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FOR SERVICES RENDERED

A Play in Three Acts

by W. Somerset Maugham

SAMUEL FRENCH

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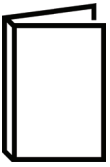
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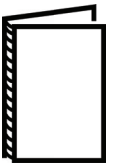
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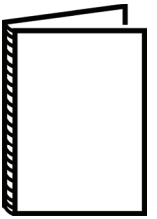
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W Somerset Maugham was born in Paris in 1874. He trained as a doctor in London where he started writing his first novels. He achieved fame in 1907 with the production of *Lady Friedrich*, and by 1908 he had four plays running simultaneously in London.

In 1947 Maugham instituted the Somerset Maugham Award for best British writer(s) under the age of thirty-five for a fictional work published within the last year. Notable winners have included Thom Gunn, V.S. Naipaul and both Kingsley and Martin Amis.

Upon his death in 1965, Maugham donated his royalties to the Royal Literary Fund.

Maugham remains a hugely influential writer whose works have been adapted for film, television, radio and theatre.

Notable works include:-
Novels:
The Magician (1908/09); *Of Human Bondage* (1915);
The Moon and Sixpence (1919); *The Painted Veil* (1925);
Christmas Holiday (1939); *The Razor's Edge* (1943/44);
Short Stories: *Rain* (1921); *Footprints in the Jungle* (1927);
Plays: *East of Suez* (1922); *Home and Beauty* (1923);
The Constant Wife (1926); *The Lotus Eater* (1935)

FOR SERVICES RENDERED

First produced at the Globe Theatre, London, W.I., on 1 November 1932, with the following cast of characters:

LEONARD ARDSLEY	C.V. France
CHARLOTTE ARDSLEY (his wife)	Louise Hampton
SYDNEY (his son)	Cedric Hardwicke
EVA **LOIS** } (his unmarried daughters)	{ Flora Robson Marjoria Mars
ETHEL BARTLETT (his married daughter)	Diana Hamilton
HOWARD BARTLETT (her husband)	W. Cronin-Wilson
COLLIE STRATTON (Commander, R.N.)	Ralph Richardson
WILFRED CEDAR	S. J. Warmington
GWEN CEDAR (his wife)	Marda Vanne
DR. PRENTICE (Mrs Ardsley's brother)	David Hawthorne
GERTRUDE (the Ardsleys' parlour maid)	Phyllis Shand

The Play was produced by H.K. Ayliff

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in the Ardsleys' house at Rambleston, a small country town in Kent, near the cathedral city of Stanbury.

ACT I
The Garden Terrace. An afternoon in September.

ACT II
The Dining Room. After lunch. About two weeks later.

ACT III
The Drawing Room. The next day.

ACT I

***SCENE**—A terrace at the back of the* **ARDSLEYS'** *house. It is five o'clock on a warm afternoon in September.*

French windows lead out on it from the house, and beyond is the garden. See the Ground Plan.

LEONARD ARDSLEY *is the only solicitor in Rambleston and his house faces the village street. Part of it is used as his office. Tea is laid.*

MRS ARDSLEY *is sitting on the seat, 2, hemming a napkin. She is a thin, grey-haired woman of more than sixty, with a severe face but kind eyes. She is quietly dressed.* **GERTRUDE**, *the maid, brings in the tea.*

MRS ARDSLEY Is it tea-time?

GERTRUDE *(bringing the tea-tray to the table)* The church clock's striking now, ma'am.

MRS ARDSLEY Go down to the tennis court and tell them that tea is ready.

GERTRUDE Very good, ma'am. *(She crosses down right)*

MRS ARDSLEY *(putting her sewing aside)* Have you told Mr. Sydney? *(She rises)*

GERTRUDE *(turning at right)* Yes, ma'am.

She exits right.

MRS ARDSLEY *crosses up and brings chairs 4 and 5 to the table.* **SYDNEY** *comes in from the house. He is a heavy man of hard on forty, with a big, fat face. He is*

blind and walks with a stick, but he knows his way about and moves with little hesitation.

MRS ARDSLEY *(by chair 6)* Where would you like to sit, dear?

SYDNEY Anywhere.

He lets himself down into chair 4, right of the table and puts down his stick.

MRS ARDSLEY *(sitting in chair 6)* What have you been doing all the afternoon?

SYDNEY Nothing very much. Knitting a bit.

MRS ARDSLEY Ethel's here. Howard's coming to fetch her on his way home from Stanbury. He's gone to the cattle-market.

SYDNEY *(after a slight pause)* I suppose he'll be as tight as a drum.

MRS ARDSLEY Sydney!

SYDNEY *(with a little chuckle)* What rot it all is. Does Ethel really think we don't know he drinks?

MRS ARDSLEY She's proud. She doesn't want to admit that she made a mistake.

SYDNEY I shall never stop asking myself what on earth she saw in him.

MRS ARDSLEY Everything was so different then. He looked very nice in uniform. He was an officer.

SYDNEY You and father ought to have put your foot down.

MRS ARDSLEY They were madly in love with one another. When all that slaughter was going on it seemed so snobbish to object to a man because he was just a small tenant farmer.

SYDNEY Did you think the war was going on for ever?

MRS ARDSLEY No, but it looked as though the world would be a changed place when it stopped.

SYDNEY *(after a moment)* It's funny when you think of it. Everything goes on in the same old way, except that we're all broke to the wide and a few hundred thousand fellows like me have had our chance of making a good job of life snatched away from us.

MRS ARDSLEY *gives a sigh and makes an unhappy gesture.* **SYDNEY** *utters a little sardonic chuckle.*

Cheer up, mother. You must console yourself by thinking that you've got a hero for a son. M.C. and mentioned in dispatches. No one can say I didn't do my bit.

MRS ARDSLEY They're just coming.

GWEN CEDAR *and* **ETHEL BARTLETT** *enter right from the garden.* **ETHEL BARTLETT,** **MRS ARDSLEY***'s second daughter, is a handsome woman of thirty-five, with regular features and fine eyes.* **GWEN CEDAR** *is fifty, a good deal painted, with dyed hair; she is too smartly dressed in a manner hardly becoming to her age. She has the mechanical brightness of a woman who is desperately hanging on to the remains of her youth.*

ETHEL *(crossing left)* The others are coming as soon as they've finished the set. Hulloa, Sydney. *(She moves down below chair 7)*

SYDNEY Hulloa.

GWEN *(having moved across to right of* **SYDNEY***; shaking hands with him)* How are you to-day, Sydney? You're looking very well.

SYDNEY Oh, I'm all right, thanks.

GWEN Busy as a bee as usual, I suppose. You're simply amazing.

MRS ARDSLEY *(trying to head her off)* Let me give you some tea.

GWEN *(moving to left of chair 5)* I do admire you. I mean, you must have great strength of character.

SYDNEY *(with a grin)* A will of iron.

GWEN *(sitting in chair 5)* I remember when I was ill last spring and they kept me in a darkened room for nearly a week, it was quite intolerable. But I kept on saying to myself, well, it's nothing compared to what poor Sydney has to put up with.

SYDNEY And you were right.

MRS ARDSLEY One lump of sugar?

GWEN Oh, no, I never take sugar. It's Lent all the year round for me. *(Brightly attacking* **SYDNEY** *again)* It's a marvel to me how you pass the time.

SYDNEY Charming women like you are very sweet to me, and my sisters are good enough to play chess with me. I improve my mind by reading.

ETHEL *sits in chair 8.*

GWEN Oh, yes, Braille. I love reading. I always read at least one novel a day. Of course I've got a head like a sieve. D'you know, it's oftened happened to me to read a novel right through and never remember till the end that I'd read it before. It always makes me so angry. I mean, it's such a waste of time.

A slight pause.

SYDNEY How's the farm, Ethel?

ETHEL We're making the most of the fine weather.

GWEN It must be so interesting, living on a farm. Making butter and all that sort of thing.

ETHEL One's at it from morning till night. It keeps one from thinking.

GWEN But of course you have people to do all the rough work for you.

ETHEL What makes you think that?

GWEN You don't mean to say you do it yourself. How on earth d'you keep your hands?

ETHEL *(with a glance at them, smiling)* I don't.

There is a sound of voices from the garden.

MRS ARDSLEY *(looking across right)* Here are the others.

Her two other daughters, **EVA** *and* **LOIS**, *enter right, with the two men they have been playing tennis with. These are* **WILFRED CEDAR** *and* **COLLIE STRATTON. WILFRED CEDAR** *is a stout, elderly man but well preserved, with a red face and grey, crisply-curling hair. He is stout, jovial, breezy and sensual. He is out to enjoy all the good things of life.* **COLLIE STRATTON** *is between thirty-five and forty. He has been in the Royal Navy and has the rather school-boyish manner of those men who have never quite grown-up. He has a pleasant frank look.* **EVA** *is* **MRS ARDSLEY***'s eldest daughter. She is thin and of a somewhat haggard appearance. She is very gentle, a trifle subdued, but she does not give you the impression of being at peace with herself. Behind the placidity is a strange restlessness. She is thirty-nine.* **LOIS ARDSLEY** *is the youngest of the family. She is twenty-six, but the peaceful, monotonous life she has led has preserved her youth and she looks little more than twenty. She is gay and natural. She is a very pretty young woman, but what is even more attractive in her than her blue eyes and straight nose is the air she has of immense healthiness.*

LOIS *(as she crosses)* Tea. Tea. Tea. *(She moves above the table to chair 7)*

WILFRED *(moving to right of* **SYDNEY***)* By George, they made us run about. Hulloa, Sydney.

COLLIE *moves down below the seat, 2.* **EVA** *remains near the entrance right.*

MRS ARDSLEY How were you playing?

WILFRED Lois and me against Eva and Collie.

EVA Of course Wilfred's in a different class from us.

COLLIE That forehand drive of yours is devilish.

WILFRED I've had a lot of practice, you know, playing in tournaments on the Riviera and so on.

GWEN Of course he was too old for singles, but a few years ago he was one of the best doubles players in Cannes.

WILFRED *(not too pleased)* I don't know that I play any worse than I played a few years ago.

GWEN Well, you can't expect to get across the court as you used to when you were young. I mean, that's silly.

WILFRED Gwen always talks as if I was a hundred. What I say is, a woman's as old as she looks and a man as old as he feels.

SYDNEY It has been said before.

MRS ARDSLEY *(to* **WILFRED***)* How do you like your tea?

LOIS Oh, mother, I'm sure they want a drink.

WILFRED Clever girl.

MRS ARDSLEY What would you like?

WILFRED *(moving a little right)* Well, a glass of beer sounds good to me. What about you, Collie? *(He turns chair 3 to face a little left)*

COLLIE Suits me.

EVA *(moving up center)* I'll tell Gertrude.

MRS ARDSLEY *(as* **EVA** *is going)* Tell your father that if he wants any tea he'd better come now.

EVA Very well.

She goes off center, into the house.

WILFRED *(sitting in chair 3)* Damned convenient for your husband having his office in the house.

LOIS He's got a private door so that he can slip away without the clients seeing him.

GWEN Evie's looking a little tired, I think.

MRS ARDSLEY She's been rather nervy lately. I've wanted her uncle to have a look at her, but she won't let him.

GWEN So sad the man she was engaged to being killed in the war.

MRS ARDSLEY They were very much in love with one another.

ETHEL She's never really got over it, poor dear.

GWEN Pity she never found anyone else she liked.

MRS ARDSLEY In a place like this she could hardly hope to. By the end of the war there were very few young men left. And girls were growing up all the time.

GWEN I heard there *was* someone.

MRS ARDSLEY Not very desirable. I believe he did ask her, but she refused him.

GWEN I'm told he wasn't quite, quite. It's always a mistake to marry out of one's own class. It's never a success.

GWEN *has dropped a brick.* **ETHEL** *has married beneath her.*

LOIS Oh, what nonsense. As if that sort of thing mattered any more. It depends on the people, not on their class.

GWEN *suddenly realises what she has said, gives* **ETHEL** *a hurried look and tries to make everything right.*

GWEN Oh, of course. I didn't mean that. All sorts of people keep shops nowadays and go in for poultry farming and things like that. I don't mind what a man is as long as he's a gentleman.

COLLIE It's a relief to hear you say that, as I run a garage.

GWEN *(rising and easing right)* That's just what I mean. It doesn't matter your running a garage. *(Moving up to left of the french windows)* After all you were in the Navy and you commanded a destroyer.

SYDNEY To say nothing of having the D.S.O. and the Legion of Honour.

WILFRED In point of fact what made you go into the motor business, Collie?

COLLIE I had to do something. I was a pretty good mechanic. I got a bonus, you know, and I thought I might just as well put it into that as anything else.

WILFRED I suppose you do pretty well out of the motor-buses.

COLLIE *(sitting in chair 2)* Lot of expenses, you know.

GERTRUDE *enters from the house with two tankards of beer on a tray, and comes down between 2 and 3.*

WILFRED Look what's here.

He takes one of the tankards and takes a great pull at it. **GERTRUDE** *gives the other tankard to* **COLLIE**, *who sits on seat 2.* **EVA** *re-enters up center.*

GERTRUDE *exits.*

EVA Father's just coming. He wants to see you, Collie.

COLLIE Oh, does he?

EVA *moves to up left of the table.*

WILFRED That doesn't look too good, old man. When a solicitor wants to see you it's generally that he has something disagreeable to say to you.

LOIS Hurry up and finish your beer and we'll give them their revenge. It'll be getting dark soon.

WILFRED *rises, and eases to right of chair 3.*

GWEN *(moving to above and left of* **WILFRED***)* Oh, are you going to play again, Wilfred? Don't you think it's time we went home?

WILFRED What's the hurry? You take the car. I'll have another set and I'll walk back.

GWEN Oh, if you're not coming, I'll wait.

WILFRED *(trying to hide his irritation behind his joviality)* Oh, come on, you can trust me out of your sight just this once. I promise to be a good boy.

A little look passes between them. She stifles a sigh and smiles brightly.

GWEN Oh, all right. A brisk walk won't do your figure any harm.

She turns towards **MRS ARDSLEY** *to say good-bye.*

MRS ARDSLEY *(rising)* I'll come as far as the door with you.

She joins **GWEN** *and they exit up center.*

SYDNEY Where's my stick, Evie?

EVA *moves round and gives it to him.*

(rising) I think I'll totter down to the court and see how you all play. *(He moves right)*

ETHEL *(rising and moving towards* **SYDNEY***)* I'll come with you, shall I?

EVA *(moving up center)* I think I'd better get some fresh tea for father.

LOIS *(up left)* Hurry up, then, or the light'll be going.

EVA I shan't be a minute.

She exits up center.

LOIS *(up left center)* What should we do in this house without Evie?

SYDNEY *(moving to the entrance right)* What would Evie do without us? You can't sacrifice yourself unless there's someone about whom you can sacrifice yourself for.

ETHEL *is at right center, on the left of* **SYDNEY**.

WILFRED You're a cynical bloke.

LOIS *(with a smile)* And ungrateful.

SYDNEY *(turning at right)* Not at all. It's jam for Evie to have an invalid to look after. If she could make me see by saying a magic word, d'you think she'd say it? Not on your life. Nature destined her to be a saint and it's damned lucky for her that I'm around to give her the opportunity of earning a heavenly crown.

ETHEL *(with a chuckle)* Come on, give me your arm.

SYDNEY *(putting on a cockney accent)* Spare a copper for a poor blind man, sir.

They go out right, to the garden.

LOIS *(starting to go right)* I'll just go and hunt for that ball. I think I know more or less where it is.

WILFRED I'd come with you if I weren't so lazy.

LOIS *(checking, between chairs 2 and 3)* No, stay there. You'll only wreck the flower beds with your big feet.

WILFRED I like that. I flatter myself not many men of my size have smaller feet than I have.

LOIS Modest fellow, aren't you? *(Moving right)* Give me a shout when Evie comes.

She exits right, into the garden.

WILFRED *(finishing his beer)* Good-looking girl that. Nice too. And she's got a head on her shoulders. *(He puts the tankard on the seat 2)*

COLLIE Plays a good game of tennis.

WILFRED Funny she shouldn't have been snapped up before now. If I was a young fellow and single I shouldn't hesitate.

COLLIE *(rising, and taking his tankard to the table, left)* She hasn't got much chance here, poor thing. Who the devil is there she can marry in a place like this?

WILFRED I wonder you don't have a cut in yourself.

COLLIE *(turning, below the table)* I'm fifteen years older than she is. And I haven't got a bean.

WILFRED Girls nowadays who live in the country have to take what they can get.

COLLIE Nothing doing as far as I'm concerned.

WILFRED *(with a shrewd look at him)* Oh!

COLLIE *(moving to left center)* Why d'you want to know?

WILFRED Only that she's a nice girl and I'd like to see her settled.

A pause.

COLLIE I say, old man, I suppose you wouldn't do me a favour.

WILFRED Of course I will, old boy. What is it?

COLLIE Well, to tell you the truth, I'm in a bit of a hole.

WILFRED Sorry to hear that. What's it all about?

COLLIE Business has been rotten lately.

WILFRED I know it has. And I don't know when things are going to improve. I can tell you I'm damned glad I got out when the going was good.

COLLIE I expect you are.

WILFRED Everyone told me I was a fool to retire. But I smelt a rat. I said, no, I've worked a good many years and I've made a packet. Now I'm going to live like a gentleman. I sold out at the top of the market. Just in time.

COLLIE *(moving away a pace or two)* Lucky.

WILFRED Lucky be damned. Clever, I call it.

COLLIE *(after a slight pause, turning back to* **WILFRED***)* Look here, old man. I hate asking you, but I'm terribly hard up just now. I should be awfully grateful if you could lend me a bit.

WILFRED *(very heartily)* Why, my dear old boy, of course I will. I'm always glad to oblige a friend. How much d'you want?

COLLIE That's awfully kind of you. Could you manage two hundred pounds?

WILFRED *(after a slight hesitation)* Oh, I say, that's real money. I thought you were going to say a tenner. Two hundred pounds is quite another story.

COLLIE It's not very much for you.

WILFRED I'm not made of money, you know. My investments have gone down like everybody else's. Believe me, I haven't got more than I can spend.

COLLIE I'm in a most awful jam.

WILFRED Why don't you go to the bank?

COLLIE I'm overdrawn already. They won't lend me a bob.

WILFRED But haven't you got any security?

COLLIE Not that they'll accept.

WILFRED Then what d'you expect me to lend you the money on?

COLLIE I'll give you my word of honour to return it as soon as ever I can.

WILFRED *(rising and moving down right)* My dear old boy, you're a damned good chap and a D.S.O. and all that sort of thing, but this is business.

COLLIE You've known me for six months now. You must know I'm honest.

WILFRED *(turning, below the seat 2)* I took a furnished house down here for my wife's health, and when I heard you'd been in the navy of course I came to you for my petrol and

tyres and repairs. I know it's hard for you fellows. I've paid all my bills on the nail.

COLLIE I've given you good service.

WILFRED I know you have. I'm very sorry your garage hasn't proved a good proposition. If you'd been a business man you'd have known it was crazy to settle down in a little tin-pot place like this. But I really don't see that I'm called upon to make you a present of two hundred pounds.

COLLIE I'm not asking it as a present.

WILFRED *(moving up between 2 and 3)* It comes to the same thing. I've lent dozens of fellows money and they never pay it back. I think it's a bit thick to ask me to lend you a sum like that.

COLLIE You don't think I like it. I tell you I'm absolutely up against it. It means life and death to me.

WILFRED I'm awfully sorry, old boy, but there's nothing doing. *(Glancing right)* ...I wonder if Lois has found that ball yet.

He turns right, and goes off into the garden.

COLLIE *sits in chair 4, dejectedly. In a moment* **EVA** *enters up center with the teapot.*

EVA What's the matter? You're looking terribly depressed.

COLLIE *(trying to collect himself)* I'm sorry. *(He rises and moves down right center)*

EVA *looks at him for a moment, then goes to above the table.*

EVA Are they waiting for us?

COLLIE *(with a slight sigh)* I suppose so.

A slight pause. Then **EVA** *moves towards* **COLLIE**, *to center.*

EVA Tell me what the matter is.

COLLIE *(turning and forcing a smile)* It wouldn't interest you.

EVA Why do you say that? Don't you know that anything that concerns you interests me.

COLLIE That's very sweet of you.

EVA I suppose I'm rather reserved. It's difficult for me to show my feelings. I should like you to look upon me as a friend.

COLLIE I do.

EVA *(sitting in chair 3)* Tell me what it is then. Perhaps I can help you.

COLLIE I'm afraid not. *(He sits on the seat 2)* I think you've got troubles enough of your own without sharing mine.

EVA You mean looking after Sydney. I don't look upon that as a trouble. I'm glad to do what I can for the poor boy. When I think of what the war did to him, it's only right that I should sacrifice myself.

COLLIE It's very good of you, all the same.

EVA You see, Ethel was married and Lois was so young. Mother isn't very strong. Looking after Sydney helped me to bear the loss of poor Ted.

COLLIE That was the man you were engaged to?

EVA Yes. I was terribly unhappy when he was killed. I'm afraid I was rather morbid about it. One can't afford to give in, can one? I mean, life is given to us, and it's our duty to make the best we can out of it.

COLLIE *(rather vaguely)* Naturally one gets over everything in course of time.

EVA Yes. I suppose one ought to consider oneself fortunate that one can. And I think a girl ought to marry, don't you?

I mean, it's a woman's province to have a home of her own and children to look after.

COLLIE Yes, I suppose it is. *(He rises, and moves to below and left of chair 4)*

There is a moment's pause.

EVA *(rising)* It's rather strange that you should never have married, Collie.

COLLIE *(turning to her with a grin)* I never had anything to marry on.

EVA Oh, money isn't everything. A clever woman can manage on very little. *(Brightly)* I must have a look round and see if I can't find someone to suit you.

COLLIE I'm afraid I'm too old now.

EVA Oh, what nonsense. You're just the same age as I am. Every woman loves a sailor. Between you and me and the gate-post I don't believe there's a girl here who wouldn't jump at the chance if you asked her.

COLLIE *(a trifle embarrassed)* I'm not likely to do that.

EVA *(after a slight pause)* Are you waiting for her to ask you? That's wanting almost too much.

COLLIE I suppose it is really.

EVA *(to above and right of chair 4)* After all, a nice girl can't do much more than show a man she's not indifferent to him and leave him to draw what conclusions he pleases.

A slight pause.

COLLIE I've got an awful headache. *(Moving down right)* I wonder if you'd tell the others that I can't play tennis again to-day. Perhaps Ethel will make a four.

EVA *(moving to right center, above chair 3)* Oh, my dear, I am sorry. Of course you mustn't play. That's quite all right.

LEONARD ARDSLEY *comes out from the house. He is a red-faced, hearty man of sixty-five, with blue eyes and white hair. He looks more like the old fashioned sporting squire than the country solicitor. He is on familiar terms with the local gentry and in the season enjoys a day's shooting.*

(turning to **ARDSLEY***)* Oh, there you are, father. We've all had tea.

ARDSLEY *(moving down below chair 4)* I had somebody with me. (*With a nod to* **COLLIE***)* How are you, Stratton? Run along, Evie, I'll help myself. I want to have a word with our young friend. *(He sits, and pours out his tea)*

EVA *(crossing right)* Oh, all right.

She goes out into the garden.

ARDSLEY I've just seen Radley.

COLLIE *(moving to below chair 3)* Yes.

ARDSLEY *(stirring his tea)* I'm afraid I haven't got very good news for you.

COLLIE He won't wait?

ARDSLEY He can't wait. *(He sips his tea)*

COLLIE Then what's to be done?

ARDSLEY The only sensible thing is to file your petition.

COLLIE *(moving up center)* It's ridiculous. *(Turning, right of chair 4)* It's only a matter of a hundred and eighty-seven pounds. I'm sure if I can hang on a little longer I can manage. When does Radley want to be paid?

ARDSLEY The first of the month.

COLLIE I've just got to get the money before then, that's all.

ARDSLEY *(rising)* You've had a hard struggle and you've deserved to succeed. *(Patting* **COLLIE** *on the shoulder)*

Believe me, no one will be sorrier than I if you're beaten. You know, you needn't worry about my fees. We'll forget about them.

COLLIE That's very kind of you.

ARDSLEY Not a bit of it. *(To below chair 4, pouring out more tea)* I think it's very tough on you fellows out of the services. A man with your record. *(Turning to* **COLLIE***)* You put all your eggs in the one basket, didn't you?

COLLIE Everything. If I go bust I haven't a shilling. *(Moving away to right center)* I'll be thankful if I can get a job driving a motor bus.

ARDSLEY *(cheerily)* Oh, I hope it won't come to that. *(Business with cake, etc)* It would be rather a come-down for a man who's commanded a destroyer and has all the ribands you have.

MRS ARDSLEY *enters up center from the house with* **DR. PRENTICE.** *He is a thin, elderly man with iron-grey hair, a stern face and searching eyes.*

Hulloa, Charlie.

PRENTICE How are you? Oh, Stratton. *(He moves left, above the table)*

ARDSLEY Just in time for a cup of tea. *(To* **COLLIE***)* Don't you bother about us if you want to go and play tennis.

COLLIE No, I'm not playing any more. I'll hop it. Good-bye, Mrs Ardsley.

MRS ARDSLEY *(up left center)* Are you going already?

COLLIE I'm afraid I must.

MRS ARDSLEY Well, good-bye. *(They shake hands)* Come again soon.

COLLIE Good-bye.

He nods to the two men and exits up center.

MRS ARDSLEY *(to* **PRENTICE***)* Will you have some tea?

PRENTICE No, thank you.

A slight pause.

MRS ARDSLEY *(to chair 3)* Collie looks rather worried. *(She sits)* Is anything the matter?

PRENTICE *(crossing to center)* I'm told his garage isn't doing any too well.

ARDSLEY *(sitting in the chair 4)* It's the same old story. All these ex-officers. They go into business without knowing anything about it. And by the time they've learnt how many beans make five they've lost every bob they'd got. *(He proceeds with his tea)*

MRS ARDSLEY It's very hard on them.

ARDSLEY Of course it is. But what's to be done about it? The nation can't afford itself the luxury of supporting an army of officers it has no use for.

PRENTICE *(crossing above* **MRS ARDSLEY** *to seat 2)* The unfortunate thing is that the lives they've led in the service have unfitted them for the rough and tumble of ordinary life.

ARDSLEY *(putting back his cup)* Well, I must get back to my office. Is this just a friendly call, Charlie, or are you hunting a patient? Personally, I am in robust health, thank you very much.

PRENTICE *(with grim humour)* That's what you say. I expect your blood pressure's awful.

ARDSLEY Get along with you. I've never had a day's illness in my life.

PRENTICE Well, don't blame me if you have a stroke. I always have my suspicions about a man who looks as well as you do.

MRS ARDSLEY As a matter of fact, I wanted to have a little talk with you, Charlie, about Eva. She's been very jumpy lately.

ARDSLEY Oh, that's only your fancy, my dear. She's getting a little old maidish. The great thing is to give her occupation. Fortunately Sydney gives her plenty to do.

PRENTICE Sydney keeping pretty fit?

MRS ARDSLEY As fit as can be expected.

ARDSLEY *(rising)* Poor old Sydney. *(He moves to center)* The only thing we can do is to make things as easy for him as we can. It's been a great blow to me. I was hoping he'd go into the business. He'd have been able to take a lot of the work off my hands now. I've paid for the war all right.

PRENTICE *(with a twinkle in his eye)* He has, too, in a way.

ARDSLEY Of course. But he's got used to it. Invalids do, you know. Well, it's lucky I've got my health and strength. Anyhow, I must go back and do a job of work.

He nods to **PRENTICE** *and exits up center.*

PRENTICE *(sitting on seat 2)* Leonard's a wonderful fellow. He always looks at the bright side of things. *(During the following dialogue, he loads and lights his pipe)*

MRS ARDSLEY It's a strength.

PRENTICE You've spoilt him.

MRS ARDSLEY I've loved him.

PRENTICE I wonder why.

MRS ARDSLEY *(with a smile)* I can't imagine. I suppose because he can never see further than the end of his nose and I've always had to take care that he didn't trip over the obvious and hurt himself.

PRENTICE You've been a good wife and mother, Charlotte. There aren't many left like you now.

MRS ARDSLEY Times are difficult. I think one should make allowances for all these young things who are faced with problems that we never dreamed of.

PRENTICE What did you want to say to me about Evie?

MRS ARDSLEY I want her to come and see you. She's been losing weight. I'm rather uneasy about her.

PRENTICE I daresay she wants a holiday. I'll have a talk to her. *(He pauses, pressing down his tobacco)* But you know I'm more concerned about you. I don't like this pain you've been complaining of.

MRS ARDSLEY I don't think it's very important. *(Taking up her needlework)* It's just pain, you know. I suppose most women of my age have it now and then.

PRENTICE I've been thinking about it. I want you to let me make a proper examination.

MRS ARDSLEY I'd hate it.

PRENTICE I'm not a bad doctor, you know, even though I am your brother.

MRS ARDSLEY You can't do anything for me. When the pain gets bad I take some aspirin. It's no good making a fuss.

PRENTICE If you won't let me examine you I shall go to Leonard.

MRS ARDSLEY No, don't do that. He'll have a fit.

PRENTICE Come along, then.

MRS ARDSLEY Now?

PRENTICE Yes, now.

MRS ARDSLEY *(after a slight pause)* I disliked you when you were a little boy and used to make me bowl to you, and every year that has passed since then has made me dislike you more.

PRENTICE You're a wrinkled old hag, Charlotte, and women ought to be young and pretty, but upon my word there's something about you that I can't help liking.

MRS ARDSLEY *(smiling)* You fool.

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