

ACT TWO

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

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

FLORENCE *comes back and answers it.*

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

Oh. What for?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

Oh, Lord!

FLORENCE (*reprovingly*)

Yes, miss.

LEONORA

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

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

What did you tell her this morning?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

Oh, Florence!

FLORENCE

Yes, miss.

LEONORA

Oh, well, here goes! (*To DWIGHT.*) Help yourself to drinks. (*FLORENCE goes back into the bedroom. LEONORA takes up the telephone.*) Hello? Aunt Emily? . . . Yes. Oh, I'm better, auntie. . . . I really don't know. Just an . . . an attack. It was most peculiar. . . . I don't know. Giddiness. . . . I felt sort of . . . lightheaded. Yes, I expect so. . . . I know . . . I'm sorry. . . . Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, I *am* sorry. . . . Yes, I know. . . . I know. . . . I know. Oh, auntie, I am sorry. (*She giggles.*) No, I'm not laughing. Really I'm not. . . . Yes, I know. I meant

to ring up. Only . . . Oh, I've just been . . . out. I've been in the country. I thought it might do me good. It was looking lovely. . . . Yes, Florence told me. It was sweet of you. I do appreciate it, really I do. Oh, I'm sorry. . . . Oh, did you? . . . Yes, so did I. Father seems a lot better, and a lot thinner, mother says. . . . Oh, good. I'll probably write tomorrow. Well, good-bye, auntie. . . . Yes, of course. Well . . . soon. Very soon. Good-bye. Give my love to uncle. (*She rings off.*) Oof!

[*Flops on to chaise-longue.*]

DWIGHT

Was she very sore?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Send her some flowers.

LEONORA

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

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

It was good, though.

DWIGHT

All except dinner.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Shape.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

I suppose I should. But it's fun . . . dramatisin oneself. I don't believe there's a single dramatic situation I haven't pictured myself in. I can be happ

for hours imagining myself dying of a broken heart, or being ruined—financially—and having to face life in the raw. I'm always so beautifully brave.

DWIGHT

You've obviously had a very happy life.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT (*thoughtfully*)

No.

LEONORA

What's the matter?

DWIGHT

Nothing. Why?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA (*taken aback*)

Really?

DWIGHT

Really and truly.

LEONORA

What for?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*relieved*)

Oh. Is that all? You frightened me.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

No. You're not, are you?

DWIGHT

I'm not.

LEONORA

That's all right, then.

DWIGHT (*taking her face in his hands*)

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT (*patting his ears*)

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

LEONORA

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

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

LEONORA

What are you looking at?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*becoming the stage invalid child*)

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

DWIGHT (*at window*)

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Yes! Please, please, please, daddee!

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

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

LEONORA (*changing her tactics*)

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

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

DWIGHT (*after looking at her*)

Dead! Dead! And never called me mother!

LEONORA (*sitting up instantly*)

"I thought to pass away before, but *still* alive I
And in the fields around I hear the bleating of
lamb!"

DWIGHT (*bleats*)

Baah!

[*She laughs.*]

LEONORA

Idiot! Oh, idiot!

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*becoming conscious of the open bedroom door*)

Ssh!

DWIGHT (*getting her alarm*)

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

LEONORA

Oh, Steve! You lunatic!

DWIGHT

What did you call me?

LEONORA (*catching herself*)

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

DWIGHT

All right. Let's both be Steve.

*[He comes back to her.*LEONORA (*holding out her hand*)

Steve.

DWIGHT (*taking it*)

Steve.

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

LEONORA

Oh, dear! This can't last.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I could toy with some food.

LEONORA (*forcibly*)

So could I! I could do more than toy!

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

A tub makes a new woman of me.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*getting up*)

Fine! It's been a good day.

DWIGHT

It's been a grand day.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT (*looking at her*)

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

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

FLORENCE

You rang, miss?

LEONORA (*very gay*)

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

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

All right, Florence, I'll be simple!

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

Yes?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

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

FLORENCE

No, miss.

LEONORA

Were they very cross?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA (*grinning a little*)

Oh, yes. Did she ask you any questions?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

What?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

Oh!

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

What did you tell her?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

My trusty Florence.

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA (*with a smile*)

And you said?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

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

FLORENCE

Beg your pardon, miss?

LEONORA

Not at all.

FLORENCE

Have I done wrong, miss?

LEONORA (*airily*)

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

FLORENCE (*begins repentantly*)

Well, I'm sure I . . . (*Then gets truculent.*) Well, anyway, miss, how was I to know what you wanted

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

LEONORA (*mock serious*)

Florence, what *are* you talking about?

FLORENCE (*very hurt*)

Nothing, miss. It doesn't matter.

LEONORA

Florence, do you think I'm doing wrong?

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA (*with stage intensity*)

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

FLORENCE

No, miss.

LEONORA

Perhaps it's just as well.

FLORENCE

Is there anything else, miss?

LEONORA

Florence, I am innocent!

FLORENCE (*sedately*)

Yes, miss.

[*She begins to go.*

LEONORA (*turns back to her letter and then looks up*)

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

[*FLORENCE remains impassive.*

FLORENCE

Is that all, miss?

LEONORA

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

FLORENCE

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

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

LEONORA

Hello? . . . Yes. Speaking. . . . Oh, hello! Peter? Which Peter? . . . Oh, Walmsley! . . . Yes. Hello. . . . What? . . . To-morrow evening? . . . I'm afraid I can't. Yes. So am I. . . . No. I'm afraid I can't manage that, either. Well, I don't know, Peter.

I'm rather busy these days, really. . . . I don't know. I don't look like having much time free . . . well, for the next three weeks, really. I've . . . I've got some Americans to look after, and they take rather a lot of entertaining. (*She listens as though to a very long speech, grows bored with it, puts down the receiver, wanders across the room, fetching and lighting herself a cigarette, then returns and picks up the receiver again. PETER, at the other end, has apparently not noticed her absence.*) Oh, Peter, shut up. If you go on like that I won't come out with you . . . at all. Well, come in for a cocktail some time. . . . Don't be silly. . . . Yes. I *am* sorry. Good-bye, Peter.

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

FLORENCE

I put your things out, miss.

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

DWIGHT

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

FLORENCE

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

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

DWIGHT

Hello there, Steve!

LEONORA (*off*)

Goodness! You've been quick.

[*FLORENCE stands in the doorway between the two.*

DWIGHT

We're not going.

LEONORA (*off*)

What? Why not?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Just a minute. I'm not dressed.

DWIGHT

Well, slip on something.

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

LEONORA (*off*)

What is it?

DWIGHT

Come in here and I'll tell you.

LEONORA (*off*)

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

DWIGHT (*turning to her*)

Honey, it's bad news.

LEONORA (*blankly*)

Bad news?

DWIGHT

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

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

LEONORA

What is it?

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

DWIGHT

I rushed straight round to you.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I know.

LEONORA

Are you . . . going to?

DWIGHT

I guess I've got to.

LEONORA (*looking at the cable again*)

Who is Addison?

DWIGHT

My partner.

LEONORA

It says: "*Can you sail?*"

DWIGHT

It means: "*Will you?*"

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Well! That's that, then.

[*She moves away from him.*]

DWIGHT (*following her and putting his arms round her*)

Don't be sore at me.

LEONORA (*pulling herself together*)

It's all right.

DWIGHT

Let's sit down and talk about it.

LEONORA

Will you come back?

DWIGHT

I can't before next year.

LEONORA

Next year?

DWIGHT

I know.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Can't you come to the States?

LEONORA

Me? How?

DWIGHT

Get on a boat.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Just that you wanted a holiday.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

I know. But that's different.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Do they think it's so awful?

LEONORA

No. They think it's so far.

DWIGHT

No farther than you are from us.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Mohammed hadn't got parents.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Well, I have to consider them.

DWIGHT

Do you get on with them?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Not without a reason.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

I'm afraid not.

DWIGHT

Well! That's that, then.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Noon. Boat train from Waterloo at 8:30.

LEONORA

And you've got to pack?

DWIGHT

That won't take long.

LEONORA

Well, shall we go out all the same?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Alright. What shall we talk about?

DWIGHT

Us.

LEONORA

Have you anything to say?

DWIGHT

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

[*He takes her in his arms.*]

LEONORA (*protesting*)

No! No! Don't!

DWIGHT

Why not?

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Steve . . . would you consider . . . marrying me?
[*She turns to him, staring at him.*]

LEONORA

Steve!

DWIGHT

Would you?

LEONORA (*dazzledly*)

What? . . .

DWIGHT

Could we do it to-night?

LEONORA

Of course not.

DWIGHT

Do you have to have an Act of Parliament?

LEONORA (*laughing*)

No! . . .

DWIGHT

I'll be gone in the morning.

LEONORA

I know.

DWIGHT

Would you come after me and marry me?

LEONORA (*bewildered*)

Oh . . .

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

What's sense got to do with it?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Did you sleep last night?

LEONORA

Not a great deal.

DWIGHT

Neither did I.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I should have thought those were reasons enough.

LEONORA

No! But be sensible!

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT (*lightly*)

Not in America!

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT (*taking it up*)

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

And he's in love with me.

LEONORA

How do you know?

DWIGHT

He said so. Besides, I know.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I shall run away and marry him.

LEONORA (*bursting into imaginary tears*)

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

DWIGHT

I can always go to the Consul.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

And elks . . .

LEONORA

And gangsters. No, but it's true. How could I? If

you were English, it would be mad enough. But, as I say, a new country . . . new people . . . new everything. I *don't* know anything about you. We seem to have talked of *me* all day—or just nonsense. It's a bit of a risk. Just because of an infatuation.

DWIGHT

Is that all it is?

LEONORA

How do I know? Quite possibly.

DWIGHT

You don't mean that.

[He comes close to her.]

LEONORA

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

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA *(pressing her forehead with her hands)*

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

DWIGHT

I shall feel worse than ever.

LEONORA

I know. So shall I.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Quite. I can support you.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*protesting*)

No.

DWIGHT

Well, it's a bit vague. Write all you know of the

history of America in not more than five hundred words.

LEONORA

Have you a family?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

A . . . ?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA (*after a second, brightly*)

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

DWIGHT

I was married nearly seven years ago.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Not any more.

LEONORA

Oh. I'm sorry.

[*With sincere sympathy.*]

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

With my mother.

LEONORA

How old is he?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Yes.

[*She looks at the other photo again.*]

LEONORA

He's like you.

DWIGHT

Thank you.

LEONORA

What's he called?

DWIGHT

Jonathan.

LEONORA

Jonathan. (*She goes on looking at the photo a mo*

ment, and then at him. They hold each other's eyes for a moment. Then she gives him back the case.)
Nice!

DWIGHT

Um. Kinda nice.

LEONORA

Tell me about your wife.

DWIGHT (*vaguely*)

Oh . . .

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

It's such a long time ago.

LEONORA

Why did you break?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

And you?

DWIGHT

I think I did. Once. Do you mind?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

What do *you* think?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Not a great deal. I call him every Sunday.

LEONORA

Telephone, do you mean?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

How strange.

DWIGHT

What is?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

It makes a difference?

LEONORA

A little.

DWIGHT

How?

LEONORA

It makes it all . . . more grown up.

DWIGHT

Do you think I ought to have told you before?

LEONORA (*simply, but not definitely*)

No . . .

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Oh.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Then you agree it makes it serious?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

A bit.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I suppose so.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Me too.

DWIGHT

Then won't you marry me?

LEONORA (*after a pause*)

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

DWIGHT

What's not enough?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

You, saying that.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I like *you*.

LEONORA

You want me.

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

I can't imagine.

DWIGHT (*accepting the situation: shortly*)

Alright.

LEONORA

I *am* right.

DWIGHT

I guess so. (*There is a long silence. DWIGHT takes a cigarette and lights it, his back turned to her. She looks at his back and then goes over to the window, draws back the curtains again, and stands looking out. He looks at her back. Then he comes down to the piano and almost mechanically begins fingering out the melody of "I'm alone because I love you."*)

LEONORA *in the window begins to cry, silently at first, only her shoulders shaking. Then presently she gives way to it completely. DWIGHT hears her and goes to*

her quickly.) Honey, don't! (He puts his arms round her.) Don't, please!

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

It's all right.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Sure!!

LEONORA *(too brightly)*

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

DWIGHT

Oh, stop being bright, will you?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Well? What do you want to do?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

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

DWIGHT

Darling!

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*brightly*)

Hell!

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA (*her face against his*)

I won't.

DWIGHT

That's right. Will you write to me?

LEONORA

Um.

DWIGHT

All the time?

LEONORA

Um.

DWIGHT

Tell me everything you do?

LEONORA

Everything.

DWIGHT

Never forget me?

LEONORA

Never.

DWIGHT

I'll be back next year.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT (*looking at her*)

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

LEONORA

They don't.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

You've never seen them.

DWIGHT

Never mind. I love them all the same, and all of you.
[*Another embrace that begins humorously and ends a good deal more passionately.*]

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I believe I am!

LEONORA

What *is* it about you?

DWIGHT

Personality.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Beloved, so am I.

LEONORA

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

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

DWIGHT (*very much carried away*)

You're so adorable . . .

LEONORA (*breathlessly*)

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

DWIGHT (*holding her very tight*)

My dear!

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

No. We mustn't.

LEONORA

Why?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

Well, then! We'd have had that.

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I know.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

I'm coming back.

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

We're going to write.

LEONORA

Nor keep it in a thermos.

DWIGHT

Won't you change your mind?

LEONORA

Don't let's begin again.

DWIGHT

What then?

LEONORA

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

DWIGHT

Now?

LEONORA

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

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

DWIGHT

O.K.

LEONORA

What were you going to say just then?

DWIGHT

Nothing.

LEONORA

What was it?

DWIGHT

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

LEONORA

And you.

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

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA (*startled*)

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

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA

Yes.

[FLORENCE goes into the bedroom.

DWIGHT (*after she has gone*)

Well . . .

LEONORA (*nodding*)

Yes. Go now.

DWIGHT

Good-bye, my dear.

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

FLORENCE

Is there anything else, miss?

LEONORA (*absently*)

What? No. I don't think so.

FLORENCE

Then I'll say good night, miss.

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

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

The world outside is very beautiful, Florence.

FLORENCE

Beg pardon, miss?

LEONORA

It's all right.

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

FLORENCE

There's nothing else, miss?

LEONORA (*listlessly*)

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

FLORENCE

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

LEONORA (*very subdued*)

No, thank you.

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

Shall I draw the curtains now, miss?

LEONORA

Yes. All right. (*FLORENCE draws the curtains. LEO-*

NORA *takes a cracker and begins to eat it.*) Mr. Houston's gone, Florence. You can lock up.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

LEONORA

He's gone back to America.

FLORENCE (*startled*)

To-night, miss?

LEONORA

He's sailing in the morning.

FLORENCE (*interested*)

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

LEONORA

Good night, Florence.

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

THE CURTAIN FALLS