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LOVERS' LEAP

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

PHILIP JOHNSON

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LOVERS' LEAP

First produced at the Playhouse, Liverpool, on June 1st, 1934, with the following cast of characters:

HELEN STORER	*Ena Burrill.*
POYNTER	*Harry Andrews.*
SARAH TRAILLE	*Lindisfarne Hamilton.*
CEDRIC NORREYS	*James Stephenson.*
ROGER STORER	*Wyndham Goldie.*

The Play produced by WILLIAM ARMSTRONG.

And subsequently at the Vaudeville Theatre, Strand, London, on October 25th, 1934, with the following cast of characters:

(In the order of their appearance)

HELEN STORER	*Nora Swinburne.*
POYNTER	*John Counsell.*
SARAH TRAILLE	*Ursula Jeans.*
CEDRIC NORREYS	*Walter Hudd.*
ROGER STORER	*Owen Nares.*

The Play produced by OWEN NARES.

The action of the play takes place at Helen's house in the country, between four o'clock of an afternoon in June and ten o'clock the next morning.

LOVERS' LEAP

ACT I

SCENE.—HELEN'S *house in the country.*

The room is of moderate size, with double doors L. *leading into the dining-room, and double doors* R. *admitting to the library.* L.C. *back is a wide arched opening, beyond which, on a higher level and achieved by two broad steps, is the entrance-hall of the house. The scheme of furnishing and decoration is charming, and conveys an immediate impression of originality and discrimination. The walls, including those of the entrance-hall beyond, are painted a light cream, while the carpets on both the floors are of some pale neutral shade. This restraint in the use of any predominating colour is observed in the upholstery and cushions, the one really brilliant-hued note being obtained by the curtains over the arched openings* R. *and* L. *in the hall. Slightly* R. *of* C. *in the room is a fairly long refectory table, and below this, but a little to the* R., *a settee. Set against the* R. *wall below the door is a sideboard, and below this a desk with stool. On the other side, almost against the* L. *wall, is a baby grand piano, and in the corner down* L. *a radio-gramophone. Stairs* R.C. *lead to the first floor, and there is a window back* C. *on the rostrum looking on to the garden. Chairs are distributed about the room at the discretion of the producer. The room has the appearance of being used as the common-room of the house: there are papers and magazines strewn on the refectory table, also a cigarette-box and ashtrays.*

(*See Ground Plan of Scene.*)

When the CURTAIN *rises it is the afternoon of a day in June.* HELEN STORER *is standing down* C., *her back to the audience, glancing from the refectory table to the piano and back again. She is about thirty-five, alert, attractive and possessed of an excellent figure, and is simply but quite exquisitely dressed in a gown of some soft, clinging material. She goes up to the table, picks up the vase of delphiniums and takes them to the piano, placing the rose-bowl on the armchair* L.C. *Having studied the effect, she decides against the vase and replaces it on the table* R.C., *then goes to the armchair for the rose-bowl. She upsets some water on the seat of the armchair and, after taking the bowl to the piano, comes back and wipes it off with her handkerchief. She looks round the room, then goes to the piano and looks at herself in the mirror on the* L. *wall. She suddenly thinks of the photograph, crosses to the desk* R., *searches for it, finds it, recrosses to the piano,*

places it there and studies the effect. She decides to ring the bell, and goes to above the door R. *and does so, then picks up "Vogue" from the table and sits at* L. *end of the settee. After a moment, deciding against the photograph, she springs up, snatches it from the piano, and thrusts it back into the desk, trapping her finger as she slams the drawer to. She murmurs a "damn," and at that moment* POYNTER *enters on the rostrum from* R.

POYNTER. You rang, madam?

HELEN. Yes. When the gentleman who is calling this afternoon arrives, show him straight in here.

POYNTER. And not to keep him waiting five minutes, as you said?

HELEN. No. Straight in here.

POYNTER. Very well, madam.

(*As* POYNTER *turns up* C. *and to* R., *the door-bell rings. In response to the bell he turns, recrosses the rostrum and disappears to* L. *The sound of the bell has startled* HELEN *into a half-suppressed gasp. She glances agitatedly round the room, then sits* R. *on the settee, giving a quick, furtive pat at her hair, as* POYNTER, *followed by* SARAH TRAILLE, *enters.* SARAH *is about twenty-eight, very beautiful, with perfect poise, and exquisitely graceful in all her movements. Her clothes are very lovely, and she is wearing a small travelling-hat.*)

(*Announcing.*) Miss Traille, madam.

(*He goes off to* L., *reappears almost immediately carrying a suitcase, recrosses the rostrum, and goes off to* R.)

SARAH (*coming down stage*). Darling, here I am.

HELEN (*in very come-to-earth tones*). Oh—it's you!

SARAH (*halting abruptly*). Aren't you glad to see me? (*Anxiously.*) Helen, you did get my letter this morning?

HELEN (*rising*). Of course I did, and of course I'm glad to see you. Come and kiss me at once.

(*They kiss,* C.)

How marvellous you're looking.

SARAH (*down* L.C.). So are you. (*Referring to* HELEN'S *dress.*) Manell?

HELEN (*nodding*). Like it?

SARAH. Lovely.

HELEN. And how are you?

SARAH. Just numb from head to foot. I drove up from the station in the village taxi.

HELEN. You poor dear. Sit down at once.

SARAH (*going to armchair* L.C.). If I'm still able to. (*She sits.*) Ah, not so bad as I feared.

(HELEN *takes a cigarette-box from the table* R.C. *and offers it to* SARAH.

She takes one herself, replaces the box on the table, returns to SARAH *and offers her a light. She lights* SARAH'S *cigarette and her own, then moves to* C.)

(*Leaning back luxuriously.*) How lovely it is to have a perfectly adorable house in the country! Oh! by the way, Cedric had to spend last night in Winchester, so he's coming on from there by car.

HELEN (*coming down* C.). Cedric? Cedric who?

SARAH (*looking at her*). Why, Cedric Norreys, of course. (*Sitting up.*) Helen, you're quite sure you *did* get my letter?

HELEN. Yes, dear. Yes, of course.

SARAH. Then, when I said I was coming for the week-end, surely I explained that I was bringing Cedric Norreys with me?

HELEN. Cedric Norreys! Oh, of course! How stupid of me!

SARAH (*looking at her rather narrowly*). Darling—you're not ill or anything? Are you?

HELEN (*above* L. *end of settee*). Ill? No. Why, do I look it?

SARAH. There's a curious aura of vagueness about you. (*Rising.*) If it isn't convenient for you to have us, do for goodness' sake say so at once, and I'll invent excuses to Cedric the moment he arrives.

HELEN. Now, don't be ridiculous! I shall love having you—both of you.

(*They kiss.*)

SARAH (*with a relieved sigh*). That's all right, then. (*She sits in the armchair again.*)

HELEN (*with rather elaborate carelessness, moving* R.C.). By the way, I'm expecting someone to tea to-day. (*She sits at* R. *end of settee.*)

SARAH. Are you, dear? A man?

(HELEN *nods.*)

Why didn't you ask him to dinner? So much more a man's meal, and we should have been an even number.

HELEN. Perhaps I'll ask him to stay; that is, if you promise not to be rude to him, Sarah.

SARAH. Helen, it isn't that poisonous creature who was here last time, and talked of nothing but patent manures?

HELEN. It isn't. . . . As a matter of fact—it's Roger.

SARAH (*sitting erect; with an exclamation*). What?

HELEN. Roger, dear.

(SARAH *rises, goes to the* L. *end of the settee, and stares at her blankly.*)

SARAH. Helen, is this a joke? You're not serious!

HELEN. My dear, a husband one hasn't set eyes on for seven years dropping in to tea is no joke.

SARAH (*still unable to grasp the news*). But—but he's in Egypt.

HELEN (*shaking her head*). No, dear, no. I had a letter from him this morning, to say he landed at Southampton yesterday,

was buying a car and motoring to Town to-day, calling here on his way.

Sarah (*speechless*). Well . . . of all the . . . (*She turns up stage.*)

Helen. Yes, I know.

(*There is a very short pause. Then :*)

Sarah (*up* c., *intensely*). Oh, the utter, utter swine ! (*She moves down again.*)

Helen. Sarah, please !

Sarah (*down* c.). How dared he !

Helen. Well, it's happened, and it's no use lashing ourselves into a state of resentment about it at this stage.

Sarah (l. *of the settee*). But—it's too awful—I mean—what will you say to him ?

Helen. I haven't thought.

Sarah. I should have been thinking of nothing else. You can't just hand the brute a cup of tea and say " What weather." Thank God for one thing, at any rate : Cedric and I will be here to back you up ; you won't be quite at his mercy. Why not refuse to see him ?

Helen. Not at home, you mean ?

Sarah. Not damn-well at home to you, would be more satisfying.

Helen (*shaking her head*). I couldn't take that line with a man who merely asks for a cup of tea.

Sarah. I could, if the man who asked for a cup of tea were the man I'd every right to have breakfast in bed with. . . . How can you be so calm about it, Helen ? I should be seething ! (*She crosses* l. *to the piano.*)

Helen. I did seethe a little just at first, but it only made me feel rather sick, so I took a couple of aspirins instead.

Sarah (*moving* c. *again*). What sort of a letter was it ?

Helen. Well, it was written on the steamer notepaper. You know, crossed flags at the top.

Sarah. I don't care if it was festooned with bunting. (l. *of the settee.*) What did he say, I mean ?

Helen. Just that he'd like to see me, as he—had something he wished to talk to me about.

Sarah. Helen—supposing it should be—— (*She sits beside her, at* l. *end of the settee.*)

Helen. Yes, dear ?

Sarah. Supposing it should be that—that he wants to come back to you ! (*As* Helen *does not immediately reply.*) Oh, Helen, you'd never do that ! You—you couldn't !

(Helen *rises and moves round* r. *to back of the settee.*)

Helen (*after a moment*). Don't you think it would be silly of us to start supposing things at this stage ?

SARAH. Oh, all right . . . (*Rising.*) Only, I hope if he makes any such suggestion, you'll have the presence of mind to smack his stupid face. (*She crosses* L., *picks up her bag from the armchair, puts her hat on the piano, and makes-up at the mirror.*)

HELEN. Roger's face was not stupid; he was extremely good-looking. (*She comes down* C.)

SARAH. Living abroad for seven years will have changed all that. I expect by now he's as yellow as a guinea and as bald as a coot.

HELEN. Oh—don't!

SARAH. Oh! (*Going towards* HELEN, C.) Isn't Egypt where they get that frightful——

HELEN (*interrupting hastily*). Sarah, listen to me. I want you to be very patient and understanding, and to do me a great favour.

SARAH. Darling, anything I can do to help.

HELEN (C.). Then, don't say another word about Roger for at least half an hour. I'm straining every nerve I possess to clamp down my feelings, so as to be able to face this meeting with a little self-possession; but I shall certainly fail to do that if you work me up into a panic beforehand.

SARAH (*reluctantly*). Oh . . . all right! I'll hold my tongue until it aches. (*She sits in the armchair* L.C.)

HELEN. There's no need to do that. Let's talk about something else. (*She crosses to below the settee.*)

SARAH. What?

HELEN. Oh—anything.

SARAH. I see. (*After a long pause.*) How are the crops?

HELEN (*down* R. *of the settee*). Do I know them?

SARAH. Crops, dear. Hay and stuff.

HELEN. Oh! I haven't the faintest idea. (*She crosses up to back of the settee.*)

SARAH. Sunk!

(*Another pause. Then:*)

HELEN (*above* L. *end of the settee, brightly*). Tell me all about your Cedric what's-his-name. (*She sits on* L. *arm of the settee.*)

SARAH (*instantly relaxing her attitude*). Cedric Norreys, dear.

HELEN. Where did you meet him?

SARAH. At the Lidyard's cricket week. We slept together through most of the matches, and since then we've met fairly frequently in Town.

HELEN. What's he like?

SARAH. Oh—well . . . he's just a man.

HELEN. I'm glad. So many of them aren't these days, I'm told. What's his type?

SARAH. Cedric's quite ordinary really . . . except in one tiny detail.

HELEN. And what's that?

SARAH. Well . . . he happens to be rather in love with me.

HELEN. I don't see anything so out of the ordinary in that. Lots of other men have been, haven't they?

SARAH. This time, though, it's rather different. Because, you see, I—well—I'm not at all sure that I'm not just a little bit in love with him.

HELEN (*rising with an impulsive movement towards her*). At last! Sarah, darling—you mean that? Seriously? Oh, but this is too wonderful. He isn't married or anything, is he?

SARAH (*shaking her head*). He's almost unbelievably eligible. The sort of unexciting nice looks that grow on one, nephew of the Duke of St. Donat's and absurdly rich.

HELEN. And he's in love with you? He's told you so?

SARAH. Told me so! He's whispered it, he's crooned it, and he's shouted it.

HELEN (*sitting on the* R. *arm of her chair—delighted*). Oh, Sarah, dearest! I can't tell you how glad I am! (*About to kiss her, then drawing back.*) He—he has asked you to marry him, of course?

SARAH (*rising before she answers*). Oh, yes, he's asked me to marry him. (*She goes to the piano and picks up her hat.*)

HELEN. That's all right, then. One never knows, these days. (*After a pause.*) Well, you're going to accept him, aren't you?

(SARAH *moves a little down* L. *to the end of the piano.*)

SARAH. I don't know, Helen—yet. (*She replaces her hat on the piano.*)

HELEN (*rising*). You don't know? (*Taking a step towards her.*) But—if he loves you, and you love him!

SARAH. I know. (*Moving up and* R.) It sounds perfectly simple, doesn't it?

HELEN (*going to her and taking her down* R., *below the settee*). Now, darling, I do hope you're not going to be foolish about this. It's been very nice for you to have your little flat in Town, all gay and independent; but you wouldn't like to think that life was never going to mean any more to you than that. . . . I mean, Sarah, you're not growing any—well—any—after all, you're twenty-eight.

SARAH. Old enough not to muddle any good chance that may come along? You needn't worry, dearest; I'm not going to muddle this one. (*She sits at* R. *end of the settee.*)

HELEN. Then—you're going to accept him? (*She sits at* L. *end of the settee.*)

SARAH. Quite definitely. I like my little Cedric very much.

HELEN. But—I thought you said——

SARAH (*laughing*). Poor darling Helen, looking all bewildered.

HELEN. You're being very exasperating, Sarah.

SARAH. Now listen, Helen: when Cedric and I decided to spend this week-end with you, it was because we both felt that when a problem has to be grappled with, then the country's the place to do the grappling in.

HELEN. Problem ?

SARAH. Yes ; of Cedric and Sarah . . . whether it is to be marriage, or—the other thing.

HELEN (*staring at her*). What other thing ?

SARAH (*with a short laugh*). My dear !

HELEN (*getting up after a moment—aghast*). You—you don't mean——

SARAH (*nodding*). I do.

HELEN. My God ! (*She sits again.*)

SARAH. You see, Helen, we've pledged ourselves to decide during this Saturday to Monday, whether we'll marry or—just live together. (*Continuing, quite unperturbed.*) If by Monday morning we've decided upon marriage, then we shall waste no time ; if it is to be the other thing, then we shall waste even less.

HELEN. Sarah !

SARAH. We shall telephone to Paris for a table at dinner, a double bedroom, and leave Croydon by the afternoon plane.

HELEN. You're mad ! Quite, quite mad !

SARAH. My dear, if everyone were as sane, the Divorce Court judges would be able to lower their golf handicaps in no time.

HELEN (*rising*). Stop being flippant ! (*Beginning to pace up and down.*) You say he's motoring down here, this man ?

(SARAH *nods her head.*)

Just wait till I meet him !

SARAH. Let me tell you, my dear, that Cedric is a man of perfectly sound morals.

HELEN. Does a man of perfectly sound morals usually offer a woman the alternative of either marrying him or becoming his mistress ?

SARAH. He does not, as Cedric most emphatically pointed out when I made the suggestion.

HELEN. *You* made the suggestion ?

SARAH. Of course.

(HELEN *appears to be struggling to speak.*)

HELEN. I'm horrified !

SARAH. So was Cedric. In fact, it may help you to realize just how charming and unspoilt he is when I tell you he blushed, actually blushed, and that his first impulse quite clearly was to refuse.

HELEN. H'm ! . . . What was his second ?

SARAH. To accept—reluctantly. You see, he really is terribly in love with me.

HELEN. He must be ; otherwise he'd have put you over his knee and smacked you.

SARAH. Darling, why not wait until Monday before abandoning me as a total loss ? Who knows, after a careful weighing of the pros and cons, we may plump for matrimony, after all ?

HELEN. Why do you keep on saying "we" when you know that the whole matter rests entirely with you?

SARAH (*rising to the back of the settee*). Oh, but Cedric, of course, will have his say.

HELEN (*at* R. *end of the settee*). But you've told me that his one ambition is to marry you.

SARAH. Well, so it was, but he's come to realize there's something to be said for my point of view.

HELEN (*turning up* R.). The poor fool!

SARAH (*moving to* R. *end of the settee*). Cedric is not a fool, Helen. He is the one man who, in my estimation, stands head and shoulders above any other man I've ever met.

HELEN (*moving* C.). If that's how you feel about him, then why on earth don't you decide to marry him at once? (*Coming down* C.) Why don't you?

SARAH (*after a moment*). Because I'm afraid. (*She sits on the stool at the desk* R.)

HELEN. Afraid?

SARAH. Of—of marriage.

HELEN (*crossing over to her*). Sarah, you've been reading one of those nasty books.

SARAH. Don't be silly! Not that part of it. . . . I'm afraid of what it may do to both of us.

HELEN. *Do* to you? . . . I don't understand. (*She sits on the* R. *arm of the settee.*)

SARAH. Well, surely, after what happened to you and Roger—— (*She checks herself.*)

HELEN (*starting, then after a tiny pause*). Oh! So that's what it is!

SARAH. Oh, I'm sorry, Helen.

(*There is a fairly long pause. Then* HELEN *rises and goes above settee to* L.)

HELEN (*slowly*). Because of Roger and me.

SARAH (*haltingly*). Darling, I didn't mean to tell you.

HELEN (*turning at the piano*). You must be even madder than I thought.

SARAH (*with sudden defiance*). Why? Because, with your experience in front of me, I choose to look with extra special care before I leap? You see, that's how I've come to look upon the whole business—as a sort of lovers' leap. You may make a perfect landing and go cantering gaily on; or you may come a hell of a cropper. . . .

HELEN. But—how do you know you would?

SARAH. How do I know I wouldn't? I'm a rotten little coward, Helen, when it comes to a gamble—especially when it's my life's happiness at stake.

HELEN (*crossing to* L. *end of the settee*). But, great heavens, you love one another, don't you?

SARAH. Just as you and Roger loved one another—before marriage.

HELEN (*moving round to the back of the settee*). You fool! . . . Why, you might as well say you were never going to eat another egg because you once heard of somebody getting a bad one.

SARAH (*rising*). No, dear, it isn't the same thing, at all. (*She crosses to the armchair* L.C. *and sits on the* R. *arm.*) I could always kick up a row with the grocer until he gave me a good one to make up. I couldn't do that with Cedric.

HELEN (*despairingly*). Oh, heavens! Is there no reasoning with the woman? My poor girl, you must have something radically wrong with you, a complex or something. (*She crosses* L. *to the back of the armchair.*)

SARAH. I don't know about that; but I have felt lately that the women of our family seem fated to make a mess of things where marriage is concerned. Look at Mother.

HELEN (*moving to* L. *of the armchair*). What about her?

SARAH. Well, it's no use pretending that she and Father didn't fight like hell. What about Aunt Jessie and Uncle Ralph? Oh, and Aunt Zoe? Divorced three times.

HELEN. It shows she wasn't downhearted, anyway. (*She sits on the* L. *arm of the chair.*)

SARAH (*shaking her head*). No, dear, just carrying on the family tradition, as you and Roger did when your turn came!

HELEN. I suppose it doesn't occur to you that you're being very unfair to me!

SARAH. To you?

HELEN. Yes! What happened to Mother and Aunt Jessie and Aunt Zoe means nothing at all to you. You're determined to throw the whole responsibility for your ridiculous behaviour upon my experience with Roger.

SARAH (*earnestly*). Dearest—I don't want you to feel that!

HELEN. What happened to me is all over and done with; you've got your life to think of.

SARAH. I know—and I am thinking of it—very, very carefully.

HELEN. But—can't you see that if you love one another, then that's all that matters? (*Sentimentally.*) My dear Sarah, the love of a good man is——

SARAH (*cutting her short; rising and moving a little away from her to* C.). Worth more than rubies? Or is it the virtue of a good woman that somehow has to do with jewellery?

HELEN. Sarah, you really are——

(*The sound of the front-door bell is heard.* HELEN *starts violently and glares wildly round the room.*)

SARAH. That'll be Cedric, I expect.

HELEN (*rising and moving up* C.). Or—or Roger.

SARAH (*going to her; remorsefully*). Dearest, and I'd forgotten! Oh, why did you let me worry you with my stupid affairs, when——?

HELEN (*as* POYNTER *comes in from* R. *on the rostrum*). Ssh!

(POYNTER *crosses and goes off to* L. HELEN *crosses to the mirror as soon as he has disappeared.*)

Sarah—tell me quickly—have I changed much?—Much older?

SARAH (*soothingly, moving down to her*). No, darling, much more lovely.

HELEN (*agitatedly*). And—and, Sarah—they don't *all* turn yellow and go bald?

SARAH. No, darling, of course not——

(*She breaks off as* POYNTER *re-enters from* L., *followed by* CEDRIC NORREYS.)

POYNTER (*announcing*). Mr. Norreys, madam. (*He moves down to behind the table.*)

HELEN. Oh!——

(*The two women relax and move a little apart, as* CEDRIC *descends the two steps from the hall and advances towards them. He is thirty-five years of age, and looks slightly older; of medium height, and pleasing though quite unremarkable appearance. His clothes are extremely well-cut and betray a certain fastidious attention to detail. His speech is rather precise, and his manner, at any rate upon his entry, suggests a shy and rather self-effacing personality. His motor-coat is still folded over his arm.*)

SARAH (*going to* CEDRIC *and bringing him down stage—quickly recovering herself*). Cedric! Here you are, darling, at last. (*To* HELEN.) Helen, this is Cedric.

CEDRIC (C., *punctiliously*). How do you do? It's most kind of you to have me for the week-end, Mrs. Storer.

HELEN (*who has not entirely recovered her self-possession*). I'm so glad you were able to come. . . . Poynter, take Mr. Norreys' things.

(POYNTER *crosses down to* CEDRIC.)

SARAH (L. *of* CEDRIC, *indicating* POYNTER). No, dear, over there.

(CEDRIC *hands his hat and gloves to* POYNTER, *who has been hovering in the background.*)

And the coat, dear——

POYNTER. Thank you, sir.

HELEN. Mr. Norreys is in the West room, Poynter.

POYNTER. Yes, madam.

(*He goes off up* C. *to* L., *reappearing almost immediately with* CEDRIC'S *suitcase. Laden with this and the coat and hat, he crosses the rostrum and exits* R.)

HELEN. Would you like some tea, Mr. Norreys ?

CEDRIC. Thank you, no ; I lunched late in Winchester.

HELEN. A drink, then ?

CEDRIC (*behind the settee*). Many thanks, but no.

SARAH. Did you have a nice time in Winchester ? Did you get all emotional over the old school ?

CEDRIC. Yes—very—at least, no—not at all !

SARAH. I always believe he had an affair with the matron.

CEDRIC. Oh ! Sarah, really—how can you ?

SARAH. All right, sweet, only my little joke, that's all. (*She goes to the table* R.C. *for a cigarette.*)

CEDRIC. Delightful country you have down here, Mrs. Storer.

HELEN (*crossing* R.). Yes, delightful—do sit down, won't you ? (*She sits at* R. *end of the settee.*)

(SARAH *is at the table* R.C.)

(*After a short pause : polite conversation.*) Do you like the country, then, Mr. Norreys ?

CEDRIC (*sitting* L. *on the settee*). I almost think I like it more than anything else. . . . I have a house in Scotland.

HELEN (*simulating intense interest*). Scotland ! Oh, yes ?

CEDRIC. The North of Scotland.

HELEN. Oh, the North of Scotland. (*After a short pause.*) Remote.

CEDRIC. I beg your pardon ?

HELEN. Very remote, the North of Scotland.

CEDRIC. Oh, yes, very. (*Another short pause.*) But very beautiful, Mrs. Storer.

HELEN. I believe so. I'm always telling myself I must go there some time.

SARAH. Are you, dear ? (*She moves down* L.C. *and sits in the armchair.*)

(*There is a rather long pause.*)

HELEN. Do smoke if you care to, Mr. Norreys.

CEDRIC (*after feeling in his pocket and discovering he has left his case in his overcoat*). Thank you—not just now.

(*Another pause. Then :*)

(*After racking his brains.*) The West Coast of Ireland, too, is very beautiful.

SARAH. Oh, Lord ! They're off again ! (*She puts one leg on the arm of her chair.*)

CEDRIC (*to* SARAH). I beg your pardon ?

SARAH. Don't leave gallant little Wales out of this.

HELEN. Sarah, please.

SARAH (*rising and coming* R. *to above the settee*). I'm sorry, my dears ; but I do want you to get to know each other ; and, after

all, we're only here till Monday. Don't you think you could start right off by calling one another by your christian names ? I always think that's such a help.

CEDRIC (*shyly*). Of course—I should like to very much if Mrs.——

SARAH. Helen——

CEDRIC. If—if Helen would allow me to.

HELEN. Oh, please do—Cedric.

SARAH (*coming to* L. *of the settee*). There ! That's much more cosy ! (*To* CEDRIC.) Now, tell me, have you noticed anything curious about your ears, this past half-hour or so ?

CEDRIC (*touching one nervously*). No. Why, do they look curious ?

SARAH. No more than usual. They haven't been burning ?

CEDRIC. Not in the least.

SARAH (*sitting on the* L. *arm of the settee*). Then, they should have been, because I've been telling Helen about—us.

CEDRIC (*after a pause, embarrassed*). Oh—yes.

SARAH. And I may as well tell you, Cedric, that she's not a bit sympathetic.

HELEN. I find it difficult to be sympathetic about something which frankly I do not understand.

SARAH. Well, darling, I'm sure I've done my best to make you understand.

HELEN. You talked a great deal of rubbish, Sarah. (*To* CEDRIC.) The most I've been able to gather from it all is that you, Mr.—er—Cedric, are in love with my sister.

CEDRIC (*fervently*). I adore her !

HELEN. And that she is in love with you.

CEDRIC. Try as I may, I can't get used to the idea. It seems too fantastic to suppose that anything so wonderful could ever happen to me. I mean—why should she——

HELEN (*silencing him with a gesture*). We won't dwell upon that just now. We'll simply say that you're in love with one another ; but you're not at all sure that you wish to marry.

CEDRIC (*quickly*). But I do ! (*Then floundering, as he catches* SARAH'S *eye.*) At least—I mean——

HELEN. Well ?

CEDRIC. I—that is, we—both wish to make reasonably sure that the—er—whichever course we adopt will be the one most calculated to lead to our ultimate happiness.

HELEN. Whichever course ? Meaning by that, that my sister is to be either your wife or—or your mistress ?

CEDRIC (*wincing at the last word*). Well—yes—I'm afraid that's what it amounts to.

HELEN. I see.

(*There is a pause.*)

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