Brief Encounter

By Noël Coward
Evening, Mr. Godby.
- Hello, hello, hello.
- Quite the stranger, aren't you?
- I couldn't get in yesterday.
- I wondered what had happened to you.
- I had a bit of a dustup.
- What about?
Saw a chap getting out
of a first-class compartment.
When he came to give up his ticket,
it was only third class.
I told him to pay the excess,
and he turned nasty.
- I had to send for Mr. Saunders.
- Fat lot of good he'd be.
- He ticked him off.
- Seeing's believing.
I tell you,
he ticked him off proper.
"You pay the balance at once,
or I'll hand you over to the police."
You ought to have seen the chap's face
at the mention of the word "police."
Changed his tune.
Then he paid up like lightning.
That's what I mean. He didn't have
the courage to handle it himself.
- He had to call in the police.
- Aw, he's not a bad lot, Mr. Saunders.
You can't expect much spirit from a man
with one lung and a wife with diabetes.
I thought something must be wrong
when you didn't come.
- I would've popped in to explain,
but I had a date and had to run.
- Indeed.
- Chap I know is getting married.
- Very interesting, I'm sure.
- What's up with you, anyway?
- I'm sure I don't know
to what you're referring.
- You're a bit unfriendly
all of a sudden.
- Beryl, hurry up.
Put some more coal in the stove while you're at it.
I'm afraid I can't really stand here wasting my time in idle gossip, Mr. Godby.
- Aren't you going to offer me another cup?
- When you've finished that one. Beryl'll give it to you.
I've got my accounts to do.
I see.
I'd rather you gave it to me.
Time and tide wait for no man, Mr. Godby.
- Laura, what a lovely surprise!
- Oh, Dolly.
My dear, I've been shopping till I'm dropping.
My feet are nearly off, my throat's parched.
I thought of having tea in Spindle's, but I was terrified of losing the train.
- Oh, dear.
- This is Dr. Harvey.
- How do you do?
- Would you be a perfect dear and get me my cup of tea?
I really don't think I could drag my poor old bones over to the counter.
No, please.
Dear, what a nice-looking man.
Who on earth is he?
You're quite a dark horse. I shall telephone Fred in the morning and make mischief.
This is a bit of luck.
I haven't seen you for ages. I've been meaning to pop in, but Tony's had measles and I had all that fuss over Phyllis.
- But, of course, you don't know.
My dear, she left me.
- Oh, how dreadful.
Mind you, I never cared for her much,
but Tony adored her.
I'll tell you all about that later
in the train. Thank you so very much.
There's certainly enough milk in it,
but still, it'll be refreshing.
- Oh, dear, no sugar.
- It's in the spoon.
Oh, of course.
What a fool I am.
Laura, you're looking
frightfully well. I wish I'd
known you were coming in today.
We could've come together
and lunched and had a good gossip.
I loathe shopping
by myself anyway.
- There's your train.
- Yes, I know.
- Aren't you coming with us?
- I go in the opposite direction.
My practice is in Churley.
- Oh, I see.
- I'm a general practitioner.
- Dr. Harvey's going out
to Africa next week.
- Oh, how thrilling.

... the 5:
to Churley, Leigh Green and Langdon.
- I must go.
- Yes, you must.
- Good-bye.
- Good-bye.
He'll have to run, or he'll miss it.
He's got to get over to the platform.
Talking of missing trains reminds me of
that awful bridge at Broadham Junction.
You've got to go traipsing all up one
side along the top and down the other.
- Well, the other day, I'd been
over about renewing the lease.
- Train Engine Chugging]
I arrived at the station at
exactly half a minute to spare.
My dear, I flew.
I'd got Tony with me,
and like a fool, I just bought a new
shade for the lamp in the drawing room.
I could've gotten it
just as easily here in Milford.
Well, it was the most enormous thing.
I could hardly see over it.
I've never been in such a hurry in
my life. I nearly knocked a woman down.
By the time I got home,
it was battered to bits.
  - Oh, is that our train?
  Is that the Ketchworth train?
  - No, it's the express.
  - The boat train.
Oh, of course. That doesn't stop,
does it? I want some chocolate, please.
  - Milk or plain?
  - Plain, I think.
Or, no, perhaps milk would be nicer.
Have you any with nuts?
Nestle's Nut Milk.
Shilling or sixpence?
I'll take one plain
and one nut milk.
  - Large or small?
  - Large, please.
Oh.
Where is she?
I never noticed her go.
Oh, I couldn't think
where you'd disappeared to.
I just wanted to see
the express go through.
What on earth's the matter?
Are you feeling ill?
  - I feel a little sick.
  - My dear, come and sit down.
  - Bell Ringing]
  - There's our train.
  - It's all right.
Have you any brandy?
  - I'm afraid it's out of hours.
- Oh, surely,
if somebody's feeling ill...
- I'm all right, really.
- Just a sip of brandy
will buck you up. Please.
- Very well.
- Thank you. How much?
- Tenpence, please.
The train for Ketchworth is now
arriving at platform three.
We shall have to hurry.
Oh, well, this is a bit of luck.
This train's generally packed.
I really am very worried about you,
dear. You look terribly peaky.
I'm all right. Really, I am. I just
felt faint for a minute, that's all.
It often happens to me. I did it once
in the middle of Bobby's school concert.
I don't think he's ever forgiven me.
- Well, he certainly was
very good-looking.
- Who?
Your friend, Doctor...
whatever his name was.
- Yes, he's a nice creature.
- Have you known him long?
No, not very long.
I hardly know him at all, really.
Well, my dear, I've always had
a passion for doctors.
I can well understand how it is
that women get...
I wish I could trust you.
I wish you were a wise,
kind friend,
instead of a gossiping acquaintance
I've known casually for years...
and never
particularly cared for.
I wish. I wish.
- Fancy him going all the way
to Africa. Is he married?
- Yes.
Any children?
Yes, two boys.
He's very proud of them.
Is he taking them with him, his wife and children, I mean?
Yes, he is.
I suppose it's sensible in a way rushing off to start life anew in the wide open spaces, but wild horses wouldn't drag me away from England... and home and all the things I'm used to.
One has one's roots after all, hasn't one?
Oh, yes, one has one's roots.
I knew a girl once years ago who went to Africa.
Her husband was something to do with engineering.
She had the most dreadful time.
She caught some awful germ through going out on a picnic, and she was ill for months.
I wish you'd stop talking.
I wish you'd stop prying, trying to find things out.
I wish she were dead.
No, I don't mean that. That was silly and unkind, but I wish you'd stop talking.
My dear, all her hair came out, and she said the social life was quite horrid.
Provincial, you know.
Very nouveau riche.
Oh, Dolly.
What's the matter, are you feeling ill again?
No, I feel a bit dizzy.
I think I'll close my eyes for a little.
Oh, you poor darling.
And here am I chattering away 19 to the dozen. I won't say another word.
If you drop off, I'll wake you when we get to the level crossing. That'll give you a chance to pull yourself together and powder your nose. Thanks, Dolly.

This can't last. This misery can't last. I must remember that and try to control myself. Nothing lasts, really... neither happiness nor despair. Not even life lasts very long. There'll come a time in the future when I shan't mind about this anymore, when I can look back and say quite peacefully and cheerfully how silly I was. No, no, I don't want that time to come ever. I want to remember every minute... always... always to the end of my days.

Ketchworth!
- Wake up, Laura. We're here.
- Ketchworth!
I could easily come to the house with you, dear. It isn't very much out of my way. Thank you. All I have to do is walk down Elmore Lane, past the grammar school. It's sweet of you, Dolly, but I'm perfectly all right now, really I am.
- You're quite sure?
- Absolutely positive. Thank you for being so kind. Oh, nonsense, dear. I shall telephone in the morning and see if you've had a relapse. I shall disappoint you. Good night. Good night. Oh, give my love to Fred and the children.
- Is that you, Laura?
- Yes, dear.
Thank goodness you've come back.
The place has been in an uproar.
- Why? What's the matter?
- Bobby and Margaret
have been fighting again.
They won't go to sleep until you go in
and talk to them about it.
- Mummy? Is that you, Mummy?
- Yes, Margaret.
Come upstairs at once, Mummy!
I want to talk to you.
You're both very naughty. You should
have been asleep hours ago. What is it?
Well, Mummy, tomorrow's my birthday,
and I want to go to the circus.
And tomorrow's not Margaret's birthday,
and she wants to go to the pantomime.
My birthday's in June.
There aren't any pantomimes in June.
It's far too late
to discuss it tonight,
and if you don't go to sleep, I shall
tell Daddy not to let you go to either.
Oh, Mummy!
Why not take them to both? One
in the afternoon, one in the evening?
You know that's impossible. We shouldn't
get them to bed till all hours,
and they'd be tired
and fractious.
Well, then, one on one day
and the other on the other.
You're always accusing me
of spoiling the children.
Their characters would be ruined
in a fortnight if I left them
to your over-tender mercies.
All right, have it
your own way.
- Circus or pantomime?
- Neither.
We'll thrash them both soundly,
lock them up in the attic...
and go to the pictures
by ourselves.
Oh, Fred.
- What on earth's the matter?
- Nothing. It's nothing.
Darling, what's wrong?
- Tell me, please.
- Really and truly, it's nothing.
I'm just a little rundown,
that's all.
I had a sort of fainting spell
at the refreshment room at Milford.
Isn't it idiotic?
Dolly Messiter was with me,
and she talked and talked and talked
until I wanted to strangle her.
Still, she meant to be kind.
Isn't it awful about people
meaning to be kind?
- Would you like to go to bed?
- No, Fred, really.
Come and sit by the fire
in the library and relax.
You can help me
with the Times crossword.
- You have the most
peculiar ideas of relaxation.
- That's better.
- There you are, darling.
- Thank you.
But why a fainting spell?
I can't understand it.
Don't be silly, darling. I've often
had fainting spells, and you know it.
Don't you remember Bobby's
school concert and Eileen's wedding...
and that time you insisted
on taking me to that symphony
concert at the town hall?
Go on, that was a nosebleed.
I suppose I must be that type of woman.
It's very humiliating.
I still maintain there'd be no harm
in you seeing Dr. Graves.
- It would be a waste of time.
- Now, listen...
Do shut up about it, darling.
You're making a fuss about nothing.
I'd been shopping and was tired.
The refreshment room was hot,
and I suddenly felt sick.
- Nothing more than that.
- All right.
Really nothing more than that.
Now you get on with your puzzle
and leave me in peace.
Have it your own way.
You're a poetry addict. See if you can
help me over this. It's Keats.
"When I behold
upon the night starred face...
huge cloudy symbols of a high"
...something in seven letters.
Romance, I think.
I'm almost sure it is.
"Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance."
It'll be in the Oxford Book of Verse.
No, that's right, I'm sure,
because it fits in with
"delirium" and "Baluchistan."
- Would some music
throw you off your stride?
- No, dear, I'd like it.
Fred.
Fred,
dear Fred.
There's so much
that I want to say to you.
You're the only one in the world
with enough wisdom
and gentleness to understand.
If only it were
somebody else's story and not mine.
As it is, you are the only one
in the world that I can never tell.
Never, never.
Because even if I waited until we were
old, old people and told you then,
you'd be bound to look back
over the years and be hurt,
and, oh, my dear,
I don't want you to be hurt.
You see, we are
a happily married couple...
and must never forget that.
This is my home.
You are my husband,
and my children
are upstairs in bed.
I am a happily married woman...
or, rather, I was
until a few weeks ago.
This is my whole world,
and it's enough...
or, rather, it was,
until a few weeks ago.
But, oh, Fred,
I've been so foolish.
I've fallen in love.
I'm an ordinary woman.
I didn't think such violent things
could happen to ordinary people.
It all started
on an ordinary day,
in the most ordinary place
in the world,
the refreshment room
at Milford Junction.
I was having a cup of tea...
and reading a book that I'd got
that morning from Boots.
My train wasn't due
for ten minutes.
I looked up and saw a man
come in from the platform.
He had on an ordinary mac.
His hat was turned down,
and I didn't even see his face.
He got his tea at the counter
and turned.
Then I did see his face.
It was rather a nice face.
- Any sugar? Thank you.
- In the spoon.
- He passed my table on the way to his.
- You're neglecting your duty.
The woman at the counter
was going on as usual.
You know, I told you about her the other
day... the one with the refined voice.
- Minnie hasn't touched her milk.
- Did you put it down for her?
Yes, but she never came for it.
- Fond of animals?
- In their place.
My landlady's got
a positive mania for animals.
She's got two cats...
one Manx, one ordinary...
three rabbits in a hutch
in the kitchen... they belong
to her little boy by rights...
and one of those dark-looking dogs
with hair over its eyes.
I don't know
to what breed you refer.
I don't think it knows itself.
- Go and clean off number three,
I can see crumbs from here.
What about my other cup?
I'll have to be moving.

The 5:
- Who's on the gate?
- Young William.
Please, a glass of water.
I've got something in my eye,
and I want to bathe it.
- Would you like me to look?
- Oh, no, don't trouble.
I expect the water will do.
- Thank you.
- Bit of coal dust, I expect.
A man I knew lost the sight in one eye
through getting a bit of grit in it.
- Nasty, very nasty.
- Better?
- I'm afraid not. Ooh.
- Can I help you?
Oh, no, please,
it's only something in my eye.
- Try pulling your eyelid down
as far as it'll go.
- And then blowing your nose.
- Please let me look.
I happen to be a doctor.
- It's very kind of you.
Turn around
to the light, please.
Now look up.
Now look down.
Keep still. I see it.
- There.
- Oh, what a relief. It was agonizing.
- It looks like a bit of grit.
- The express went through.
Thank you very much, indeed.
- There we go. I must run.
- How lucky for me
you happened to be here.
- Anybody could've done it.
- Never mind, you did,
and I'm most grateful.
- There's my train. I must go. Good-bye.
- Good-bye.
That's how it all began...
just through me getting
a little piece of grit in my eye.
I completely forgot the whole incident.
It didn't mean anything to me at all...

at least
I didn't think it did.
The next Thursday I went
into Milford again, as usual.
I changed my book at Boots.
Miss Lewis had at last managed
to get the new Kate O'Brien for me.
I believe she'd kept it hidden
under the counter for two days.
On the way out, I bought
two new toothbrushes for the children.  
I like the smell of a chemist's  
better than any other shop.  
It's such a mixture of nice things...  
herbs and scent and soap.  
That awful Mrs. Leftwich  
was at the other end of the counter...  
wearing one of the silliest hats  
I've ever seen.  
Wearing one of the silliest hats  
I've ever seen.  
Fortunately, she didn't look up, so  
I got out without her buttonholing me.  
Just as I stepped out  
onto the pavement...  
- Good morning. How's the eye?  
- Oh, Good morning.  
Perfectly all right. How kind it was  
of you to take so much trouble.  
- It was nothing at all.  
It's clearing up I think.  
- Yes, it's going to be nice.  
- Well, I must be getting along  
to the hospital.  
- And I to the grocers.  
- What exciting lives we lead,  
don't we? Good-bye.  
- Good-bye.  
That evening I had to  
run nearly all the way to the station.  
I'd been to the Palladium, as usual,  
but it was a terribly long film.  
I was afraid I'd be late.  
As I came up onto the platform,  
the Churley train was just puffing out.  
I looked up idly as the windows  
of the carriages went by,  
wondering if he was there.  
I remember this crossing my mind  
but it was quite unimportant.  
I was really thinking  
of other things.  
The present for your birthday  
was worrying me rather.
It was terribly expensive, but I knew you wanted it, and I sort of half taken the plunge and left a deposit on it... at Spink and Robson's until the next Thursday, the next Thursday.
Well, I squared my conscience by thinking how pleased you would be and bought it.
- Yes, I'll have it.
- Thank you, madam.
It was wildly extravagant, I know, but having committed the crime, I suddenly felt reckless and gay.
The sun was out, and everybody in the street looked more cheerful than usual, and there was a barrel organ at the corner by Harris's, and you know how I love barrel organs.
It was playing "Let the Great Big World Keep Turning," and I gave the man sixpence and went to the Kardomah for lunch.
It was very full, but two people had got up from the table just as I had come in. That was a bit of luck, wasn't it? Or was it?
Just after I had given my order, I saw him come in. He looked a little tired, I thought, and there was nowhere for him to sit, so I smiled and said...
- Good morning.
- Oh, good morning. Are you all alone?
- Yes, I am.
- Would you mind if I shared your table? It's very full.
- No, of course not.
I'm afraid we haven't been introduced properly. My name's Alec Harvey. How do you do?
Mine's Laura Jesson.
- Mrs. Or Miss?
- Mrs.
- You're a doctor, aren't you?
I remember you said so that day
in the refreshment room.
- Yes.

Not a very interesting one. Just an
ordinary G.P. My practice is in Churley.
- Yes, sir? Excuse me, sir?
- What did you plump for?
Um, the soup and fried sole.
- Yes, I'll have the same.
- Anything to drink?
No, thank you. That is,
would you like anything to drink?
- No, thank you. Just plain water.
- Plain water, please.

Will you just look
at the cellist?
It really is dreadful, isn't it?
But we oughtn't laugh.
They might see.
There should be a society
for the prevention of cruelty
to musical instruments.
- You don't play the piano, I hope?
- I was forced to as a child.
- You haven't kept it up?
- No, my husband isn't musical at all.
- Good for him.
- For all you know, I might have
a tremendous burning talent.
- Oh, dear, no.
- Why are you so sure?
You're too sane
and uncomplicated.
I suppose it's a good thing
to be uncomplicated
but it does sound a little dull.
You could never be dull.
- Do you come here every Thursday?
- Yes, to spend a day at hospital.
Stephen Lynn, the chief physician here
graduated with me.
I take over from him once a week.
Gives him a chance to go to London.
- Gives me a chance
to study the hospital patients.
- I see.
- Do you?
- Do I what?
- Come here every Thursday?
- Yes, I do the week's shopping.
Thank you.
Change my library book, have lunch
and generally go to the pictures.
Not a very exciting routine,
but it makes a change.
- Are you going to the pictures
this afternoon?
- Yes.
How extraordinary.
So am I.
I thought you had to spend
all day at the hospital.
Well, between ourselves, I killed
two patients by accident this morning.
The matron's very displeased with me.
I simply daren't go back.
- How can you be so silly?
- Seriously, I did get through
most of my work this morning.
It won't matter at all if I play truant.
Would you mind if I came with you?
- Well, l...
- I could sit downstairs,
and you could sit upstairs.
Upstairs is too expensive.
The orchestra stopped
as abruptly as it had started,
and we began to laugh again.
I had no premonitions,
although I suppose I should have had.
It all seemed so natural
and so innocent.
We finished lunch, and that idiot of
a waitress had put the bill all on one.
- I really must insist.
- I couldn't possibly. Having forced my company on you, it's only fair I pay. Please, don't insist. I should so much rather we halved it.
- I would really, please.
- I shall give in gracefully. We halved it meticulously. We even halved the tip. Thank you. We have two choices: The Loves of Cardinal Richelieu at the Palace...
- or Love in a Mist at the Palladium.
- You're very knowledgeable. There must be no argument about buying the tickets. We each pay for ourselves. You must think me a poor doctor if I can't afford a couple of one-and-ninepennies.
- I insist.
- I hoped you were going to treat me.

- Which is it:
- Palladium. I was once very sick on a channel steamer called Cardinal Richelieu. Excuse me. I feel awfully grand perched up here. It was very extravagant of you.
- It was a famous victory.
- Do you feel guilty as all? I do.
- Guilty?
- You ought to more than me. You neglected your work. I worked this morning. A little relaxation never did harm to anyone. Why should either of us feel guilty?
- I don't know.
- How awfully nice you are. It can't be. It is. We walked back
to the station together.
Just as we reached the gates,
he put his hand under my arm.
I didn't notice it then,
but I remember it now.
- What's she like... your wife?
- Madeleine?
Small, dark,
rather delicate.
How funny. I should have thought
she would've been fair.
And your husband?
What's he like?
Medium height, brown hair, kindly,
unemotional and not delicate at all.
- You said that proudly.
- Did I?
- Good evening.
- Good evening.
We've just got time for a cup of tea
before our trains go.
And for the third time in one week, he
brought that common man and his wife...
to the house without so much as
a "by your leave."
- Two teas, please.
- Cake or pastry?
- Cake or pastry?
- No, thank you.
- Are those Bath buns fresh?
- Certainly they are. Made this morning.
Two, please.
That'll be sevenpence.
- Take the tea to the table, Beryl.
- I'll carry the buns.
You must eat one of these.
Fresh this morning.
- Very fattening.
- I don't hold to such foolishness.
- They do look good, I must say.
- One of my earliest passions in life...
never outgrown it.
- What happened then, Mrs. Bagot?
- Well...
Well, it's all very fine, I said, expecting me to do this, that and that other, but what do I get out of it? You can't expect me to be a cook, housekeeper and char during the day... and a loving wife in the evening, just because you feel like it. Oh, dear me, no. There are just as good fsh in the sea as ever came out of it. And I packed me boxes then and there and left him. - Didn't you never go back? - Never. Went to my sister's place at Folkestone for a bit. Then I went in with a friend of mine, and we opened a tea shop in Hythe. - What happened to him? - Dead as a doornail inside three years. Well, I never. Is tea bad for one? Worse than coffee, I mean? If this is a professional interview, my fee is a guinea. - Why did you become a doctor? - That's a long story. - Perhaps because I'm an idealist. - I should think all doctors ought to have ideals. - Otherwise their work would be unbearable. - Encouraging me to talk shop? It's what interests you most. Yes, it is. I'm terribly ambitious really. Not ambitious for myself so much as for my special pigeon. - What is your special pigeon? - Preventive medicine. - I see. - I'm afraid you don't. - I was trying to be intelligent. - Most good doctors,
especially when they're young,
have private dreams.
That's the best part of them.
Sometimes, though,
those get over-professionalized
and strangulated... am I boring you?
No, I don't quite understand,
but you're not boring me.
What I mean is this: All good doctors
must primarily be enthusiasts.
They must, like writers
and painters and priests...
they must have
a sense of vocation,
- a deep-rooted, unsentimental
desire to do good.
- Yes, I see that.
Well, obviously one way of preventing
disease is worth 50 ways of curing it.
That's where my ideal comes in.
Preventive medicine isn't
anything to do with medicine at all.
It's concerned with conditions... living
conditions, hygiene and common sense.
For instance,
my speciality is pneumoconiosis.
- Oh, dear.
- Don't be alarmed.
It's simpler than it sounds.
It's nothing but a slow process
of fibrosis of the lung...
due to the inhalation
of particles of dust.
In the hospital here there are
splendid opportunities for
observing cures, making notes...
- because of the coal mines.
- You suddenly look much younger.
- Do I?
- Almost like a little boy.
What made you say that?
I don't know. Yes, I do.
Tell me.
Oh, no, I couldn't, really.
You were saying about the coal mines.
Oh, yes, the inhalation
of coal dust.
That's one specific form of the disease.
It's called anthracosis.
What are the others?
Chalicosis...
that comes from metal dust...
steel works, you know.
Yes, of course, steel works.
And silicosis...
that's stone dust...
gold mines.
I see.
- There's your train.
- Yes.
- You mustn't miss it.
- No.
- What's the matter?
- Nothing. Nothing at all, really.
It's been so very nice.
I've enjoyed my afternoon enormously.
I'm so glad. So have I. I apologize
for boring you with long medical words.
I feel dull and stupid
not to be able to understand more.
Shall I see you again?
It's the other platform, isn't it?
You'll have to run.
Don't bother about me.
- Shall I see you again?
- Yes, of course. Perhaps you'd
come to Ketchworth one Sunday.
- It's rather far, I know,
but we should be delighted.
- Please, please.
- What is it?
- Next Thursday, the same time.
- No, I couldn't possibly.
- Please.
I ask you most humbly.
- You'll miss your train.
- All right.
- Run. I'll be there.
Good-bye.

Thank you, my dear.

I stood there and watched

his train draw out of the station.

I stared after it until its taillight

had vanished into the darkness.

I imagined him getting out

at Churley,

giving up his ticket,

walking back

through the streets,

letting himself into his house

with his latchkey.

His wife... Madeleine...

would probably be in the hall

to meet him.

Or perhaps upstairs in her room,

not feeling very well.

"Small, dark

and rather delicate."

I wondered if he'd say,

"I met such a nice woman

at the Kardomah.

We had lunch

and went to the pictures."

Then suddenly,

I knew that he wouldn't.

I knew beyond a shadow of doubt

that he wouldn't say a word,

At that moment, the first awful feeling

of danger swept over me.

I got into the first compartment

I saw.

I wanted to get home

as quickly as possible.

I looked hurriedly around the carriage

to see if anyone was looking at me,

as if they could read

my secret thoughts.

No one was, except a clergyman

in the opposite corner.

I felt myself blushing and opened

my library book and pretended to read.

By the time I'd got to Ketchworth,
I had made up my mind definitely...
- that I wasn't going
  to see Alec anymore.
- Good evening, Mrs. Jesson.
It was silly and undignified flirting
like that with a complete stranger.
Oh, good evening.
I walked up to the house
quite briskly and cheerfully.
I'd been behaving like an idiot,
admittedly, but after all,
no harm had been done.
You met me in the hall. Your face was
strained and worried, and my heart sank.
Fred, what's the matter?
- It's all right, but you must
  keep calm and not be upset.
- What is it? What's wrong?
It's Bobby. He was knocked down
by a car on the way home from school.
Now it's not serious.
He was just grazed by the mudguard,
but it knocked him against the curb,
and he's got slight concussion.
The doctor's upstairs
with him now.
It's all right, Mrs. Jesson.
Nothing to worry about.
He'll be as right as rain
in a few hours.
You're sure?
You're sure it's not serious?
Quite sure, but it was
certainly a very lucky escape.
I've given him a little sedative,
and I shall advise...
keeping him at home
for a couple of days.
It must have been a bit of a shock...
I felt so dreadful,
Fred, looking at him, lying there...
with that bandage
round his head.
I tried not to show it,
but I was quite hysterical inside,  
as though the whole thing  
were my fault...  
a sort of punishment,  
an awful, sinister warning.  
An hour of two later, of course,  
everything became quite normal again.  
He began to enjoy  
the whole thing thoroughly...  
and revelled in the fact  
that he was the center of attraction.  
Oh, good!  
Do you remember how we spent  
the whole evening planning his future?  
But he's much too young  
to decide really.  
Good life, if the boy has  
a feeling for it.  
How can he possibly really know  
if he has a feeling for it?  
He'll probably want to be  
an engine driver next week.  
No, it was last week  
he wanted to be an engine driver.  
It seems so fnal, somehow, entering  
a child of that age for the navy.  
- It's a healthy life.  
- I know it's a good life,  
and I know it's a healthy life,  
and I know he'll be able to see the  
world and have a wife in every port...  
and keep on calling everybody "sir,"  
but what about us?  
- What do you mean, "What about us?"  
- We shall hardly ever see him.  
- Oh, nonsense.  
- It isn't nonsense.  
He'll be sent away to sea  
as a smooth-faced boy,  
and the next thing we know,  
he'll come walking in  
with a long beard and a parrot.  
I think you take rather  
a Victorian view of the navy, my dear.
He's our only son, and I should like to be there while he's growing up.
All right, old girl.
Then we'll put him into an office, and you can see him off

**on the 8:**
And you can see him off

**on the 8:**
You really are very annoying. You know perfectly well I should hate that.
All right, have it your own way.
- Fred?
- Hmm?
I had lunch with a strange man today, and he took me to the movies.
- Good for you.
- He's awfully nice. He's a doctor.
- A very noble profession.
- Oh, dear.
It was Richard III who said, "My kingdom for a horse," wasn't it?
Yes, darling.
Well, I wish to goodness he hadn't because it spoils everything.
I thought perhaps we might ask him to dinner one night.
By all means.
Who?
Dr. Harvey... the one I was telling you about.
- Must it be dinner?
- Well, you're never at home for lunch.
Exactly.
Oh, Fred.
Now what on earth's the matter?
It's nothing.
It's only that... Oh, Fred.
I really don't see what's so frightfully funny.
Oh, I do. It's all right, darling.
I'm not laughing at you.
I'm laughing at me.
I'm the one that's funny.
I'm an absolute idiot, worrying myself
about things that don't exist...
and making mountains
out of molehills.
I told you when you came in
that it was nothing serious.
There was nothing to get
into such a state about.
I do see that now,
I really do.
When Thursday came,
I went to meet Alec,
more as a matter of politeness
than for any other reason.
It didn't seem of any importance,
but, after all, I had promised.
I managed to get
the same table.
I wanted a bit,
but he didn't come.
The ladies' orchestra
was playing away, as usual.
I looked at the cellist.
She seemed to be so funny last week,
but today, she didn't seem
funny anymore.
She looked pathetic,
poor thing.
After lunch, I happened to pass
by the hospital.
I remember looking up at the windows
and wondering if he were there...
or whether something awful
had happened to prevent him turning up.
I got to the station
earlier than usual.
I hadn't enjoyed
the pictures much.
It was one of those noisy
musical things, and I'm so sick of them.
I had come out
before it was over.
As I took my tea to the table, I
suddenly wondered if I'd made a mistake,
and he'd meant me
to meet him there.
Albert Godby, how dare you!
- I couldn't resist.
- I'll trouble you to keep
your hands to yourself.
You're blushing.
You look wonderful when you're
angry, just like an avenging angel.
I'll give you avenging angel,
coming in here taking liberties.
I thought after what you said
last Monday you wouldn't object
to a friendly little slap.
Never you mind about last Monday.
I'm on duty now.
A nice thing if Mr. Saunders happened
to be looking through the window.
If Mr. Saunders is in the habit
of looking through windows,
it's about time he saw something
worth looking at.
- You ought to be ashamed of yourself.
- It's high spirits, don't be mad.
High spirits, indeed.
Take your tea, and be quiet.
- It's all your fault, really.
- I don't know to what you're referring.
I was thinking of tonight.
If you don't learn to behave there won't
be a tonight or any other night, either.
- Give us a kiss.
- I'll do no such thing.
The lady might see us.
- Come on, a quick one across the bar.
- Albert, stop it!
- Come, there's a love.
- Let go of me this minute.
Albert! Now look at me Banburys
all over the floor.
Just in time
or born in the vestry.
You shut your mouth and help
Mr. Godby pick up them cakes.
Come along now...
what are you standing there gaping at?
As I left the refreshment room,
I saw a train coming in... his train.
He wasn't on the platform,
and I suddenly felt panic-stricken...
at the thought
of not seeing him again.
My dear, I'm so sorry.
I'd no way of letting you know.
- Your train, you'll miss it.
- The house surgeon
had to operate suddenly.
I was going to send a note
to the Kardomah, but I thought
they might shout your name.
Please don't say anymore.
Quickly, quickly, the whistle's gone.
I'm so glad I had a chance to explain.
I didn't think I'd see you again.
How absurd.
Quickly, quickly.
- Next Thursday?
- Yes, next Thursday.
- Good-bye! Next Thursday! Good-bye!
- Good-bye!
The train for Ketchworth is
about to leave from platform three.
The stars can change in their courses,
the universe go up in flames,
and the world crash around us,
but there'll always be Donald Duck.
I do love him so... his dreadful energy,
his blind frustrated rages.
It's the big picture now. Here we go.
No more laughter. Prepare for tears.
It was a terribly bad picture.
We crept out before the end,
rather furtively,
as though
we were committing a crime.
The usherette at the door
looked at us with contempt.
It was a lovely afternoon, and
it was a relief to be in the fresh air.
We decided we'd go
to the botanical gardens.
Do you know, I believe we should
all behave quite differently...
if we lived in a warm,
sunny climate all the time.
We shouldn't be so withdrawn
and shy and difficult.
Oh, Fred, it really was
a lovely afternoon.
There were some little boys
sailing their boats.
One of them looked like Bobby.
That should have given me
a pang of conscience, I know,
but it didn't... I was enjoying myself,
enjoying every single minute.
Alec suddenly said that he was
sick of staring at the water...
and that he wanted to be on it.
All the boats were covered up,
but we managed to persuade
the old man to let us have one.
He thought we were raving mad.
Perhaps he was right.
Alec rode off at a great rate,
and I trailed my hand
in the water.
It was very cold,
but a lovely feeling.
You don't row
very well, do you?
I'm going to be perfectly honest
with you... I don't row at all,
and unless you want to go round
and round in ever-narrowing circles,
you'd better start steering.
Oh, we had such fun, Fred.
I felt gay and happy
and sort of released.
That's what's so shameful about it all. That's what would hurt you so much if you knew... that I could feel as intensely as that... away from you, with a stranger.

- Oh, look out! We can't get through!
- Pull on your left!

Oh. Oh, dear, I never could tell left from right.
I'm most awfully sorry. You know the British have always been nice to mad people. That boatman thinks we are quite dotty, but look how sweet he's been.

Tea, milk, even sugar. Thank you.

You know what's happened, don't you?
Yes. Yes, I do.
I've fallen in love with you.
Yes, I know.

Tell me honestly. Please tell me honestly if what I believe is true.
- What do you believe?
- That it's the same with you... that you've fallen in love too.
- It sounds so silly.
- Why?
- I know you so little.
- It is true, though, isn't it?
- Yes, it's true.
- Laura.

No, please, we must be sensible. Please help me to be sensible. We mustn't behave like this. We must forget that we've said what we've said.
- Not yet, not quite yet.
- But we must. Don't you see?

Listen, it's too late now
It's too late to forget what we've said, and anyway, whether we'd said it or not couldn't have mattered.

We know. We've both of us known for a long time.

How can you say that? I've only known you for four weeks. We only talked for the first time last Thursday week.

Last Thursday week. Has it been a long time for you since then?

- Answer me truly.
- Yes.

How often did you decide that you were never going to see me again?

- Several times a day. Oh, Alec.
- So did I.

I love you. I love your wide eyes...

and the way you smile

and your shyness...

- and the way you laugh at my jokes.
- Please, don't.

I love you. I love you. You love me too.

It's no use pretending it hasn't happened, because it has.

Yes, it has.

I don't want to pretend anything either to you or to anyone else, but from now on, I shall have to.

That's what's wrong, don't you see? That's what spoils everything. That's why we must stop here and now talking like this.

We're neither of us free to love each other. There's too much in the way. There's still time, if we control ourselves and behave like sensible human beings. There's still time to...
There's no time at all.
- There's your train.
- Yes.
I'll come over
to the platform with you.
No, Alec, not here.
Someone will see.
I love you so.
Do you think we might
have that down a bit, darling?
Hi, Laura.
- Yes, dear?
- You were miles away.
Was I?
Yes, I suppose I was.
Do you mind if we turn that down
a little? It really is deafening.
No, of course not.
I shan't be long over this,
darling, then we'll go to bed.
You look a bit tired, you know?
Don't hurry.
I'm perfectly happy.
How can I possibly say that?
"Don't hurry.
I'm perfectly happy."
If only it were true.
Not, I suppose, that anybody
is ever perfectly happy, really.
But just to be ordinarily contented,
to be at peace.
It's such a little while ago, really,
but it seems an eternity...
since that train
went out of the station,
taking him away
into the darkness.
I was happy then.
As I went back through
the subway to my own platform,
I was walking on air.
When I got into the train,
I didn't even pretend to read.
I didn't care whether people were
looking at me or not. I had to think.
I should have been utterly wretched and
ashamed. I know I should, but I wasn't.
I felt suddenly
quite wildly happy,
like a romantic schoolgirl,
like a romantic fool.
You see, he'd said he loved me,
and I had said I loved him.
And it was true.
It was true.
I imagined him holding me
in his arms.
I imagined being with him in all sorts
of glamorous circumstances.
It was one of those absurd fantasies,
just like one has when one is a girl,
being wooed and married
by the ideal of one's dreams.
I stared out of that
railway carriage window into the dark...
and watched the dim trees
and the telegraph posts slipping by,
and through them,
I saw Alec and me.
Alec and me...
perhaps a little younger than we are
now, but just as much in love...
and with nothing in the way.
I saw us in Paris,
in a box at the opera.
The orchestra was tuning up.
Then we were in Venice, drifting along
the Grand Canal in a gondola...
with the sound of mandolins
coming to us over the water.
I saw us traveling
far away together,
all the places
I've always longed to go.
I saw us leaning on the rail of a ship,
looking at the sea and stars,
standing on a tropical beach
in the moonlight...
with the palm trees
sighing above us.
Then the palm trees changed into those
pollarded willows by the canal...
just before the level crossing,
and all the silly dreams
disappeared,
and I got out at Ketchworth
and gave up my ticket...
and walked home as usual,
quite soberly
and without wings...
without any wings at all.
When I had changed for dinner and was
doing my face a bit... Do you remember?
I don't suppose you do,
but I do.
You see, you didn't know that that was
the first time in our life together...
that I had ever lied to you.
It started then...
the shame of the whole thing,
the guiltiness, the fear.
- Good evening, Mrs. Jesson.
- Hello, dear.
- Had a good day?
- Yes, lovely.
- What'd you do?
- Well, I shopped and had lunch
and went to the pictures.
- All by yourself?
- Yes.
Uh, no, not exactly.
What do you mean,
"not exactly"?
Well, I went to the pictures by myself,
but I had lunch with Mary Norton.
She couldn't come to the pictures
'cause she had to see her in-laws.
They live just outside
Milford, you know?
So I walked with her to the bus
and then came home on my own.
I haven't seen Mary Norton for ages.
How is she looking?
Very well, really.
A little fatter, I thought.
Hurry up with all this beautifying.
I want my dinner.
You go on down.
I won't be five minutes.
- Number, please?
- Ketchworth 3-7, please.
Ketchworth 3-7.
- Hello?
- Hello, is Mrs. Norton there, please?
- Yes. Will you hold on?
- Yes, I'll hold on.
- Hello?
- Hello? Is that you, Mary?
Oh, Laura! Fancy hearing from you.
I thought you were dead.
No, I haven't seen you for ages.
Listen, my dear,
will you be a saint and back me up
in the most appalling domestic lie?
- As bad as all that?
- My life depends on it.
Well, today, I went into Milford,
as usual, to do my shopping.
With the special intention
of buying a far too expensive
present for Fred's birthday.
Well, Spink and Robson's
hadn't got what I wanted,
which was one of those clocks
with barometers and everything in one,
but they rang up their branch in
Broadham and said there was one there,
so I hopped on the 1:30 train
and went to get it.
- Go on.
- Well, this is where
the black lie comes in.
Fred asked me if I'd had a good day,
and I said yes,
and that you and I had lunch and
that you had gone to see your in-laws...
and I had gone

to the pictures.
-
- If you run into him,
- don't let me down, will you?
- Darling, of course not.
- I'll do as much for you, I promise.
- Let's really lunch one day.
- Yes, that'd be lovely.
- What about next Thursday?
No, I can't on Thursday. That's
my Milford day. What about Friday?
- Fine, better make it here.
- All right, perfect.
You know what my cook's like.
It'll have to be early.
Yes, all right.
- Good-bye.
- Good-bye.

That week was misery.
I went through it
in a sort of trance.

How odd of you not to have
noticed that you were living
with a stranger in the house.
Thursday came at last.
I had arranged to meet Alec
outside the hospital at 12:30.
- Hello.
- Hello.
I thought you wouldn't come.
I've been thinking all week
that you wouldn't come.
I didn't mean to really,
but here I am.
I hadn't been inside the Royal
since Violet's wedding reception.
It all seemed very grand.
He actually ordered
a bottle of champagne,
and when I protested, he said
that we were only middle-aged once.
We were very gay during lunch and
talked about quite ordinary things.
Fred, he really was charming.
I know you would have liked him if things had been different. As we were going out he said that he had a surprise for me... and that if I would wait in the lounge for five minutes, he'd show me what it was. He went out and down the steps at a run, more like an excited schoolboy than a respectable doctor. Suddenly out of the dining room came Mary Norton and that rich over-made-up cousin of hers. They must have been in the dining room all the time... and seen Alec and me and the champagne and everything. Laura! So it was you after all. Hermione said it was. 
- How are you?
- You know how shortsighted I am.
I peered and peered and still couldn't be sure.
I never saw you at all. How awful of me. I expect it was the champagne. I'm not used to champagne for lunch or for dinner either, but Alec insisted. Alec? Alec who, dear? Alec Harvey, of course. Surely you remember the Harveys.
I've known them for years.
- No, I don't think I ever...
- He'll be back in a minute. You'll probably recognize him when you peer very closely. He looks very charming and very attentive. He's a dear. One of the nicest people in the world and a wonderful doctor.
- Oh, Alec, you remember Mrs. Norton, don't you?
- I'm afraid I don't. It's no use, Laura.
We've never seen each other before in our lives, I'm sure. How absurd. I made certain he and Madeleine were there when you dined with us... just before Christmas last year.

- Alec, this is Mrs. Rolandson.
- How do you do?
- Horrid weather, isn't it?
- Yes.

Of course, one can't really expect spring at this time of the year, can one?

No.

Well, we must be going.

I'm taking Hermione with me to the in-laws as moral support.

- Good-bye, Dr. Harvey.
- Good-bye, my dear.
- Good-bye.
- I do so envy you your champagne.
- Good-bye.

I tried so hard to look pleased, but it wasn't any good. I kept thinking of those two laughing and talking, laughing and talking about us, and I couldn't get them out of my mind.

When we were out in the real country... a few miles beyond Brayfield... we stopped the car just outside a village and got out.
There was a little bridge
and a stream,
and the sun was making an effort
to come out, but really
not succeeding very well.
We leaned on the parapet of the bridge
and looked down into the water.
I shivered,
and Alec put his arm round me.
- Cold?
- No, not really.
Happy?
No, not really.
I know exactly what
you're going to say.
That it isn't worth it.
That the furtiveness and lying outweigh
the happiness we might have together.
Isn't that it?
Something like that.
I want to ask you something,
just to reassure myself.
What is it?
It is true for you, isn't it?
This overwhelming feeling
we have for each other...
it's as true for you
as it is for me, isn't it?
Yes, it's true.
We must have stayed
on that bridge for a long time,
because when we got back to Stephen
Lynn's garage, it was getting dark.
I remember feeling as if
I was on the edge of a precipice.
I think Alec felt that too.
You see, we both knew
how desperately we loved each other.
Alec said he had to leave the keys
of the car in Stephen Lynn's flat...
and suggested
that I came up with him.
I refused rather too vehemently.
Alec reminded me that Stephen
wasn't coming back till late, but I still refused.
I'm going back.
I'm going to miss my train.
- Back where?
- To Stephen's flat.
- Train Whistle Blowing]
- Oh, Alec.
Alec, I must go home now.
I really must go home.
A cup of tea, please.
- Good afternoon.
- Afternoon, lady.
- Afternoon.
- Couple of whiskeys, please.
- Very sorry. It's out of hours.
Well, just sneak 'em to us under the cover of them poor old sandwiches.
Them sandwiches were fresh this morning, and I shall do no such thing.
- Come on, be a sport.
- You can have as much as you want after 6:00.
My throat's like a parrot's cage.
Listen.
I'm sorry. My license does not permit me to serve alcohol out of hours.
That's final. You wouldn't want to get me into trouble, would you?
Just give us the chance, lady. That's all we ask. Just give us the chance.
- Beryl!
- Yes, Mrs. Bagot?
- Ask Mr. Godby to come here a moment, will you?
- Yes, Mrs. Bagot.
- Oh, and who's he when he's at home?
- You'll soon see.
- Coming in here cheeking me.
- Come off it, Mother. Be a pal.
- I'll give you "Mother,"
you saucy upstart.
- Oi, who you callin' an upstart?
You! And I'll trouble you
to get out of here double quick.
Disturbing the customers and
making a nuisance of yourselves.
Here, where's the fre,
where's the fre?
- What's going on in here?
- Mr. Godby,
these gentlemen are annoying me.
- What? We haven't done nothing,
have we, Johnnie?
- All we did was ask for drinks.
- They insulted me, Mr. Godby.
- We never did anything of the kind.
- Just having a little joke, that's all.
- Hop it, both of you.
- We've got a right to stay here
as long as we like.
- You heard what I said. Hop it.
Now, look here. What is this, a free
country or a bloomin' Sunday school?
I checked your warrants at the gate.
Your train's due in one minute. Hop it.
- Now, look here...
- Aw, come on, Johnnie. Come on.
- Don't argue with the poor basket.
- Hop it.
Cheerio, Mother.
And if them sandwiches were made
this morning, you're Shirley Temple.
- Thank you, Albert.
- What a nerve... talking to you
like that, Mrs. Bagot.
Be quiet, Beryl. Pour me out a nip
of Three Star. I'm feeling quite upset.
- I have to get back to the gate.
- I'll be seeing you later, Albert.
Okay.
The train
now arriving at platform three...

is the 5:
- I really must go home.
- I'm going back to the flat.
- I must go home.
I really must go home.
- I'm going back to the flat.
I'm going home.
Excuse me.
I've forgotten something.
Darling.
It's raining.
It started just as I turned out of the High Street.
You had no umbrella, and your coat's wet.
You mustn't catch cold.
That would never do.
- I look an absolute fright.
- Let me put that down for you.
Thank you.
I hope the fire will perk up in a few minutes.
- I expect the wood was damp.
- Yes, I expect it was.
Do sit down, darling.
I got right into the train and then got out again. Wasn't it idiotic?
We're both very, very foolish.
- Alec, I can't stay, you know.
Really, I can't.
- Just a little while.
Just a little while.
Quickly, quickly!
I must go.
- Here, through the kitchen.
There's a tradesman's staircase.
- Is that you, Alec?
- Yes.
- You're back early.
- Yes, I felt a cold coming on, so I denied myself the questionable pleasure of dining...
with that arch-arguer Roger Hinchley and decided to come back to bed.
- Inflamed membranes are unsympathetic to a dialectic.
- What'll you do about food?
I can always ring down to the restaurant
if I want any later on.
- We live in a modern age,
  and this is a service flat.
- Yes, yes, of course.
It caters for all tastes.
You know, my dear Alec, you have hidden
depths which I never even suspected.
- Look here, Stephen...
- Oh, for heaven's sake, Alec.
No explanations or apologies.
I am the one who should apologize
for returning so inopportune.
It's quite obvious to me that you were
interviewing a patient privately.
Women are frequently
rather neurotic creatures,
and the hospital atmosphere
is upsetting to them.
By the rather undignified scuffling
which I heard when I came into the hall,
I gather that she beat
a hasty retreat down the back stairs.
I'm surprised at this farcical streak
in your nature, Alec.
Such carryings-on are quite unnecessary.
After all, we've been friends for years,
and I am the most
broad-minded of men.
I'm really very sorry,
Stephen.
I'm sure that the whole situation
must seem inexpressibly vulgar to you.
Actually,
it isn't in the least.
However, you're perfectly right:
Explanations are unnecessary,
particularly between friends.
- I must go now.
I'll collect my hat and coat.
- Very well.
- Good-bye.
- Perhaps you'll let me
have my latchkey back.
I only have two,
and I'm so afraid of losing them.
You know how absentminded I am.
- You're very angry, aren't you?
- No, Alec, not angry, just disappointed.
I ran until I couldn't run any longer.
I leant against a lamppost
to get my breath.
I was in one of those side roads
that lead out of the High Street.
I know it was stupid to run,
but I couldn't help myself.
I felt so utterly humiliated
and defeated and so dreadfully,
dreadfully ashamed.
After a moment or two
I pulled myself together...
and walked on
in the direction of the station.
It was still raining,
but not very much.
I suddenly realized
that I couldn't go home,
not until I had got myself more under
control and had a little time to think.
Then I thought of you waiting at home
and the dinner being spoilt,
so I went into the High Street and found
a tobacconist and telephoned to you.
Do you remember?
Hello, Fred, is that you?
Yes, dear, it's me, Laura.
Yes, everything's perfectly all right,
but I shan't be home to dinner.
I'm with Miss Lewis.
Miss Lewis, dear. You know,
the librarian I told you about at Boots.
Y- Yes, I can't explain in any detail
because she's outside the box now.
I met her in the High Street a little
while ago in a terrible state.
Her mother's been taken ill,
and I've promised to stay
with her until the doctor comes.
Yes, I know, but she's always
been awfully kind to me,
and I feel so sorry for her.
No, I'll get a sandwich, but
ask Ethel to leave me some soup
in a saucepan in the kitchen.
Yes, of course,
as soon as I can.
All right. Good-bye.
It's awfully easy to lie when you know
that you're trusted implicitly...
so very easy
and so very degrading.
I started walking
without much purpose.
I turned out of the High Street
almost immediately.
I was terrified
that I might run into Alec.
I was pretty certain that he'd
come after me to the station.
I walked for a long while. Finally,
I found myself at the war memorial...
you know, it's right
at the other side of the town.
It had stopped raining altogether,
and I felt stiflingly hot,
so I sat down
on one of the seats.
There was nobody about,
and I lit a cigarette.
I know how you disapprove
of women smoking in the street...
I do too, really...
but I wanted to calm my nerves,
and I thought it might help.
I sat there for ages...
I don't know how long...
then I noticed a policeman
walking up and down a little way off.
He was looking at me
rather suspiciously.
Presently he came up to me.
Feeling all right, miss?
- Yes, thank you.
- Waiting for someone?
No. No, I'm not
waiting for anybody.
Don't go and catch cold now. It's a damp
night for sitting about on seats.
I'm going now anyhow.
I've got to catch a train.
You're sure you feel
quite all right?
Quite, thank you.
Good night.
Good night, miss.
I walked away, trying to look casual,
knowing that he was watching me.
I felt like a criminal.
I walked rather quickly back
in the direction of the High Street.
I got to the station 15 minutes
before the last train to Ketchworth.
And then I realized that I'd been
wandering about for over three hours,
but it didn't seem to be
any time at all.
Stan, you are awful.
- See ya in the yard.
- All right.
- I'd like a glass of brandy, please.
- We're just closin'.
Yes, I see you are, but you're
not quite closed yet, are you?
- Three Star?
- That'll do.
Oh, and have you got
a piece of paper and an envelope?
- I'm afraid you'll have to
get that at the book stall.
- Well, the book stall's closed.
Please, it's very important.
I should be so much obliged.
All right.
Just a minute.
- Thank you very much.
- We close in a few minutes, you know.
Yes, I know.
- Darling, I've been
looking for you everywhere.
- Please go away. Please don't.
- I've watched every train.
- Please go away.
- I can't leave you like this.
- You must. It'll be better,
really it will.
You're being dreadfully cruel.
It was just an accident
that he came back early.
- He doesn't know who you are.
He never even saw you.
- He laughed, didn't he?
- I suppose you spoke of me
together as men of the world.
- We didn't speak of you.
- We spoke of some nameless
creature who has no reality.
- Why didn't you tell him?
Why didn't you say we were cheap
and low and without courage?
- Stop it, Laura. Pull yourself together.
- It's true.
It's nothing of the sort.
We know we love each other.
That's all that matters.
It isn't all that matters.
Other things matter too.
Self-respect matters, and decency.
I can't go on any longer.
Could you really say good-bye,
ever see me again?
Yes, if you'd help me.
I love you, Laura. I shall love you
always until the end of my life.
I can't look at you now
because I know something.
I know that this is
the beginning of the end...
not the end of my loving you,
the end of our being together.
But not quite yet, darling.
Please, not quite yet.
Very well.
Not quite yet.
I know what you feel about this evening... about the sordidness of it.
I know about the strain of our different lives... our lives apart from each other.
The feeling of guilt, doing wrong is too strong, isn't it?
Too great a price to pay for the happiness we have together.
I know all this because it's the same for me too.
You can look at me now.
I'm all right.
Let's be very careful.
Let's prepare ourselves.
A sudden break now, however brave and admirable, would be too cruel.
We can't do such violence to our hearts and minds.
Very well.
- I'm going away.
- I see.
- But not quite yet.
- Please, not quite yet.

- That's the 10:
It's after closing time.
- Oh, is it?
- I shall have to lock up.
- All right.
- I want you to promise me something.
- What is it?
Promise me that however unhappy you are... and however much you think things over,
- that you'll meet me again next Thursday.
- Where?
Outside the hospital

at 12:
- All right. I promise.
- I've got to talk to you.
I've got to explain.
- About going away?
- Yes.
- Where will you go?
Where can you go?
- You can't give up your practice.
I've had a job offered me.
I wasn't going to tell you.
I wasn't going to take it,
but I know now it's the only way out.
- Where?
- A long way away... Johannesburg.
- Oh, Alec.
- My brother's out there.
They're opening a new hospital.
They want me in it.
It's a fine opportunity, really.
I'll take Madeleine and the boys.
It's been torturing me...
the necessity of making
a decision one way or the other.
I haven't told anybody,
not even Madeleine.
I couldn't bear
the thought of leaving you,
but now I see it's
got to happen soon anyway.
It's almost happening already.
Stanley!
When will you go?
Almost immediately,
in about two weeks' time.
- Quite near, isn't it?
- Do you want me to stay?
- Do you want me to turn down the offer?
- Don't be foolish, Alec.
- I'll do whatever you say.
- That's unkind of you, my darling.
The train for Ketchworth is
now arriving at platform three.
You're not
angry with me, are you?
No, I'm not angry.
I don't think I'm anything, really.
I just feel tired.
- Forgive me?
- Forgive you for what?
For everything...
for meeting you in the first place,
for taking the piece
of grit out of your eye,
for loving you,
for bringing you so much misery.
I'll forgive you
if you'll forgive me.

Thursday.
All that was a week ago.
It's hardly credible
that it should be so short a time.
Today was
our last day together...
our very last together
in all our lives.
I met him outside the hospital
as I had promised at 12:30...

at 12:
That was only this morning.
We drove into the country again,
but this time he hired a car.
I lit cigarettes for him
every now and then as we went along.
We didn't talk much.
I felt numbed and hardly alive at all.
We had lunch in a village pub.
Afterwards, we went to the same bridge
over the stream,
the bridge that we'd
been to before.
Those last few hours
went by so quickly.
As we walked through the station
I remember thinking,
"This is the last time
with Alec.
I shall see all this again,
but without Alec. "
I tried not to think of it,
not to let it spoil
our last moments together.
Are you all right,
darling?
Yes, I'm all right.
I wish I could think of something
to say. It doesn't matter...
- not saying anything, I mean.
- I'll miss my train
and see you to yours.
- Please don't. I'll come over
to your platform. I'd rather.
- Very well.
Do you think we shall ever
see each other again?
I don't know.
Not for years anyway.
The children will
all be grown up.
I wonder if they'll ever
meet and know each other.
Couldn't I write to you,
just once in a while?
No, Alec, please.
You know we promised.
Well, all right, dear.
I do love you so very much.
I love you with
all my heart and soul.
I want to die.
If only I could die.
If you died, you'd forget me.
I want to be remembered.
Yes, I know. I do too.
- We've still got a few minutes.
- Laura!
What a lovely surprise.
My dear, I've been
shopping till I'm dropping.
My feet are nearly falling off.
My throat's parched.
I thought of having tea at Spindle's,
but I was terrified of losing the train.
- Oh, dear!
- Oh, this is Dr. Harvey.
- How do you do?
- How do you do? Would you be a dear and get me a cup of tea?
- I don't think I could drag my poor bones to the counter.
- No, please.
It was cruel of fate to be against us right up to the very last minute.
Dolly Messiter... poor, well-meaning, irritating Dolly Messiter... crashing into those last few precious minutes we had together.
She chattered and fussed, but I didn't hear what she said.
- I felt dazed and bewildered.
- Oh, dear. No sugar.
- It's in the spoon.
- Alec behaved so beautifully, with such perfect politeness.
No one could have guessed what he was really feeling.
And then...
- There's your train.
- Yes, I know.
- Oh, aren't you coming with us?
- I go in the opposite direction.
My practice is in Churley.
- Oh, I see.
- I'm a general practitioner at the moment.
- Dr. Harvey's going out to Africa next week.
- Oh, how thrilling.
The train now arriving at platform four...

is the 5:
Leigh Green and Langdon.
- I must go. Good-bye.
- Yes, you must.
Good-bye.
I felt the touch of his hand
on my shoulder for a moment,
and then he walked away...
away,
out of my life forever.
He's got to get
right over to the other platform.
Talking of missing trains reminds me of
that awful bridge at Broadham Junction.
Dolly still went on talking,
but I wasn't listening to her.
- I was listening for the sound
of his train starting.
Then it did.
I said to myself,
"He didn't go.
"At the last minute his courage
failed him. He couldn't have gone.
Any minute he'll come back into
the refreshment room pretending
he's forgotten something."
I prayed for him to do that,
just so that I could
see him again for an instant.
But the minutes went by.
Is that the train? Oh, can you tell me,
is that the Ketchworth train?
- No, it's the express.
- The boat train.
That doesn't stop,
does it?
- I want some chocolate, please.
- Milk or plain?
I meant to do it, Fred.
I really meant to do it.
I stood there trembling
right on the edge,
but I couldn't.
I wasn't brave enough.
I'd like to say it was the thought of
you and the children that prevented me,
but it wasn't.
I had no thoughts at all,
only an overwhelming desire
not to feel anything ever again,
not to be unhappy anymore.
I turned...
and went back
into the refreshment room.
That's when I nearly fainted.
Laura.
Yes, dear?
Whatever your dream was,
it wasn't a very happy one, was it?
No.
Is there anything
I can do to help?
Yes, Fred.
You always help.
You've been
a long way away.
Yes.
Thank you for coming
back to me.