

KAY. Yes, she does. She looks down that bony nose of hers at me – and Mary Aldin talks to me as though I were someone she'd just met on a train. They only have me here on sufferance. You don't seem to know what goes on.

NEVILE. They always seem to me to be very nice to you. You imagine things.

KAY. Of course they're polite. But they know how to get under my skin all right. I'm an interloper. That's what they feel.

NEVILE. Well – I suppose that's only natural.

KAY. Oh, yes, I daresay it's quite natural. They're devoted to Audrey, aren't they? Dear, well bred, cool, colourless Audrey. Camilla has never forgiven me for taking Audrey's place. I'll tell you something – Audrey gives me the creeps. You never know what she's thinking.

NEVILE. Oh, nonsense, Kay, don't be absurd.

(He sits heavily on the sofa.)

KAY. Audrey's never forgiven you for marrying me. Once or twice I've seen her looking at you – and the way she looked at you frightened me.

NEVILE. You're prejudiced, Kay. Audrey's been charming. No one could have been nicer.

KAY. It seems like that, but it isn't true. There's something behind it all.

(There is a pause.)

Let's go away, at once, before it's too late.

NEVILE. Don't be melodramatic. I'm not going to upset old Camilla just because you work yourself up into a state about nothing at all.

KAY. It isn't nothing at all! I don't think you know the first thing about your precious Audrey.

(LADY TRESSILIAN and TREVES enter by the French windows.)

NEVILE. *(Furiously.)* She isn't my precious Audrey!

KAY. Isn't she? Anyone would think so, the way you follow her about.

(She catches sight of LADY TRESSILIAN.)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Are you going down to bathe, Kay?

KAY. *(Nervously.)* Yes – yes, I was.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Almost high tide. It ought to be very pleasant. What about you, Nevile?

NEVILE. *(Sulkily.)* I don't want to bathe.

(LADY TRESSILIAN turns back to KAY.)

LADY TRESSILIAN. Your friend, I think, is down there waiting for you.

(KAY hesitates a moment, then exits.)

Nevile, you're behaving very badly. You really must stand up when I come into the room. What's the matter with you – forgetting your manners?

(NEVILE rises quickly.)

NEVILE. I'm sorry.

LADY TRESSILIAN. You're making us all very uncomfortable. I don't wonder your wife is annoyed.

NEVILE. My wife? Audrey?

LADY TRESSILIAN. Kay is your wife now.

NEVILE. With your high church principles I wonder you admit that fact.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Nevile, you are exceedingly rude.

(NEVILE crosses to LADY TRESSILIAN, takes her hand and kisses her on the cheek.)

NEVILE. I'm very sorry, Camilla. Please forgive me. I'm so worried, I don't know what I'm saying.

LADY TRESSILIAN. *(Affectionately.)* My dear boy, what else could you expect with this stupid idea of being all friends together?

NEVILLE. (*Wistfully.*) It still seems to me the sensible way to look at things.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Not with two women like Audrey and Kay.

NEVILLE. Audrey doesn't seem to care.

TREVES. How did the matter first come up, Neville?

NEVILLE. (*Eagerly.*) Well, I happened to run across Audrey in London, quite by chance, and she was awfully nice about things – didn't seem to bear any malice or anything like that. While I was talking to her the idea came to me – how sensible it would be if – if she and Kay could be friends – if we could all get together. And it seemed to me that this was the place where it could happen quite naturally.

TREVES. You thought of that all by yourself?

NEVILLE. Oh, yes, it was all my idea. And Audrey seemed quite pleased and ready to try.

TREVES. Was Kay equally pleased?

NEVILLE. Well, no. I had a spot of bother with Kay. I can't think why – I mean, if anyone were going to object, you'd think it would be Audrey.

LADY TRESSILIAN. Well, I'm an old woman. Nothing people do nowadays seems to make any sense.

(She makes for the door leading to the rest of the house. TREVES follows, opening it for her.)

TREVES. One has to go with the times, Camilla.

LADY TRESSILIAN. I feel very tired. I shall rest before lunch. But you must behave yourself, Neville – with or without reason, Kay is jealous. I will not have these discordant scenes in my house.

(She exits.)

(Offstage.) Ah, Mary, I shall lie down on the library sofa.

(TREVES closes the door and turns to NEVILLE.)

NEVILLE. She speaks to me as though I were six!

TREVES. At her age, she doubtless feels you are six.

(NEVILLE recovers his temper.)

NEVILLE. Yes, I suppose so. It must be ghastly to be old.

(TREVES pauses slightly.)

TREVES. It has its compensations, I assure you. *(Dryly.)* There is no longer any question of emotional involvements.

NEVILLE. (*Smiling.*) That's certainly something. I suppose I'd better go and make my peace with Kay. I really can't see though why she has to fly off the handle like this. Audrey might very well be jealous of her, but I can't see why she should be jealous of Audrey. Can you?

(NEVILLE grins and exits by the French windows. TREVES looks after him thoughtfully then goes to the waste paper basket. He takes out the pieces of the torn photograph. AUDREY enters cautiously from the house, looking round for NEVILLE.)

AUDREY. What are you doing with my photograph?

TREVES. It seems to have been torn.

AUDREY. Who tore it?

TREVES. Mrs. Barrett, I suppose. That is the name of the woman in the cloth cap who cleans this room? I thought I would put it in here until it can be mended.

(He puts the pieces of the photograph on the bureau. Their eyes meet for a moment.)

AUDREY. It wasn't Mrs. Barrett, was it?

TREVES. I have no information, but I should think probably not.

AUDREY. Was it Kay?

TREVES. I told you, I have no information.

(There is a pause.)

AUDREY. Oh, dear, this is all very uncomfortable.

TREVES. Why did you come here, my dear?