

*(She fiddles in her handbag.)*

**CECILY.** I've got some, Auntie Loo-Loo.

*(She takes a one pound note out of her bag and offers it.)*

**AUNTIE LOO-LOO.** Oh, it's all right, dear, I shan't want all that...

*(With a change of thought she approaches and collects it.)*

Well, perhaps a glass of sherry.

*(She exits to the landing, after violent and muddled signals to MAVIS from the doorway. There is a pause. The front door slams. They burst into peals of laughter.)*

**MAVIS.** Auntie Loo-Loo is disappointed in you.

*(She takes a cigarette from the box on the table and lights it. A box that is actually a handsomely bound volume of "Arabian Nights" with the inside converted to contain cigarettes.)*

You're not reacting according to schedule! She wants flushed cheeks, dancing eyes and a correctly palpitating heart.

*(There is a pause. CECILY becomes serious.)*

**CECILY.** So do I.

**MAVIS.** Oh, do you?

**CECILY.** Oh, don't pretend to be surprised. You've had a pretty shrewd idea what my feelings have been for some time.

**MAVIS.** What is it?

**CECILY.** I'm terribly worried.

**MAVIS.** Over Nigel?

**CECILY.** Yes.

**MAVIS.** Really, Cecily, you've left it a bit late in the day to start changing -

**CECILY.** I can't help it. One must be honest with oneself, but it all seems so dull.

**MAVIS.** Dull?

**CECILY.** Yes, dull... Nigel and I are fond of each other, of course.

**MAVIS.** Fond? My God, what a word to get married on!

**CECILY.** We've known each other for years. It's such a very tepid romance.

**MAVIS.** Romance? What do you want? Fun in a gondola?

**CECILY.** I want excitement. Life's been so deadly monotonous up to now.

**MAVIS.** It must have been pretty monotonous for Nigel.

**CECILY.** Yes, I know, but he's breaking away from it all now, coming back to England to something entirely fresh – that's just the point. The office has been my Sudan and yours, too.

**MAVIS.** Yes, I know what you mean but still –

**CECILY.** Day after day, year after year. Getting up in the morning, having to be at the office on time. Always the neat efficient secretary. "Yes, Sir Henry"... "No, Sir Henry"... "Certainly, Sir Henry." ...Going out to lunch, then rushing back. The journey home on the bus. I want to live – to live, before I'm grey and old and dead, and –

**MAVIS.** Can I get you a glass of water, dear, after all that?

**CECILY.** Oh, I know it sounds a bit silly, but subconsciously I've always craved for adventure, and then, when we won all this money, I saw that at last I'd got the chance of it. Do you know the first thing I did?

**MAVIS.** No, tell me.

**CECILY.** I meant to tell you before. I wrote to Nigel, asking him if he'd postpone our wedding.

**MAVIS.** Cecily, you didn't!

**CECILY.** After all, it was only a postponement.

**MAVIS.** What reason did you give him?

**CECILY.** I said I wanted just a little time to enjoy my freedom in my own way.

**MAVIS.** What did Nigel say?

**CECILY.** He was furious.

**MAVIS.** I'm not surprised.

**CECILY.** You know how he hates his plans being upset. To use his own words, he had it all cut and dried. We're to have one week after his arrival for him to get clothes and arrange details. Then a special licence, a short honeymoon, in England, because he's seen nothing of it for so long, and then - Golders Green.

*(There is a pause.)*

**MAVIS.** Yes, I know all that, but, after all, why not? It's what you've always planned yourself - I've heard you say a hundred -

**CECILY.** Yes, I know, but now I feel I want something more broadening than warming Nigel's slippers in front of the fire - just for a little while, Mavis, that's all.

**MAVIS.** But, Cecily, you do love Nigel?

**CECILY.** That's just it. Do I? Have I ever loved Nigel? Or did I simply think he would do? That he was a means of escape from the office? It's an ugly thought but it might be true.

**MAVIS.** No, you're doing yourself an injustice. You're not really serious.

**CECILY.** *(Gravely.)* I do wish I wasn't.

*(She crosses to the bureau. She opens a drawer and takes a note.)*

Last night I wrote this to Nigel.

**MAVIS.** Oh, Cecily, not -

**CECILY.** Yes, breaking off our engagement.

**MAVIS.** But you can't, after all these years.

**CECILY.** Well, you know, that's not all my fault. I offered to go out three years ago. I wouldn't have minded being poor but Nigel thought it was wiser to wait. It wouldn't