

MIDGE HARVEY enters up centre from left. She is small, neatly dressed but obviously badly off. She is a warm-hearted, practical and very nice young woman, a little younger than **HENRIETTA**. She carries a suitcase.)

MIDGE. (as she enters) Hullo, Cousin Henry.

SIR HENRY. (turning) Midge! (He moves to right of her, takes the suitcase from her, and kisses her.) Nice to see you.

MIDGE. Nice to see you.

SIR HENRY. How are you?

MIDGE. Terribly well.

SIR HENRY. Not been overworking you in that damned dress shop of yours?

MIDGE. (moving down centre) Business is pretty slack at the moment, or I shouldn't have got the weekend off. The bus was absolutely crowded; I've never known it go so slowly. (She sits on the sofa, puts her bag and gloves beside her and looks towards the window right.) It's heaven to be here. Who's coming this weekend?

SIR HENRY. (putting the suitcase on the floor right of the armchair left right) Nobody much. The Cristows. You know them, of course.

MIDGE. The Harley Street doctor with a rather dim wife?

SIR HENRY. That's right. Nobody else. Oh yes - (he strikes a match) Edward, of course.

MIDGE. (turning to face **SIR HENRY**; suddenly stricken by the sound of the name) Edward!

SIR HENRY. (lighting his pipe) Quite a job to get Edward away from Ainswick these days.

MIDGE. *(rising)* Ainswick! Lovely, lovely Ainswick! *(She crosses to the fireplace and gazes up at the picture above it.)*

SIR HENRY. *(moving down centre)* Yes, it's a beautiful place.

MIDGE. *(feelingly)* It's the most beautiful place in the world.

SIR HENRY. *(putting the matchbox on the coffee table)* Had some happy times there, eh? *(He eases to right of the armchair left centre.)*

MIDGE. *(turning)* All the happy times I've ever had were there.

(LADY ANGKATELL enters right. She carries a large empty flower-pot.)

LADY ANGKATELL. *(as she enters)* Would you believe it, *(she crosses above the sofa to right of SIR HENRY)* they've been at it again. They've pushed up a whole row of lovely little lobelias. Ah well, as long as the weather keeps fine ...

SIR HENRY. Here's Midge.

LADY ANGKATELL. Where? *(She crosses to MIDGE and kisses her.)* Oh, darling Midge, I didn't see you, dear. *(to SIR HENRY confidentially)* That would help, wouldn't it? What were you both doing when I came in?

SIR HENRY. Talking Ainswick.

LADY ANGKATELL. *(sitting in the armchair left centre; with a sudden change of manner)* Ainswick!

SIR HENRY. *(patting LADY ANGKATELL's shoulder)* There, there, Lucy.
(A little disturbed, he crosses and exits left.)

MIDGE. *(indicating the flower-pot; surprised)* Now why did you bring that in here, darling?

LADY ANGKATELL. I can't begin to think. Take it away.
(MIDGE takes the flower-pot from LADY ANGKATELL, crosses, goes on to the terrace up centre and puts the flower-pot on the ground out of sight.)

Thank you, darling. As I was saying, at any rate the weather's all right. That's *something*. Because if a lot of

discordant personalities are boxed up indoors...*(She looks around.)* Where are you?

(MIDGE moves to right of the armchair left centre.)

Ah, there you are. It makes things ten times worse.

Don't you agree?

MIDGE. Makes what worse?

LADY ANGKATELL. One can play games, of course - but that would be like last year when I shall never forgive myself about poor Gerda - and the worst of it is that she really is so nice. It's odd that anyone as nice as Gerda should be so devoid of any kind of intelligence. If that is what they mean by the law of compensation I don't think it's at all fair.

MIDGE. What are you talking about, Lucy?

LADY ANGKATELL. This weekend, darling. *(She takes hold of MIDGE's left hand.)* It's such a relief to talk it over with you, Midge dear, you're so practical.

MIDGE. Yes, but what *are* we talking over?

LADY ANGKATELL. John, of course, is delightful, with that dynamic personality that all really successful doctors seem to have. But as for Gerda, ah well, we must all be very, very kind.

MIDGE. *(crossing to the fireplace)* Come now, Gerda Cristow isn't as bad as all that.

LADY ANGKATELL. Darling. Those eyes. Like a puzzled cow. And she never seems to understand a word one says to her.

MIDGE. I don't suppose she understands a word *you* say - and I don't know that I blame her. Your mind goes so fast, Lucy, that to keep pace with it, your conversation has to take the most astonishing leaps - with all the connecting links left out. *(She sits on the pouffe.)*

LADY ANGKATELL. Like monkeys. Fortunately Henrietta is here. She was wonderful last spring when we played limericks or anagrams - one of those things - we had all finished when we suddenly discovered that poor

Gerda hadn't even started. She didn't even know what the game *was*. It was dreadful, wasn't it, Midge?

MIDGE:. Why anyone ever comes to stay with the Angkatells, I don't know. What with the brainwork and the round games and your peculiar style of conversation, Lucy.

LADY ANGKATELL. I suppose we must be rather trying. *(She rises, moves to the coffee table and picks up the tobacco jar.)* The poor dear looked so bewildered; and John looked so impatient. *(She crosses to the fireplace.)* It was then that I was grateful to Henrietta. *(She puts the jar on the mantelpiece, turns and moves centre.)* She turned to Gerda and asked for the pattern of the knitted pullover she was wearing - a dreadful affair in pea green - with little bobbles and pom-poms and things - oh, sordid - but Gerda brightened up at once and looked so pleased. The worst of it is Henrietta had to buy some wool and knit one.

MIDGE. And was it very terrible?

LADY ANGKATELL. Oh, it was ghastly. No - on Henrietta it looked quite charming - which is what I mean when I say that the world is so very very sad. One simply doesn't know *why* ...

MIDGE. Woah! Don't start rambling again, darling. Let's stick to the weekend.

(LADY ANGKATELL sits on the sofa.)

I don't see where the worry is. If you manage to keep off round games, and try to be coherent when you're talking to Gerda, and put Henrietta on duty to tide over the awkward moments, where's the difficulty?

LADY ANGKATELL. It would all be perfectly all right if only Edward weren't coming.

MIDGE. *(reacting at the name)* Edward? *(She rises and turns to the fireplace.)* Yes, of course. What on earth made you ask Edward for the weekend, Lucy?

LADY ANGKATELL. I didn't ask him. He wired to know if we could have him. You know how sensitive Edward

is. If I'd wired back "No," he would never have asked himself again. Edward's like that.

MIDGE. Yes.

LADY ANGKATELL. Dear Edward. If only Henrietta would make up her mind to marry him.

(MIDGE turns and faces LADY ANGKATELL.)

She really is quite fond of him. If only they could have been alone this weekend without the Cristows. As it is, John has the most unfortunate effect on Edward. John becomes so much *more* so, and Edward so much *less* so. If you know what I mean.

(MIDGE nods.)

But I do feel that it's all going to be terribly difficult.

(She picks up the "Daily Graphic.")