerrold said: "Darling, do you see that chap by the door? Sitting alone."

She allowed herself to follow his glance. Philip lit a cigarette elaborately.

"Yes," she said. "Why?"

"That is the young man who was on your stairs the other day."

"That is Philip Meyer." Her voice sounded heavy and solemn, as though all the world should know Philip Meyer.

"Says nothing to me," Jerrold commented. His vulnerable face was clouding; she could see him trying to hide his curiosity. "Friend of yours?"

"Just a man I used to know."

The universal epitaph amused her while she spoke it. She searched to remember the tunes of that lost time. The present music from the gallery impeded her. 1931. "King's Horses, King's Men." "Just One More Chance." "Mädchen, mein Mädchen." "Through With Love." They all belonged to

Philip. What was the other that hovered out of reach, the jerky, obsessing melody? "*Yew!*" She giggled again. She wrote "You're Driving Me Crazy" on a corner of the menu, tore off the corner and handed it to the nearest waiter. "Give that to the violinist and ask him to play it after this."

"What about Le Touquet on Friday, Jerrold?"

He turned to her. "You could get away Friday evening, darling?"

"I think so. Not too early."

"Bob will fly you over," said the other eager young man.

She watched the waiter handing the small piece of cardboard up to the gallery. In the silence after the music had ended she heard the violinist saying: "Anybody remember 'You're Driving Me Crazy'?"

"Lord, this is an old one," somebody greeted it. Victoria leaned her chin on her hands, staring at Philip's bent head. She saw him become aware of the tune; frowning, he looked up and their eyes met. She smiled. He rose from his chair, bowing to her gracefully.

She let her lips frame the words: "So—you—are."

He raised his eyebrows; he did not understand.

"You—are—driving—me—crazy. What—do—you—want?"

"Come and dance, Victoria," Jerrold said.

"Let me wash my hands first, darling."

She held them out in the explanatory gesture; she enjoyed the heavy sound of her skirt as she crossed the floor; this Persian brocade cost five pounds a yard. She halted beside his table. He rose without a word. They stared at each other to the bars of their dead tune.

"Lovely dress; you look like Cleopatra," he said at last.

"Why do you keep following me and staring? Nothing could be more tiresome."

"I came to find you."

"Well, don't. How are you? What are you doing now?"

"You're quite right to take that line," he said. "The young man is watching you with a most despiteous expression. Does he not like Jews?"

He strolled beside her through the doorway. She said: "You can't follow me into the ladies' cloak-room."

"That was not my intention. I am leaving now."

"Aren't you dining here?"

"Heavens, no. I couldn't afford to. I only came here to see you. It wasn't," he added, "very easy to obtain admittance. I didn't know this was a

club. So I said I was waiting for Mr. Cohen. When they said: 'Which Mr. Cohen?' I was done."

"But Philip, what do you *want*?"

"Only to look at you."

"Why didn't you speak to me before? You just hung about."

"Ladies must speak first, I was taught."

"Silly," she said.

"Why did you make them play that tune?"

"Because you were driving me crazy."

"Oh no, you didn't."

He ceased all at once to look gay and enamelled; she saw the deeper lines in his face. While she looked at him the journey to the past became swift. She felt her curiosity rising; the moment had a tang in it. She knew that her hand would rise to touch his cheek lightly, then fall again. She knew that she would say: "Are you happy?" She had done these things before.

"And you? The man in possession is Sir Jerrold Moore, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"I should marry that one."

"I am going to."

"When?"

"Philip, you must let me go. I am being rude to them."

"All right, sweet." She remembered the forgiving quality of his smile; he held out his hand; the light in the little hall was sharply unkind to the clothes he wore. The grace and the neatness of his body were unhampered by them.

"Ring me up," she said in the tradition.

"Of course I shall ring you up." He turned from her. "You are still beautiful," he called over his shoulder. She hesitated before she answered: "So are you." He went out into the dark.

When she walked back to her table she thought that she might have been walking back through time. Jerrold said: "Was that chap being a nuisance? I saw him follow you out."

"No, no. He was going in any case. His friend hadn't turned up." She moved into the dance with Jerrold. She was glad not to be afraid any more. She felt warmed and lively.

Philip's voice on the telephone at half-past eight said: "Supposing we meet again to-day?"

"To-day isn't possible. To-morrow."

"We could dine to-morrow, could we? I get paid on Wednesdays."

"What is your job, Philip?"

"I am a commercial photographer's assistant. And I pose for him. As you should have seen."

"I saw."

"Well, dinner?"

"It must be after dinner."

He laughed.

"I don't quite know where I shall be," she said. "Where are you living?"

"Near my work. I've a room off the Tottenham Court Road. I don't advise it."

"Could you telephone me at about ten to-morrow night?"

"Are you sure you think it wise?" he said, and rang off. She stared angrily at the telephone. "He needn't imagine it will be as easy as all that." She sat plucking her eyebrows viciously.

On the following day at half-past six she found him beside the door of the shop.

"Oh, dear, Philip, I am in such a hurry."

"I will hurry with you. Where are you going?"

"I have to get home and change and be at the Savoy Grill by half-past seven."

"What a hideous time to dine," he said, walking rapidly beside her.

"I am going to the theatre."

"Then it would seem that there will be remarkably little point in my ringing you at ten."

"I shall be home soon after eleven."

"What about the man in possession?"

"Jerrold is away till to-morrow."

He said: "*Elle pense à tout*," and faded away at the angle of the pavement without saying good-bye. She looked after him before she hailed a taxi. She made a face at his back. "That goes for you," she said vulgarly.

After the theatre she went to supper and danced. Jerrold brought her home at two o'clock.

"It is so late, darling, and you have to be up so early. I ought to leave you."

"No. Please come into the flat with me."

"Are you frightened of something?"

"No, of course not. It is only that I am not sleepy."

There was no sign of intrusion. Jerrold left her and afterwards she slept. She needed very little sleep. At eight, she was drinking her orange-juice and deciding that she had been intelligent with Philip Meyer.

"He will telephone to-day; very cross, I shouldn't wonder."

He did not telephone. Nor did he appear, to haunt her. Three days passed; four days; five. Her curiosity was sharpened with every day. She let the spring weather carry her back to the pain of another spring. His sudden re-entry would have been less absorbing had he not possessed already one advantage. On the map of her acquaintance Philip alone remained uncharted; unsolved; he made a teasing question-mark in her mind; the only person of whom she had never had the chance to grow weary.

"Which is less of a compliment to his staying power than to his going-power," she thought.

Jerrold's family were large on the horizon at this time. They had been told of the engagement. She dined at their house demurely, thinking: "You have nothing on me." It was a big sad house in Eaton Square, shut up or let for the greater part of the year. The mother, tall and alarming as a battleship, the blonde, capable sisters, spent most of their time at the country house in Devonshire. She could act the part of the young girl to them with ease.

"Only why a registrar's?" asked Lady Moore. "Is that your idea or Jerrold's?"

"Jerrold's. He says he hates fuss—I'm sorry."

"Wouldn't you rather be married in church?"

"Yes."

"Then of course you must be."

She left Jerrold to argue with his mother and let the elder daughter show her the house. The pictures and the furniture depressed her. She continued to act. The shy friendliness of the girl was comforting.

"You must find us awfully dull. We don't do anything. Does the country bore you?"

"No, I love it."

"But will you really go on working after you are married?"

"Oh yes. At first." Tactful suggestion of an heir. "Is that an ancestor?" Victoria stood on tiptoe peering at the portrait that was half in shadow.

"Grandpapa. He looks like Jerrold, don't you think?"

The heavy face might have been a prophecy of Jerrold at forty, thickened and subdued.

When he took her home, he said: "Why did you tell Mummy that I wanted the registrar's office?"

"Because she wouldn't have liked to think that I did."

"You are odd, my sweet."

"I adapt myself to my surroundings," she said smugly. He clasped her and held her to his side as though she were a kitten. "Now you must set about making yourself a lovely wedding-dress."

She was ashamed because she looked hopefully through the messages on her table. Nothing from Philip.

He returned when the uneasy sunshine and the blue April air still troubled memory. She was alone at the end of the day, reading and waiting for Jerrold. She had lit the fire, not because the room was cold, because she loved its light on wall and ceiling. Her eyes kept deserting the book to watch its reflections; the shadows that towered and dwindled; under the mantel, the scarlet, the gold and the blue liquid smoke.

When the bell rang, she thought that Jerrold must have forgotten his key. She threw back the door and spread out her arms before she recognised Philip. In the half-dusk she saw him silhouetted, unmistakable.

His voice was low, as if the hour were late when he said: "Alone or in company?"

"Alone."

"May I come in?"

"Do."

He followed her. She saw that he was thinner and shabbier; the bones of his face very distinct, giving him a Red Indian look.

"May I have a cigarette? I haven't smoked for a week." When he lit the cigarette his hands shook exaggeratedly from the wrists. She said: "What is the matter with you?" and poured him a cocktail.

He arched his eyebrows. "Nothing is the matter, thank you." He bowed to her over the edge of the glass.

"Your hands——"

"They do that when I am tired. And I am very tired. I must apologise," he said between gulps of the drink, "for not telephoning you on the night that I said I would. I hope you didn't wait up for me."

"No," she said after a minute, "I did not wait up for you."

He smiled at her. "You see, immediately I left you I got involved in a job. And so I hadn't time even for you. I was desolated." His hand steadied very quickly. When she poured the second drink into his glass it did not shake at all. She said: "What was the job?"

"In the East End. A long story. I do not imagine that you sweat your workers, darling." He looked bright and wicked. He spoke her thoughts when he added: "This is too strong for an empty stomach."

"Drink it slowly. Who has been sweating workers in the East End?"

"Jews, darling."

"I thought they always did. And what concern is that of yours?"

"I try to organise a boycott against the sweating employers from time to time. Not easy. Victoria, I have a pound; will you come and dine at the French Horn?"

"It is shut now."

"Is it? I never go that way. And you are dining already; I see it in your eye."

"But there is no reason why you shouldn't join us."

" 'Us' implying the baronet?"

"Yes."

"No."

"As you like," she said. "But at least sit down. You look as though you had come about a job—I'm sorry."

"*I'm sorry*; that takes me back. Understand," he said, settling into a corner of the sofa, "that I am not refusing because I am too proud to let the baronet pay for my dinner. I should be delighted. It is just that I am tired and I should prefer you alone."

"Philip——" she began; then paused to light a cigarette deliberately. She knew that his eyes were studying her head and the turn of her neck, the brown suit with the orange scarf at the throat. "Go on," he said thickly, when the cigarette was lighted.

"I know nothing about you now."

"No, do you?"

"You have nothing to do with films any more."

"The nearest I can get is my commercial photographer."

"Wouldn't Jupiter Pictures take you back?"

"God forbid that I should ask them."

"Where did you go afterwards?"

"I went about Europe for a time. Then I came home. I stayed with Jennifer Flood last summer; do you remember her? Then," he paused, slanting his head, staring at the fire, "then something happened; and gave me the idea that if I stayed with her any longer I might become sane. So I went. I much prefer to be mad."

"You are not mad."

"I know," he said, looking more wicked. "But I don't want to lose my privileges. A mad Jew is more deserving of sympathy than the sane sort. Ask your Aryan Jerrold. Tell him that I am a Jew and he will commiserate with you for my acquaintance. Tell him that I am mad and he will say: 'Ah, poor chap. Concentration camp, what?' helping himself meanwhile to another glass of port."

"Jerrold is not in the least like that. You can judge for yourself; he will be here in a minute."

"And you," he said, leaning forward, "are you like that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Right or Left?" he said. "I must know." He was laughing. "Don't bother to answer. I can guess. You make your money out of the Capitalist system. Frightened of 'Bolshevism,' Victoria?"

"Why should I be? It won't happen here. And I don't know why you go on about Jews. But you always did."

"Did I? That is worth noting."

She heard Jerrold's key in the door. She knew that he would pause before using it, to listen for voices inside the flat. Philip's voice was quiet. She turned and saw Jerrold being embarrassed. In the tired daylight he was the exact contradiction to Philip. His grey suit and suède shoes, the fair head and the fair skin, the school tie, these helped the portrait of the Englishman whose private income was above the thousand-a-year mark; whose family had been here a long time. Beside him Philip looked fluent and Oriental. He had the tang that was left out of Jerrold. While she introduced them she was satisfied with Jerrold and still curious about Philip. "Which is as good a preparation for trouble as any I have known," she decided, filling Jerrold's glass.

Philip stayed only a few minutes longer. When he had gone Jerrold said: "Nice person."

"He is."

"One of yours, darling?"

"No, of course not. I used to know him years ago."

"Not blackmailing you by any chance?" Jerrold's shrewdness of observation sometimes surprised her. Philip had the shabby swagger of a man with a card up his sleeve. She said: "I should not give a blackmailer a cocktail."

"He looks as though he'd been through it."

"Probably he has. A Jew and a German by birth."

"Concentration camp?" The echo was so close to Philip's words that she stifled a laugh.

"He didn't say so."

"Do you love me?"

She knew him in this uneasy mood. Perhaps his very simplicity made him a difficult person to deceive. As a child or an animal might see ghosts, so Jerrold sniffed the threatening air. The minor trespasses of the past year had not been easy to hide. While she cradled his head, she wondered when she would see Philip again.

IV

She saw him on May Day. Jerrold was paying a reluctant week-end visit without her; she had decided to remain in London. The luxury of loneliness, of rest, of leisured beauty-treatments and meals in bed, soothed her until Sunday afternoon. Even from her high window she could hear the noise of the marching companies. Red banners waved above the crowds. She could see the little people packed together in Hyde Park under the sunshine. She could see the solid blue of the police uniforms interrupting the grey, the brown and the black.

"They always expect some kind of a demonstration," the servant said. "Bolsheviks, that's what they are, madam."

She was already reminded of Philip when she walked across Park Lane and through Stanhope Gate.

She had no fear of crowds. She enjoyed her slow journey to Marble Arch. She read the messages on the banners: "Arms for Spain"; "Stop the Fascist Murderers," and went on thinking of Philip. A phalanx of young men

and women with their fists clenched in the salute were shouting as they marched. The police marched with them. The crowds and the demonstrators alike seemed to her very cheerful, very innocuous. She was amused when a young man of Jerrold's type said to his companion: "Sedition. And we do nothing whatever about it. It *is* sedition." His face was as worried as the face of a dog searching for its master.

She was pushed; she was jolted and obstructed; she was happy. Where the orators stood on their boxes with red flags waving beside them, she would have liked to halt and listen. She could not stand still. Every time she took up her position she was squeezed and carried off her feet. The different hoarse voices continued in opposition. A sudden movement of the packed mass drove her out on to the road. She stood laughing and straightening her hat. It was then that she saw Philip. He was being led across the road by two policemen, a trail of the crowd following.

She saw his head thrown back and the look of his laughing face; he called to the people behind him; she could not hear the words. He was ragged as a tramp. When she saw how the policemen twisted his arms, she began to run. The mounted police were riding along the edge of the crowd; the near, wooden noise of the hooves frightened her; she dodged as others were dodging; a man fell beside her; he shouted: "Let 'im go!" She must reach Philip; she could not; the crowd poured round her. She fought with elbows and knees, she clutched a shoulder here, a hand there, she levered herself along, she burrowed and tunnelled and pushed until there was a sudden gap that let her through. She stood, absurd and breathless, before a very large policeman.

"Did they hurt you, miss? I should get out of the Park if I was you."

There was no sign of Philip now, no sign of riot. The movement had subsided suddenly; there was the ordinary rhythm of the crowd again. She put her hand to her forehead.

"I'll take you across," said the policeman.

"No, please. That was a friend of mine they arrested up there. I must find him." She wished not to feel faint, to tell the policeman how much she hated the two who were hurting Philip. She was obliged to lean on the large blue arm. He piloted her respectfully. She knew his verdict. A young woman in distress. A young woman who wore beautiful clothes, who had nothing in common with these shabby, sweating crowds, who had doubtless gone for an unsuspecting walk within her own lawful bounds of Mayfair. She wanted to kick and struggle. She had kicked and struggled when the mass got in her way. Now she could only droop ignominiously, hoping not to faint.

"It is all right. I live in those flats over there." Beside the gate, she saw the white insignia of two ambulance-men. Their faces were turned hopefully in her direction. "Please—I can walk perfectly well by myself. Thank you so much." She withdrew her arm. She smiled at him. She hurried across Park Lane, feeling that the eyes followed her. It was better on the other side of the street. She began to cry.

The maid said that those Bolsheviks were a disgrace to the country and gave her a glass of sal volatile.

She read a short paragraph in Monday's evening paper. Philip Meyer was charged with using insulting words and behaviour; with resisting the police in the discharge of their duties. He was let off with a caution. Now in her mind he had become selfish and remote; she thought that she would not see him again.

V

She saw him again moving towards her between the tables in the corridor of the restaurant. She had kept the memory of him from the last time, and it was a shock to see him sleek as any young man who lingered here.

"You look beautiful. What will you drink?" he said.

"Nothing, I think."

"But this is an occasion, Victoria."

"Is it?" she said deliberately. She set her finger-tips below her chin and gave him the long look that went with the words.

"Perhaps you did not know that it was; how should you?" He beckoned a waiter. "It is always an occasion when I have five pounds. *And* some silver," he added innocently, putting his hand in his pocket. "Five pounds, nine shillings and threepence. Two articles accepted in one week. Two champagne cocktails, please."

"Is five pounds all that you have got?"

"It ought to be enough for dinner."

"I wasn't thinking of dinner."

"You always were careful of money, weren't you, darling?" he said.

"And are you never careful of anything now? Policemen for example."

"You read that bit of news, did you?"

"I saw them arrest you."

"I shouldn't have thought that Labour Day was much in your line."

"Philip, why do you do those things?"

"There's no harm in laughing at Communists," he said. "I oughtn't to have thrown the stick at the policeman. But you wouldn't understand. You see, my pretty, I am leading a life entirely beyond your orbit. I have my back bedroom off the Tottenham Court Road, my book, my daily job and my evenings, which are spent in the East End or in squalid little clubs or the cheapest kind of restaurant. I am trying to talk sense to the people of my own age; I can't afford to talk it to the people of my own class. And God, how the lower classes stink! Poor pets. This suit which I wear is kept in a tin box under my bed. It is still wearable because I wear it so seldom."

"Do you need money?" she asked.

"Not to-night, thank you," he said, and would answer no more questions. He looked about him greedily. "How many years since I was here? I wouldn't know. Possibly the last time was with you and Mr. Harrison. Or possibly not. My race is still well represented, I see. And there is still a draught blowing in under the door. Prophetic. The cold airs of reality trying to force their way in where they are not wanted. What will happen to you under a Nazi régime, Victoria? Women will be kept in the background, used only for breeding. Nobody will care what they wear because nobody will love them. Perhaps you could design pretty mufti for Storm Troopers. Of course, if it is Communism, you haven't a hope. The men will be men and the women will wear sail-cloth."

"Philip, you can't truly think that either thing would come here."

The two gold glasses were set before them. He drank before he answered. "And which would you prefer?"

"If I had to make a choice," she said, "I think I would rather have Fascists or Nazis than Communists. They are more efficient and less depressing."

"A very English point of view."

"But must we talk about these things?"

"No, we will talk about you."

When they were seated at the table, she remembered lunching here with him on the day that the Bruton Street shop was opened. Time had changed the decorations of the room, changed Victoria Lloyd, changed Philip Meyer; she felt appropriately sentimental. His mocking attitude did not trouble her. He wore his defences too obviously. They would not be proof against the music, the careful lights, the elegance of recalling past love in sophisticated surroundings.

So she was patient while he talked of abstract things; she kept her voice cool, her manner as detached as his. Two dresses of her design flowed past their table. Philip said: "They are lovely," and followed them with his eyes until they went. The music was all Italian opera, youthful and insidious. The ballroom began to be full of white ties and naked shoulders and the colours of the women's clothes. Philip looked at her musingly.

"You were fortunate," he said, "not only in knowing what you wanted to do, but in knowing how to set about it; knowing exactly what to sacrifice for it."

"Was that a matter of fortune?"

"To be born with so clear a head."

"Do you think that I have a clear head?"

"Yes, my sweet."

She said, nibbling a piece of asparagus: "Isn't it grown-up to be dining politely like this, with everything over and tidy and nothing hurting any more?" She would not have sounded the personal note without a cue. She let him stare into her eyes for as long as he wished to stare. She liked to watch his face; the changing light on his hair. Across the room, the music swooped, saving them the trouble of words. She thought: "How many times—in this kind of room? How many tunes? How many glasses of champagne? How many faces opposite me? How many evenings costing five pounds in the silly convention? What did he say? 'The cold airs of reality.' I feel them. That is I. Champagne and the cold airs of reality in equal draughts." She let her hand creep along the edge of the table to touch his. He played with the narrow bracelet on the wrist-bone; his fingers were cool. She thought: "Except for John I do not think that I ever had a lover with ugly hands."

"Can we escape," he was saying, "from what we were?"

"Of course not. Not entirely. I should like to dance, Philip."

"Wait for a waltz."

While they turned in the waltz, she let her own mood take her, to the theme of his words: "Never escape from what we were." Then there were a hundred versions of Victoria Lloyd dancing here; in frocks that were out of date; with men who had vanished. The tables that framed the floor with champagne and flowers held each a ghost; the ghost of the young woman watching her past and her future stretch away on either side of her, as though she saw herself reflected many times in a long line of mirrors. This was cheap rhapsody, as satisfying in its indulgence as the known bars of the "Blue Danube."

For others the place, where yesterday and to-morrow alike stood captured, would not be this. For Victoria Lloyd the restaurant, the music; the playground *de luxe*; the world that did not exist save in the minds of those who watched it from outside. The silliest of kingdoms, with *maître d'hôtel* for monarch and always a happy ending in a taxi at 2 a.m.

She moved closer to Philip in the dance. This was the present; it pointed to something livelier than the waltz tune; simpler than the obedient motion of their feet upon the floor. He had sanctioned it, saying: "Can we ever escape?" Now that she had no doubts of him she could let disguises go. When the tune ended she said: "Do you want to dance any more?"

"No." His voice was rough.

"Then let us leave now."

He put his five-pound note upon the folded bill without looking at it. He lit a cigarette, staring silently at her. She thought that he did not want to surrender as soon as this, that he would be obliged to surrender. Still he remained silent. She said: "After all, I have a very early morning to-morrow."

"Yes. Do you want me to drop you at your door?"

"No, of course not. You can come up and drink whisky while I drink barley-water."

These were formalities as necessary as stamps on envelopes, Victoria thought. Still he looked puzzled. Then he said lightly: "What has happened to your Jerrold to-night?"

"This time he really is away. His Minister is making a speech in Edinburgh and Jerrold had to go with him."

"What do you mean, 'this time'? Was he not away before—when I couldn't telephone you?"

"Darling, on that particular evening I never got home till two."

"On purpose?"

"Well, you were a little hurried with me, weren't you?"

Still he looked as though he did not understand. He took the change from the plate abstractedly; she wondered what further thought was teasing him. She saw a party of Jerrold's friends approach a table at the other end of the room. She did not want to be seen. "Let us go now." He laid her cape on her shoulders. They walked to the door. She knew this moment well; when they waited for the taxi, with the night air sudden on their foreheads; another stage in the London entertainment. "Who goes home?" ("Meaning, 'Who goes home to bed with whom?' Why is he so solemn?")

When she went before him into the flat, she remembered that not long ago she had been afraid to come here lest he should be waiting. She turned up the lamp. For a moment she was conscious of nothing but the lovely, shadowed room. Then his watching face returned to her. She stood very close to him. He did not bend his head.

"What would you like to drink, Philip?"

"I don't want to drink anything at all."

"Nor do I."

Still he stood looking bewildered until she stepped back, her hands falling at her sides. He caught her angrily, stooping over her without tenderness. She did not hate the harsh pressure of his mouth on hers, nor the hard hands. She kissed him with her lips and her tongue. She thought that he was very silent in all this, not clumsy, still brutal and preoccupied. She remembered that before, his body had been gentle and, as though she had reminded him of it, he held her carefully all at once, touching her cheek with his.

"No," he said, "how very foolish of me to try to hate and love at the same time." He let her go. "You see, I have been seeking you out for so long; carrying a grudge against you and wanting you desperately. I am sorry."

"There is nothing to be sorry for, Philip."

She kissed the palm of his hand. "Come into the other room. This is cold."

He followed her and stood gazing about him. His expression had changed. He looked as calm as a statue. When she sat before her mirror the calm face watched her.

"What are you doing exactly, Victoria?"

"Unpinning this brooch. The safety-clasp is stiff. Can you do it?"

She put her lips to his hair when he stooped over her breast. After his hands had wrestled and freed the pin, she tried to capture them. He drew them away.

"Jerrold's photograph," he said.

"You should remember that I am going to marry Jerrold." She turned the photograph on its face.

"Is that true?"

"Oh yes! The announcement will be in the papers next week. It doesn't make you unhappy, does it?"

"No."

She lifted her fingers to the shoulder-straps of her dress. She rose and turned to him. She could see her body in all the shadowy looking-glasses.

"It is a beautiful room, isn't it?" she said. "Kiss me, darling."

He smiled at her. "A little too dangerous, I think. I will say good-bye to you now."

She was so much surprised that she could only ask: "Why?"

"Because this has happened before."

"What do you mean?"

"I had forgotten," he said. "You would be unfaithful to anybody. And I thought that you were only unfaithful to me."

"What *is* this, Philip?"

"Forgive me. I came back to find you out of curiosity—and hate. I didn't realise that you were so readily prepared to sleep with a past lover. That has been puzzling me all the time. But it shouldn't puzzle me, really. There have always been women like you. You get what you want. I happened to be what you wanted for a time. I was no more persecuted by you than any of them were, than your poor Jerrold is—and will be. Good-bye, Victoria."

She sat watching the door after he had shut it; she heard his footsteps cross the outer room. She looked in the glass for a long time.

CHAPTER SIX

I

THERE was a white flagstaff by the wall, that gave the little house a seafaring look. The house was red, double-fronted, standing sideways to the road and facing its own sloped garden. From the gravel in front of the house, steps went down to a wide lawn. The lawn was separated from the vegetable-garden by apple-trees with the blue Solent water appearing above their heads.

This was early morning in the garden. When her walking took her under the shadow of the apple-trees, Sally saw the dew still on the grass. She stepped over the shadow's rim into veiled, harmless sunshine. The sky was pale and the sea was pale. In the hush, all sounds were distinct, from the thrush here to the scrape of a bicycle-bell far up the road. She could hear the paws of the terrier scuffling the earth in a flower-bed before she turned to discover him and call him.

This hour of a summer day belonged most of all to childhood. She did not know why. She remembered the awed sense of adventure; the impatience to be up and out and in it.

She saw the green apples between the leaves; she saw the budding hollyhock, the rose's brownish petal. August, after a year of too much rain.

Her footsteps did not take her beyond the apple-trees. Soon it would be time to go down and work among the vegetables; time to fork potatoes out of the thin soil; to examine the lettuces for slugs and weed the cabbage-patch; to pull the narrow pea-pods and shell them. She grimaced at the vegetables which assumed in her mind human qualities of disobedience and need for attention. "The vegetables," she had said to Ronald, "are always out to annoy."

Ronald came to the cottage only at week-ends. The flying-boat squadron was stationed at Renshot, the bleak colourless spit of the mainland running out into Southampton Water. To Sally's eyes it was a derelict, end-of-the-world place, with the black storm-cones, the long, sulky sheds and the greyish mud flats.

The silver shapes of the flying-boats, more graceful than the sea-planes with their clumsy boots, went over noisily. In formation they had the look of being suspended from strings. When they lay on the water they were dead

and enormous. When they roared themselves alive, circling and beating up rolls of white foam, they frightened her; it seemed impossible that they would ever take the air.

Walking on the lawn, she was glad that Ronald was not here at this moment. The fact that her nerves should manifest themselves in any form surprised her; it would have been equally a surprise to Ronald; she could hear him saying: "Why the devil should he worry you like this? He's not your friend any more."

She unfolded the two letters to read them again. She saw her hand shaking a little. The more she tried to steady it, the more it shook. She knew that her painful concentration was foolish. She went all day warily, holding her breath, thinking: "I must be careful not to hurt the baby."

She stood still. "Perhaps there is nothing really frightening in either," she thought.

The first letter was headed with the complicated crest of Jupiter Pictures, Limited.

Dear Mrs. Arthur,

Thank you for your letter. Please forgive my few days' delay in answering. I have been out of town. Of course I do not think it impertinent or tiresome of you to have written to me about Philip.

Like you, I have not seen him for a very long time. And like you I have noticed his name once or twice; latterly, I am afraid, in the connections you mention. The name not being uncommon, I was not certain that this was the Philip Meyer I used to know until I saw a photograph of him leaving the courts; after the May Day trouble in Hyde Park, I think.

If as you suggest he would settle down to steady work, given the opportunity, I should be happy to recommend him to some of the British studios. Things here are very much too quiet to permit my re-engaging him. I am sorry, because he was a bright person and we all liked him so much. He was inclined to be an erratic worker, but Jeremy French (now captured by Hollywood) agreed with me as to his ability and imagination.

Philip was unusually good company in an office where people are inclined to run to type. We were very sorry to lose him. I don't know whether he has told you that his departure from us was entirely his own choice. We offered him a new contract on the

production side, to start when he returned from Africa at the beginning of the year 1932. This he refused, giving no reasons.

Kindly let me know where I should send such letters of introduction as I write. Is he living in London?

Yours sincerely,

Jacob Lowenstal.

She folded the two sheets, thinking: "That is kind. Why did Philip tell me that his job had been stolen—that they all hated him?" Had the lie come from another person it would have puzzled her as all distortions or concealments puzzled her. Coming from Philip, who had trusted her from childhood, it added further weight to her conviction that he was no longer sane.

The dog's untidy head, pushing against her hand, comforted her. She stooped awkwardly to caress him. He sat on his haunches, head cocked to one side, appearing to wait for her verdict upon the second letter.

The second letter was from Ralph Broughton.

Dear Sally,

By the time your wire had arrived, I had paid his fine and he was out. He was not guilty anyway, though he wouldn't say so. Takes me too long to explain in a letter. I enclose a cutting which clears up some points a little. I'll be with you (by air) to-morrow evening. Don't worry.

She had read the newspaper cutting already; the names:

"Leonard Rodka (22), hairdresser; David Marks (19), student at London University; Philip Meyer (30), a photographer's assistant. At Bow Street to-day, charged with creating a disturbance, using insulting language and resisting the police in the discharge of their duties. Meyer was charged further with causing grievous bodily harm to Commander L. C. Fielding, Conservative candidate in the South Ham by-election."

The evidence occupied a column. She re-read only the last lines.

"Mr. Ralph Broughton, author of *Essays on England*, who was acting as chairman at the meeting, also gave evidence. He said that Meyer was personally known to him."

Mr. L. G. Maxwell (Counsel for Meyer): "Did you see him before the disturbance began?"

"I did. He was standing at the end of the third row, leaning against a pillar, on my right. He remained there throughout the whole of my speech. The stone came from the other side of the hall."

The Magistrate: "Other witnesses have said that they saw the stone in Meyer's hand."

"They have not said that they saw him throw it."

"The second charge against Meyer was dismissed. The Magistrate said that there was not enough evidence to show who threw the stone. At the same time, he would bear in mind that two previous charges of a similar character had been brought against all three defendants. He found them guilty on the first charge and sentenced them each to a fine of five guineas or a week's imprisonment."

"Rodka and Marks paid the fine. Meyer elected to go to prison."

II

Perhaps Ronald had spoken the truth when he said: "He isn't your friend any more." Still Sally could wonder whether it were possible to travel so far from youth. At least Philip had made the journey. She, still faithful to their friendship, was perhaps absurd, like an old anxious mother who could not lose the child's image in the man who had now no need of her.

Broughton treated her as though she were that mother; with the exhortation not to worry, with the inconvenient journey to her side. She went up across the lawn to order dinner for him. Then she took the gardening tools from the shed.

Digging for potatoes was like digging for treasure; plunging the fork into the uncommunicative soil and turning up the yellow tubers always with a sense of surprise that they should be there. She tried to keep her movements in rhythm, afraid of jerking her body.

The sun grew stronger; she saw the leaf shadows sharpening on the soil. It was good to move into the shade beside the marrows. She had promised Ronald that she would soon get help in the garden. "If I can find a boy to come for a very little money."

Ronald, confronted by any suggestion of economy, would lower his head and butt it away. "Better pay him a pound a week than tire yourself and make yourself ill. He needn't come more than once a week, anyway. It's not our garden."

"It is for the next three years, unless there's a war. Besides, you don't realise how much we save by growing our own vegetables. I was looking at

the prices in Cowes yesterday."

Ronald, she thought, had never looked at a price in his life. That was the legacy of his parents; the dim survivors still clinging tightly to the conviction that Colonels, their ladies and their sons, should be fed from heaven.

She was sorry for the parents and always kept her temper with them when they became peevish. Their grumbles were directed variously against Bolshevism, the dole, the death-duties, "thoughtless young people," "temporary gentlemen," the trend of certain sections of the Press to insult Hitler and the increase in the comforts of the lower classes.

Poor parents. Ronald was less patient with them than she, though he inherited so much from them; spending every penny of his now adequate pay; extravagant as a woman with his clothes and toilet necessities; regarding long-term credit as his birthright. It was for her to turn the gas low, to eat small meals and save towards the rent.

When Ronald said that one or another member of his squadron was a "counter-jumper," she shouted "Parents!" and he would apologise. "I know I am a snob, Sally. Bear with me. I can't help hating common people. Ever since we married I have tried desperately hard to like spotty little clerks and girls whose teeth stick out in shops."

Ronald disarmed her always. Thinking of him now, she straightened her clumsy shape and stretched her lips in a kiss. He never bored her, not even when he sat for an hour, a tankard in his hand, describing a Rolls engine with full technical detail; not when he brought five officers of the squadron to dinner and talked shop to them, ignoring her. She loved the flying-boats because they were his preoccupation. She could forgive him the passion that might some day take him away from her for ever.

She had forgiven him the child in her body; and that had been the hardest thing of all to forgive.

She wiped the sweat from her forehead and rested her hands upon the broad, smooth handle of the spade. She felt well now, warm and sleepy. Time to pick the peas. She went slowly up and down, past the stakes, with the basket in her hand; there were the green fluttering leaves and the shiny pods, the brown grains of earth caking under her foot, the curve of the dog suddenly asleep upon the lawn. The solid peace of the garden and the ordinary tasks to be done there, reassured her as nothing else could. Still she was afraid.

She did not remember which of them, herself or Ronald, had first said: "Never again." She could recall their astonishment at the light-hearted

condolences: “You must have another one as soon as you can.” “My sister lost two.” “Never mind.” “It would have been worse if it had lived just a few weeks.”

They had agreed, the two of them, that it was idle to weep for an image dissolved, a life that had never been, a thing so nebulous and small. Yet they had wept and come but slowly from their wounded silence to talk of it.

She thought that they might have minded less had the child itself not been the foundation of their marriage. Because of it they had fought; God had seen to it that they lost the fight. And after that she did not want a child of Ronald’s at all, nor he a child of hers.

They had stood looking at the things left to remind them; the clothes and the cot, the basket with the frills. She had said: “It would be unkind to give them away.” Ronald said: “No. There’ll be a woman somewhere . . . Send them to the hospital,” and his voice was so steady that she was surprised to see the tears running down his face while he looked at the clothes. He had patted them abruptly with a gentle hand before he took her away. “Never again.”

It was he who had gone back on the words. She had protested before she knew how persistently dread would live with her. After they had argued, she had felt that nothing she might say or do would hold back the issue; that their child must be born because fate had ruled this for her. Only when she became certain did the superstition change to the living fear.

Foolish. Neurotic. Cowardly. She might pour adjectives upon herself and still fail to dispel the cloud, the feeling that she was snared in the heavy trap of her own body.

She set the basin upon the lawn beside her and began to shell the peas; the sharp, acid sheath split under her finger-nails; the peas fell with a little drumming noise. “I am not afraid. I know that the baby will be all right this time. It is only being alone so much that worries me. And I am only alone four nights in the week, so what am I grumbling about?”

She whistled the dog awake. He put his nose in the basin of peas; she talked to him softly. This evening she would not be alone. Broughton would be there. Her evenings were spent knitting, sewing, listening to the radio. There came a time when she did not dare to rise, to turn out the lights and go to bed; when she dared not look over her shoulder lest she should see something standing behind her chair.

Philip was mixed curiously with the fear. He had haunted her since he came from his travels, fierce, melancholy, seeming to have only the wish to plague and insult her. She had hated his talk of Left and Right, his wild

rages against the Jews and the persecutors of the Jews. It was like seeing a gentle person bewitched. Now he invaded her solitude. She dreamed of him often; sometimes he was a little boy again; sometimes she saw him with a knife in his hand; sometimes he was running after her down a dark corridor, calling sadly: "Wait! Help me!" and when she turned she would see a mad, cruel face that was not Philip's face at all.

She split the last green pod and carried the basin towards the house, the dog leaping beside her.

"I'd have done those," said the little servant: "You oughtn't to be out in all that sun."

"I like it," Sally said. She took the newspaper which she had not had time to read and arranged a deck-chair under the apple-trees. The girl brought her a cup of tea. This was the interval between the garden jobs and the jobs in the house.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BROUGHTON said: "I saw him as soon as we came on to the platform. Remembering May Day and other occasions, I looked carefully to see whether he had any toughs with him. He seemed to be alone. The lights in that hall are very bright and he was such a short distance away that I could watch the expression on his face. He looked as cool and blank as a leaf.

"He wouldn't sit down; there was an empty chair just by his elbow and I saw one or two people pointing it out to him. He went on leaning against the pillar. There was a reasonable amount of row going on at the back; we had been warned to expect it. Fielding hasn't a hope of getting in. Some boys started singing 'The Red Flag.' Philip never turned his head; he went on watching the platform quite steadily. I grinned at him once; he may have seen or he may not; he didn't take the slightest notice.

"I got up while they were still singing. We were overdue to begin. After I had been talking for a few minutes they quieted down. I like being on a platform; Fielding doesn't. He's a lumpy, sincere person, but I knew that any sympathetic stuff had got to come from me. I was set to give them what they wanted. Don't think me a charlatan. Sally; it's simply the way of putting the thing over; oratorical tricks. I can do them every time, even in a political speech. My American lecture-tour taught me how.

"Well, here I was, temporising with a few mild jokes to get them nicely attentive. I could hear Fielding shifting and rustling his notes. I wasn't speaking from notes; I never do. As usual, I let my eyes wander along the rows; until Philip's face stopped me short.

"I still don't quite know why. He was half-smiling, where before he had been quite solemn. The light was directly on his face. I had forgotten how Philip's head sometimes looked like all the finest Jewish heads in history rolled into one; the best of the blood; that poise and sorrow and liveliness that you never get in any other type of face. He looked magnificently gentle, as though he were forgiving the world. And yet there was nothing soft about the look; nothing cowardly. It was the way that Christ might have looked when He said: 'They know not what they do.'

"I realised that I had stopped speaking. I could see nothing but that astonishing blue-black hair of his with the light on it and the face that seemed to have all history in its eyes.

"I had enough sense not to stammer. I kept the silence going until I had thought of my next words. And my next words, not at all according to plan,

were about the persecution of the Jews.

"I swooped up from the popular conception of Right politics to some even more popular misapprehensions. I think I made the most violently anti-Nazi speech that anyone holding my views has ever made. I told them what I thought of Jew-baiting and what would come to the persecutors. I warned them. I warned the world. I put everything that I had into that speech.

"No need to bore you with it. I could tell that Fielding was horribly embarrassed; he rustled and he drank some water. I didn't care a damn what anybody thought. I don't believe I cared what Philip thought. He had ceased to *be* Philip, do you understand? He was all of them and I was the world with my foot on his neck.

"It sounds silly now, when I remember it. But the audience got what I meant; the noise was considerable.

"It's odd," Broughton said, "how cold one goes the minute one stops. I sat down and grinned at Fielding and lit a cigarette and listened to the applause. Coming, I thought, from the comfortable consciences of those who only need assurance that the extreme Right does not necessarily include Anti-Semitism in its programme, to shout 'Heil!' and prepare to meet their dictator. Sheep. With a woolly-head admiration for discipline and a cosy reserve about cruelty and no desire for freedom whatsoever."

"Oughtn't you to be giving up politics, Ralph?"

"Probably. Anyhow that's the last time I'll ever take the chair. While Fielding shifted his large feet, I looked along the third row and saw that Philip was still there. He was looking down. I couldn't see his face, but that hair is quite unmistakable.

"Fielding wasn't going to get up while they were still clapping me. He took his time, fluffing those notes about for quite three minutes. I remember that as he stood up I looked in Philip's direction again and couldn't find him. The stone flew past my face, coming from my left. I hadn't even time to wonder what it was before I heard it crash and saw Fielding topple over.

"Then the fun began. There must have been far more of the agitators at the back of the hall than I thought; or the crowd would have accounted for the ones that the police missed. But they didn't. It seemed to be turning into a pitched battle. That sort of scrimmage always looks worse than it is. I was bothered about Fielding; not that I care if he breaks his thick head or not, but he isn't a young man and he lay very still. I got him up. Two ambulance-men came to him, and a man who said he was a doctor.

"There was nothing I could do for the minute, so I jumped down into the middle of the scrum. I never could leave a fight alone. Besides, I wanted to

find Philip.

"Nobody went for me, though I was dragged all over the place. It was rather like swimming in a very rough sea. Chairs kept tripping me up. I shouted for Philip all the time. I knew he was in for trouble. But I knew damned well that he never threw that stone."

"But he wasn't there, by the pillar when it was thrown. You said in the box that he was."

"I tell you the truth, Sally. I told them the relative truth. For one thing he hadn't time to get to the other side of the hall and throw it from there. For another, and this is much more important, no man with the look he had on his face could have done it. I would have bet a million on his side. And I was right, as it happens."

"Did you find him?"

"Not till I got outside on the steps. I wasn't aiming for the exit; I was carried that way. Somebody pushed me and I went flat on my face; very funny. I was winded. While I lay there with the feet trampling bits of me, wondering if my spine would be broken before I could get my breath back, I heard Philip's voice say: 'You had better help that man up instead of twisting my arms into knots. He's the chairman.'

"I heard a truncheon bumping nastily on soft places, then there was some air for a change and they dragged me out. Philip was standing a yard away. He had two other policemen holding him by that time.

"He looked as though he had been pretty severely handled; there was blood all over his face. He said: 'Hullo, Ralph,' and I said, 'Hullo, Philip,' and for some reason I felt like weeping. Idiotic. But I've never had a friend I liked as much as I liked him.

"I asked the police to let him go. I said that I would be surety for his behaviour. I told them that he hadn't thrown the stone. They were politely unimpressed. When I asked what they had got against him they said that he had been fighting like a tiger. Philip said: 'But the Jews can't fight; everybody knows that,' and laughed and then they took him away.

"I went round to the police station as soon as I had reassured myself about Fielding. They wouldn't listen to me. They said that his record was a bad one, that he had been cautioned once and fined twice; that he and Marks and Rodka were three young hooligans and that a couple of women had seen him throw the stone.

"I offered to go bail for him if they would let him out overnight. No good. I think that if I hadn't admitted losing sight of him for five years I

might have swung it. I rang up Reggie Maxwell and arranged that he should act for Philip. Then I went to bed, with several headaches.

"The women's evidence was soon torn to pieces. Maxwell saw to that. If Philip hadn't been such a regular offender they would never have charged him. I instructed Maxwell to pay whatever fine was involved, but Philip made such a scene that Maxwell thought it better to let him go to the cells and pay the fine afterwards. I waited until he came out. I took him to have a drink.

"He was so placid that I went back five years. It might have been the time when I was working at Jupiter Studios with old Leslie Gage and he used to come to my squalid flat for drinks. *Were* there any politics then, Sally? He made me laugh a lot. He talked about his imaginary persecutions. When I pointed out that to be falsely accused of throwing a stone and to spend a night in the cells for it, might come under the heading of actual persecution, he just giggled. 'Oh,' he said, 'that didn't worry me; I was thinking of something else.'

"I asked him what was on his mind before I began my speech and he looked very mysterious. He said: 'I had just decided upon a plan.' He is going abroad again. He asked me to find out whether you could bear to see him to say good-bye. He said: 'Tell her that I am sorry and that I love her.'"

"Of course he can come," she said bewilderedly, "but didn't he tell you what it was all about; why he has been doing these things?"

"I believe he started rough-house tactics simply because he wanted to prove that Jews could fight. Remember he made scenes at Communist meetings as well. He admitted that he had come to our hall to kick up the dust and that he had a stone in his hand. My speech stopped him from throwing it. He knows who did throw it, by the way. He wouldn't take any money from me. Said he wanted to get back to this dingy photographer in the Tottenham Court Road and find out if his job was still there. He promised to let me know if he had the sack.

"I wish you had seen him. He looked," said Broughton shyly, "like one who had come out of great tribulation."

His voice ceased. She saw him smile at her; dusk was beginning in the garden. The water beyond the trees paled as they darkened. The dog ran hunting below the farthest hedge; they could hear him snuffle and bark.

"We should go in," Broughton said, "you will catch cold."

"It is good of you to stay with me."

"Nonsense."

He stood up, looking solid and rumpled, so that Sally was reminded of the evening when she and Philip first met him at the failure of his play. He was reassuring company.

"It is silly to be afraid when one is alone," she said.

"You have company in one sense."

"What do you mean?"

He said: "I do not believe that there is a single person alive in Europe at this moment who is not afraid."

CHAPTER EIGHT

I

SEPTEMBER came and Sally gave up hopes of Philip. There was no letter; no news. Broughton had heard nothing. He must have dodged away again into his mad kingdom, she thought and was sad for him once more. Now there were only three months of her time left.

She looked across the breakfast-table at Ronald. It was good to see his head and shoulders obscuring her lonely view of the garden through the window. He had his usual early-morning look, sleepy and golden; he grinned at her.

"What are you so large-eyed about?"

"Thinking that I like to have you here."

"Me, I like it too."

"Don't ever go away."

"I won't."

"What do you want to do with your morning?"

"I have rendezvous with the marrows. You can watch me, poor tubby."

"Poor tubby," Sally echoed. "Give me the *Express*."

"Oh, darling. I have just found a lovely bit about German Jews bringing dope into London. Hidden under cabbages."

"The dope or the Jews?"

"The Jews with the dope. Do you think that there are Jews in our cabbages? Wash them carefully."

"Ronald, it isn't funny."

"They get right down between the leaves. I think salt and water kills them. Did I tell you the story about Davis in 503 Squadron?"

"No. And I shan't listen. You are all horrid to poor Davis."

"We aren't. I don't hate Jews any more than you do. I just find them funny."

"No funnier than Christians."

"Oh, Sally. They have such funny behinds."

"Not all of them."

"They wear them very low down."

"I am not listening."

"This story was *about* Davis's behind," said Ronald aggrievedly. He rose from the table to get a cigarette from the silver box with the model aeroplane on the lid. He came back to kiss her.

"All I have got against the Jews is that they make too much noise," he said, "they won't forget that they are Jews and muck in. They are on sufferance in every country and yet they won't behave."

"No persecuted race behaves."

"Well, the ones over here aren't persecuted. Why can't they settle down and be content to be English, which they are, instead of joining Left parties and planning to overthrow the system of Government that puts up with them?"

"Darling," said Sally, "if your name were Smith and you suddenly heard that a lunatic had decided to exterminate all the Smiths in the world you might feel faintly involved. Besides, you can't curse the poor Jews one minute as a race on sufferance and then say that the English ones are English. Anyway, all Jews aren't Communists. You're talking like the parents."

"I have been warned," Ronald said. "Did I tell you the story about the vicar and circumcision?"

"You and your little co-mates," Sally said, "have only one level of conversation."

"It's not a bad level, really."

"The soldierly tradition, I suppose."

"We aren't soldiers. We are birdmen; very lean and spare with narrow blue eyes fixed on some impossible goal."

"Fixed on some impossible girl," said Sally. "Let's go out before the sun goes in."

Ronald brought a rug for her and spread it on the lawn. She lay as comfortably as she could, reading the papers, looking up to watch the white terrier as he fussed after Ronald beside the marrows. The apples were ripe on the branches above her head; some of the fruit was fallen. The hollyhock flowered. There were sharp, shiny dahlias starring the border. She who had always liked the promise of autumn, now tried to ignore its approach. There was still warmth in the sun. If she shut her eyes to the warning of the garden she could believe in early summer.

She slept easily now at odd moments of the day, finding it hard to sleep for long at night. She blinked; the garden retreated; she heard Ronald's voice fade: "Going to buy some cigarettes," she repeated stupidly.

The sun was very warm on her cheek. She saw bright colours under her lids. This was half a dream and the body was light again, escaped. There was no more fear.

She opened her eyes. Ronald was gone and the dog with him. She turned over heavily, looking towards the house. She saw Philip walk in at the gate and stand beside the flagstaff. She thought that she might be dreaming still; he moved so slowly and carefully, shading his eyes with his hand, staring her way. He did not speak. He came down across the lawn; he paused shyly a little way from her. Still heavy with sleep, she blinked upon him. He wore light flannels and canvas shoes, no hat. He looked as thin as his own shadow in the flat sunshine.

"I waited till you woke up," he said. "I have been watching you for a long time over the wall." He looked down at her. "Sally, I didn't know. Ralph never told me. Are you glad?"

"Yes, of course I am glad. Sit down, Philip. There is the rug, or a rather dangerous chair in the shed."

He remained standing, his head lowered now, his hands at his sides.

"What is the matter?"

"I am so sorry. From the bottom of my heart, Sally. Will you please say that you forgive me?"

"Silly," she said.

"I have been terribly unkind to you."

"No, you haven't."

"And rude; and wicked. And leaving you alone."

"No."

"I would give anything in the world to take it back. Anything. And there is nothing I can do. It will always be there."

"No, it won't. It's gone."

He knelt beside her on the grass. He kissed her hands.

"Will you forgive me?"

"I forgave you a long time ago."

He sat back on his heels, with a hand resting lightly on each side of him. "But I haven't come near you; I haven't wanted to be near you. How could you forgive me?"

"How can anyone not forgive a person who is sorry? Don't be stupid, Philip."

"Will you ever forget it?" He dug his finger-tips into the grass. "You see, I don't think that one can ever wash things out. I think they stay."

"Nothing horrid that you did could ever stay. Because you aren't a horrid person. The only thing that I minded was thinking that you didn't love me any more and that you hated all the things we used to like."

"Oh, no," he said with tears in his eyes. "Oh, no. Never. That is over. Finished. Absolutely. I promise." He held out his hand.

She took the hand, pressing it against her cheek. He moved close to her and laid his head on her shoulder. She saw how the violent hair was streaked with grey. She said, as she sometimes said to the dog: "What have they been doing to you?"

"Nothing. Nobody did anything to me. I did it all to myself."

"Tell me."

"Not now. I will tell you before I go."

"Won't you stay with us? The room is quite nice."

"You will make me cry," he said. "Because I remember: 'Won't you come back? There is some beer.'"

"What was that?"

"You, a long time ago."

"Philip, do stay. Can't you?"

"Actually, I deposited some rather inferior luggage at the hotel up the road. I've left London for good."

"Why? Where are you heading for?"

He looked purposely mysterious, as though he hoped that she would ask him further questions. She remembered this look from the time when he was a child; the desperate anxiety to be grand with a secret.

A little wind came from the sea. It ruffled Philip's hair; it brought a small apple bouncing in her lap; the newspaper on the lawn blew upward into a tent; she read the words.

"British Ship Sunk in Mediterranean."

Ronald came in at the gate, carrying boxes of cigarettes. The terrier danced ahead. She could see Ronald walking slowly, making up his mind. Philip rose and went towards him.

She watched him through the day. When she saw that he was the same again, returned somehow from the inexplicable journey, she felt the interval retreat and shrink. This might be five years ago, when he came to keep her company at Brodrick. The thought made her superstitious for a moment, as though by his arrival he had put the final touch to the likeness of that time, foreshadowing the end. She shook the idea away.

He would not talk about himself while Ronald was there. He gave her the impression of having lost any desire to establish his point of view. All the time, whether he spoke or remained silent, she found it hard to believe that he had been absent and afflicted.

He seemed younger than Ronald. He played exhaustively with the dog. He ate raw peas and climbed a tree for apples until he fell on his back. He sang one tune endlessly, the Skye Boating Song.

"Carry the lad that was born to be king."

After tea Ronald took him to the hotel to fetch his luggage, saying: "There's quite a well-shaped waitress there; I'll show you." They went off together, solemn and friendly. Philip brought her back a cornet with ice-cream. She ate it for fear of hurting his feelings. They played Lexicon. Ronald wanted a bonus for Anglo-Saxon words. The cards blew about the lawn.

It was a good and foolish day; she did not want it to end. It ended, as Sunday always ended, at the pier where the pinnace waited to take Ronald back to Renshot. A last drink at the public-house on the pier-head; a last game of shove-ha'penny. Ronald said: "Now look after poor tubby for me."

"He doesn't care really," Sally said to Philip. "All he thinks about is the marrows."

"And the marrows," Ronald added, "Minister to them as though they were your own."

"I wouldn't minister to my own marrows. I hate them," said Philip.

Ronald said: "Wordsworth called them winsome. So they are. I love my winsome marrows. They'll be ripe for the plucking soon. God, I must go." She saw him turn to Philip with his hand outstretched. "I am glad you have come. Mind you're there when I get back. I'll borrow a crate next week and take you up. Good-bye, Sally darling."

They stood waving to him while the pinnace grew smaller. The water was full and luminous; at its far edge they could see the lean shadow of Renshot Spit. The air chilled and Sally shivered. "Don't let's watch him out of sight. It's unlucky."

They climbed into the old taxi; Philip said: "Cars like this always smell the same, don't they?" He sniffed. "All these things——" he began.

"What things?"

He did not answer. He said: "You do like your life, don't you, Sally?"

"I love it," she said. "If only Ronald didn't have to be away during the week."

The taxi jarred and struggled on the hill. She said: "But to-night I don't mind because you are here."

"He is happy with his flying-boats, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes. They are lovely. You must go over and see them."

He was silent.

"You will stay, won't you, Philip?"

"Of course I will stay for a little time. There is nothing I should like more."

When they came into the garden the moon was over the tops of the apple-trees; the Solent lay white, with the mainland's long dark arm stretching behind it.

Now she need not be afraid, need not listen to her own footsteps crunching the gravel. Philip went into the house before her and turned on the lights. No need to glance towards the dark staircase fearfully; to think that a solid shadow waited among the other shadows in the hall; to start at a curtain blowing; to hold the dog close against her knees, and wake him when he began to sleep.

Philip drew the curtains, lit the gas-fire. The room, with its plain walls and ordinary, comfortable furniture, was as harmless as it would be in daylight. She told him to fetch himself a tankard of beer from the barrel. He came back and settled himself opposite her. She went on sewing the small frock, waiting for him to break a silence which had lasted for five years.

He was slow to begin. He talked about Ronald. "Does he pilot those machines himself? What rank is he now? Flight Lieutenant? What's the next? Squadron-Leader? He will go right to the top, that one. You picked a winner, Sally." He talked about Air Defence. Then he fell silent. She said: "I had a letter that I wanted you to see. Would you get it out of the desk? The top right-hand drawer."

She saw his face change when he unfolded Lowenstal's letter. He looked confused; he stood with it in his hands, saying: "I don't understand. Did you write to them?"

"Yes, I was worried. I thought he might be able to find you a job. Don't be cross. It is a nice letter."

He did not bring it to the fire; he turned and read it with his back to her. Presently she knew that he had finished reading. She looked up; he was staring straight in front of him.

"It is nice, isn't it?" she said.

He came back to his chair and swallowed a gulp from the tankard. Then he said: "Do you think he was trying to please you?"

"How?"

He read from the page: " 'We all liked him so much.' "

"Why shouldn't they like you?"

"They never said so at the time."

"I don't think people say that sort of thing much, at the time."

Philip passed his hand over his hair. He said, bewilderedly: "But do you suppose they did? Like me, I mean. Lowenstal; and French; and the others? I always thought they hated me."

"Silly."

He said: "You don't know what it is to mind whether people like you or not; to feel all the time that they hate you; that you are absolutely alone. Until Victoria I never had anybody at all. And after she went there was nobody again. Seeing everybody else in couples; friends; lovers; never being needed or wanted. I suppose I let it get on my mind."

Sally put down her needle. "But, Philip, you had plenty of people to play with. There was Ralph. He told me last time he was here that he had never liked any friend as much as he liked you. And Jennifer Flood. I wrote to her when you first came home. I remember the sentence in her letter: 'Lawrence and I both loved him from the first minute we saw him.' How can you be such an ass?"

He repeated: "Why couldn't they have said so at the time. Just one of them. It would have made such a difference."

He got up and walked restlessly, then he leaned on the mantelpiece; his face became tranquil; he smiled down at her. "No. You are right. That was as much my fault as the other things. I got the idea that I was persecuted and nothing would make me let go of the idea. It began in Africa when I was lonely. Then I thought that I hated my race; God forgive me."

"You can't hate it."

"I love it and I am proud of it. And I can take away part of my sin against it."

"You haven't sinned," she said, troubled by the word.

"Oh, yes, I have. And I know what I must do."

"What must you do?"

He shook his head. "No. I won't tell you yet. I don't want to talk about myself ever again. I shall," he added, grinning, "because I am made that way, but I don't want to. Do you mind if in return for Lowenstal's letter I show you one from Lawrence Nash?"

He took it carefully from his wallet. The paper was grey and thin; the neat, pencilled lines very pale, so that he was obliged to hold the letter to the light.

Dear Philip,

I hope you will get this without too much delay. It is destined for the diplomatic bag when it arrives in Madrid.

I wanted you to know how good a time it is, and how encouraging. The fighting in our sector has been severe; first sleep for two days this morning. We shall win because we must. I can't tell you any details in case the letter is stopped. I remember talking to you last year about the holiday in Spain, and I thought it would make you laugh to know that I am writing a book called "Holiday in Spain" at odd moments.

You worried me then because you hated both sides so much; even before the war began and made the two sides inevitable throughout the world. They are inevitable now. I hope that you will throw your lot in with us. I shall be grateful all my life for having this chance to fight for freedom.

Do you remember:

"*I came up to Imbros at morning, out of the sea.*
Stand in the trench, Achilles, flame-capped and shout for me."

It has been in my head for days. I say it to myself when things become active, to stop myself from being frightened. Not that there is much to be frightened of, except the aeroplanes. I wish I could

tell you more. I know you would be interested. Anyway, it is good to have talked to you for a minute.

Yours from a great way off,

Lawrence.

She handed the letter back to him.

"He is an inhuman creature," Philip said. "He always was. Priggish, selfish, inflexible, narrow. And yet I admire him. I did when he was quite a child. I thought that he had unusual resignation. There he is, fighting placidly for the one thing he does believe. He has been in Spain more than a year now. It can't be comfortable."

"Do you think he will be killed?"

"No. Somehow I don't. I am grateful to that young man. He taught me something."

He put away the letter. He sat with the tankard between his hands. "*These were men and women*," he quoted to the ceiling.

"*They have gone their ways now*
as men and women must. The
high song is over."

"Who?"

"Lawrence. Jennifer. Victoria. You. Ronald. Me."

"What else should we be but men and women?"

"When I was crazy I kept looking back and seeing all of us, five years ago, as a kind of frozen forecast. Not only of what we are now, but of what Europe is now. I saw Jennifer and Lawrence as the Left—before all this began. I thought they never had existed as anything but mechanical prophets. Then, when he broke to her that he was leaving for Spain, the two of them somehow thawed for me. I remembered the other time; when he left her for his father. It was the same then. Funny," he said, "as though I saw their flesh and blood when I had thought of them only as bones. Can you understand?"

"A little."

"And Victoria. She did the same trick. I had hugged the memory of her as the hand of Jehovah sent to smite me. I flattered her. When I saw her again I realised that she had only two ideas; the other was work. She would have deceived anybody, not only me. She's still at it. She's a much simpler proposition than she looked when I was mad."

"You weren't mad."

"I was as mad as anybody else who thinks in terms of Right and Left. It is we who make the creeds; not the creeds that make us."

She said: "I suppose I am very stupid and selfish. I only want the world to be better in a vague way. I don't do anything about it. I really care more about Ronald and keeping the house nice for him, and getting the bills paid, and looking after the garden and the dog. There will be the baby; but that is another selfish love, isn't it?"

He looked at her for a long time, his narrow hands propping his chin; he shook his head slowly.

"That is human; universal. The animal and the spirit in you wanting their freedom; to be individual; to be private; to belong to God and yourself. That is only the true way of life, which we haven't troubled to think about, you and I; because it was so ordinary; because it was not threatened; we took it for granted."

"And can't we do that any more?"

He knelt beside her, taking the work out of her hands. "I promised Ronald that I would look after you. This isn't looking after you. Your face is getting too small for your eyes."

She lay back, looking at him; he went to shut the windows; he made the papers neat upon the desk. He emptied an ash-tray and shook the cushion in the chair where he had sat.

"You are so tidy always. You would be a peaceful person to marry," she said. "I wish there was somebody very nice for you."

He laughed.

"Please tell me what you are going to do, Philip? Where you will go after this?"

"Not to-night, dearest."

At the door of her room he kissed her and said: "Bless you. I am so happy." His face, changed and alight, was before her eyes when she lay staring into the dark.

CHAPTER NINE

I

HE told her while they lay on the lawn, looking up at the mosaic of leaf and apple overhead. They had watched a liner, magnificently enormous, bridging the gap from the shore to the mainland with its sheer side. They had seen a flying-boat of the squadron skim the water. They had thrown rotten apples for the dog. It was a lazy afternoon. Philip had brought his manuscript book, intending to work; it remained unopened on the grass. Sally sewed and slept; glad that he was as idle as she.

"I shall remember this," he said suddenly. "It will look as desirable as it is from Germany."

She laid aside her work and stared at him. "From Germany?"

"That is where I am going."

"But why? You will hate it."

"I know. I am going to fetch Joseph."

She had not heard him speak Joseph's name for years. She tried to remember whether she had thought that Joseph was dead, or whether she had merely forgotten him; she felt ashamed.

"Has he been there all this time?"

"Oh, yes."

"But——"

"Yes," he said, in a stiff, cold voice. "He did want to come to England. Always. And I wouldn't do a thing about it. I couldn't face the facts. I went on telling myself that if he once wrote to ask me, I would go and fetch him. But he never asked. I only made up my mind on the night when Broughton was speaking; the night of the trouble. I had to fix things with the refugee committee. Jennifer helped me. I had to get my fare and his fare. I leave on Friday."

"You won't stay there long?"

"Not a minute longer than I can help. I may run into difficulties."

"How?"

"You see," he said, "I have been rather frank with my propaganda against the régime."

"But they don't get the English newspapers."

"Oh, don't they? Besides, the English stuff was the least of it. I wrote in German when I was in Vienna."

"But they can't hurt you. You are an Englishman."

"I was born a German and a Jew," he said lightly.

"Do you think that there is any danger?"

"I can't believe there is. But Jennifer's Foreign Office friend told me that I was unwise to go." He sat up, hugging his knees, looking enchanted with the thought.

"Then why do you go? If you send him the money, he can come alone."

"He can't travel by himself. He is completely crippled, remember; he hardly moves out of the house. I have found a nice home for him here, in Regent's Park; a rich Jewish family who will take him. God, they are good, some of those people."

"Philip, can't someone else fetch him."

"No, I want to go." He chewed a leaf. She studied the obstinate line of his profile; she thought: "Yes, you would. You are right. It may not be necessary, but you, being you, must do it." She thought that he was more placid than she had ever known him; she could not even tell whether he was afraid.

She saw him in focus; from the curled and shining head to the narrow feet in their canvas shoes; his sweater too brightly blue; his hands too well manicured; she saw the width of his shoulders, the flat line of his stomach, the careful creases in his pale flannels; for once he looked entirely Jewish to her; his neatness, his beauty, were overdone and obvious. She thought with affection of the race of whose blood there was a little in her; loving them for their kindness, for their easy slant into melodrama, for the gentle, elusive quality that the best of them had, for their childish defiance of the world that was their imposition.

She had heard talk of "absorbing" the Jews. She thought that one might as well try to absorb quicksilver. For a moment their whole purpose seemed clear to her; they were the leaven of the human race, the secret of its liveliness, and though man might war with them as he warred with the God within himself, he would admit them again, having no choice.

Afterwards she could not remember how long they had remained in peace when the screaming noise of the car's horn sounded up the road.

"That is our car," she said.

"How do you know?"

"It is an American horn."

"Where do you keep the car as a rule?" Philip asked sleepily.

"It stays at the garage by the pier now that I can't drive it. And Ronald brings it up at week-ends. Here he is."

She saw his light-blue uniform, the colour of his hair, the car's shining body mixed in a sudden brilliant snapshot, warning her. She was not deceived into pleasure at the sight of him; she guessed at once that he brought bad and urgent news. She climbed out of the deck-chair and went clumsily to meet him.

"Hullo, love," he said. "I've got a couple of hours' leave. Hullo, Philip."

"Why the leave?" Her voice sounded shrewish and sharp to her own ears.

"I'm afraid I am going to be a nuisance. The Nyon Conference has pointed a finger at me, and said, 'Your country needs you.'"

The Nyon Conference. Italy keeping out. Non-intervention. The words were jumbled in her mind while Ronald said: "Two squadrons are flying to Spain; to keep watch for submarines; they call us a blinking non-intervention patrol. Leaving the day after to-morrow; from Plymouth." She felt his fingers tightening on hers. "The order just came through. My lunch is stuck somewhere under my chin. Can you beat it, Sally?"

"Where are they sending you?"

"Malta. Beautiful women and blazing sun. I shall want my flannels."

"Are you piloting?"

"Yes, God help me. I'm in command of one of the machines. Even if I make Batten Head, which seems remarkably unlikely, I shall probably end up at Nice by mistake. It won't be for more than a few weeks. Poor tubby, you ought to come too."

"M'm," she said, thinking. "This is too silly. Too like war. And me having to be brave." She put her arms round him. "You ought to get things ready," she said. "What exactly do people need when they non-intervene?"

"I can't think." He went on kissing the top of her head. "Philip will look after you all right, won't he?"

"Yes," she said. "Philip will look after me all right."

"I want a drink." He held her arm while they walked into the house. "And when we get there I am willing to bet that we are sent straight back again."

She could not answer. She thought that she could have borne it better if he had not been so obviously excited. She disliked herself because she felt ignominiously left behind. In a moment, the other, less bearable thoughts would begin. Just at this second, while her throat hurt and her hands were cold, she wanted to say as she had said when she was a child: "It's *mean*. It isn't fair."

And it was not her habit to cry against destiny. She thought of the squadron heading for the Spanish coast; the wings in formation, the shapes, as she had seen them so often, descending on another harbour in the sun, the high adventure that he welcomed. She asked him dry questions and listened to the answers. She said: "Aren't you lucky?" She wished that he had not come suddenly to kiss her, to say: "I'm sorry." She looked through her tears at the sea and the sky and a silly aeroplane, a passenger machine, going over; she thought: "Why did they invent the damn things, anyway?"

He said: "You won't be alone. You'd rather have Philip than anybody, wouldn't you?"

"Yes. Oh, yes."

She must get to Philip and warn him that he must keep silence about his journey. She had no hope that he would stay with her. Perhaps more certainly than anyone whom she knew, Philip had his own fate to work out.

She would find somebody; a dull, cosy friend to sit opposite her in the evenings and wait with her. She refused to pity herself. It was too easy an indulgence.

She would not even cry again. There were no thoughts; there was no point of view. It was a simple situation. Saying good-bye. Going to the war. Being left. Silly to think that it could not happen. Perhaps her dread had been for the shadow of this; and if that were true there could be nothing now to dread.

She shut her eyes and wished that she could see the future, whatever danger lay there. The bright colours faded off her lids, leaving the dark.

III

She waited by her window. The sky and the garden and the water had the pale, misty tones of early morning; the indeterminate hour and weather

when sun or rain might follow. She strained her eyes; she did not know whether she would see them. It was cold beside the window.

Very faint and far away, as though she heard it only in her own mind, there sounded the droning of the engines. Ronald would be trying to think of her, to send a message back from that cabin where a hundred discs and instruments claimed his exact attention; where the machine was all-important, absorbing; where the narrow sides shut him in. He would have no time for her; he would not be Ronald any more, only the pilot ordered on his journey.

She watched the sky until its pale face was blurred everywhere with dark; she blinked and it came clear again. That was the sound of the engines, unmistakable, and those were the wings. She saw them pass roaring in arrow-head formation, greyer than the sky.

She waved foolishly; she called: "Good-bye, Ronald! Good-bye!" in a feeble voice that cracked on the silence. They were away now, flat, unrecognisable shapes bunched together, becoming small, becoming a mere black line, vanishing in the mist.

She did not understand when Philip said to her: "This shouldn't be. For you."

"Why not for me? It could happen to anybody."

He said confusedly: "I never thought that you would be caught in it, too. I knew that I was, that the others were."

"What do you mean, Philip?"

He stroked her cheek. "Salt of the earth," he said.

She made a face at him. "I must go in and order the meals."

She went towards the house. Now she heard her own footsteps on the gravel. Foolishness. She looked back once at the autumn garden and saw Philip standing there perplexed, as though he learned a lesson. "Salt of the earth." His words, that she found unreasonably kind, proved that she existed in his mind quite otherwise than as her true, ordinary self. Perhaps he saw the thing that had happened to her also differently. It might have been important for him to be the observer of this scene.

That thought was comforting. To have another life, another purpose, in the mind of the onlooker, was to be at company; was not to be alone.

EPILOGUE

PHILIP stood still and pointed. His own attitude, his own body, his own thoughts had become unfamiliar; he might have been saying good-bye to himself. He asked: "Is that the ship?" In this dark she looked immense, as though she were fated to travel further than the North Sea.

He was glad that it was night. The docks were beautiful, with the lights at the mastheads and the lights of the little houses by the river; the little houses by day would have been squalid and sad. The coloured station-lamps, the yellow windows of the train, the lit smoke, painted the dark variously. A good last picture.

With one foot on the gangway, there was no more land, only the ship.

"This way, sir, for the second class."

He saw the luggage placed in the saloon. He went on deck. He walked and the landscape of the ship began to assemble; in deck-house and swinging boat and cabin port-hole. There was some identity here.

Not his own identity. That was gone; in a series of faded little snapshots showing an ordinary man who thought that he was hated because he was a Jew; who had forced his whole world into the frame of his hatred and seen it made flesh and blood again.

He turned up his collar. The wind was shrieking in the masts overhead; it would be a rough journey.

Try as he would, he could not be solemn nor afraid of the things that might wait for him. Perhaps he had become bored with himself. He was impatient for the boat to sail, that the illusion of action might begin.

He listened to the feet on the gangways, to the echoes and creakings and always the noise of the wind. He lit a cigarette within the shelter of his collar.

He saw a gull blown sideways into the light; its sickle-shaped wings sure and travelling with the wind; its neat feet folded under the white feathers. He watched it until it curved into the dark again.

A man came to lean on the rail a little way off.

He wished to think of a last word for this country and a defiant salute to the land at the end of his journey, the land where freedom was dead. In the present mood of calm there was no word that he could speak. He knew that he was no more significant than the figure huddled on the rail ten yards

away; a stranger to every other person in the world and still a blood-brother; imperfect and a part of the perfection that was beyond the mind of man.

The siren made its noise; the ship moved.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Devil We Know*, by Pamela Frankau.]