

(MIDGE replaces the receiver: She is near to tears.)

EDWARD. Who was that?

MIDGE. My employer.

EDWARD. You should have told her to go to hell.

MIDGE. And get myself fired?

EDWARD. I can't bear to hear you so - subservient.

MIDGE. You don't understand what you're talking about.

(She moves above the sofa.) To show an independent spirit one needs an independent income.

EDWARD. My God, Midge, there are other jobs - interesting jobs.

MIDGE. Yes - you read advertisements asking for them every day in *The Times*.

EDWARD. Yes.

MIDGE. (moving up centre) Sometimes, Edward, you make me lose my temper. What do you know about jobs? Getting them and keeping them? This job, as it happens, is fairly well paid, with reasonable hours.

EDWARD. Oh, money!

MIDGE. (*moving to left of the sofa*) Yes, money. That's what I use to live on. I've got to have a job that *keeps* me, do you understand.

EDWARD. Henry and Lucy would ...

MIDGE. We've been into that before. Of course they would.

(*She crosses to the fireplace.*) It's no good, Edward. You're an Angkatell and Henry and Lucy are Angkatells, but I'm only half an Angkatell. My father was a plain little business man - honest and hardworking and probably not very clever. It's from him I get the feeling I don't like to accept favours. When his business failed, his creditors got paid twenty shillings in the pound. I'm like him. I mind about money and about debts. Don't you see, Edward, it's all right for you and Lucy. Lucy would have any of her friends to stay indefinitely and never think about it twice - and she could go and live on her friends if necessary. There would be no feeling of obligation. But I'm different.

EDWARD. (*rising*) You dear ridiculous child. (*He puts the magazine in the coffee table.*)

MIDGE. I may be ridiculous but *I am not a child.*

EDWARD. (*crossing to the fireplace and standing above MIDGE*)

But it's all wrong that you should have to put up with rudeness and insolence. My God, Midge, I'd like to take you out of it all - carry you off to Ainswick.

MIDGE. (*furiously and half crying*) Why do you say these stupid things? You don't mean them. (*She sits on the pouffe.*) Do you think it makes life any easier when I'm being bullied and shouted at to remember that there are places like Ainswick in the world? Do you think I'm grateful to you for standing there and babbling about how much you'd like to take me out of it all? It sounds so charming and means absolutely nothing.

EDWARD. Midge!

MIDGE. Don't you know I'd sell my soul to be at Ainswick now, this minute? I love Ainswick so much I can hardly

bear to think of it. You're cruel, Edward, saying nice things you don't mean.

EDWARD. But I do mean them. (*He eases centre, turns and faces MIDGE.*) Come on, Midge. We'll drive to Ainswick now in my car.

MIDGE. Edward!

EDWARD. (*drawing MIDGE to her feet*) Come on, Midge. We're going to Ainswick. Shall we? What about it, eh?

MIDGE. (*laughing a little hysterically*) I've called your bluff, haven't I?

EDWARD. It isn't bluff.

MIDGE. (*patting EDWARD 's arm then crossing to left of the sofa*) Calm down, Edward. In any case, the police would stop us.

EDWARD. Yes, I suppose they would.

MIDGE. (*sitting on the sofa at the left end of it; gently*) All right, Edward, I'm sorry I shouted at you.

EDWARD. (*quietly*) You really love Ainswick, don't you?

MIDGE. I'm resigned to not going there, but don't rub it in.

EDWARD. I can see it wouldn't do to rush off there this moment - (*he moves to left of the sofa*) but I'm suggesting that you come to Ainswick for good.

MIDGE. For good?

EDWARD. I'm suggesting that you marry me, Midge.

MIDGE. Marry ... ?

EDWARD. I'm not a very romantic proposition. I'm a dull dog. I read what I expect you would think are dull books, and I write a few dull articles and potter about the estate. But we've known each other a long time - and perhaps Ainswick would make up for me. Will you come, Midge?

MIDGE. Marry you? (*She rises.*)

EDWARD. Can you bear the idea?