

(BRUCE puts his cigarette out.)



BRUCE. Look at me a moment.

(She turns to him.)

Are you terribly glad and excited that he's coming back?

(She does not answer.)

No, you're not. Can you possibly be in love with him, then? You may make a mistake now and the real thing may come along too late.

CECILY. But how can I be sure this isn't the real thing?

BRUCE. It isn't. You know it isn't, don't you?

(His gaze is almost hypnotic.)

Oh, I understand so well what you're going through. I've been through the same sort of thing.

CECILY. You have?

BRUCE. There have been girls I've met, that I've liked plenty, everything's been very - er - suitable, and all that. It could have been all so easy. And yet, all along I've known that one day - one day, when I least expected it, I would walk into a room, see a girl and it would be all over - like that.

(He snaps his finger.)

CECILY. Do you think it can happen like that?

BRUCE. It has happened - today.

(There is a long pause.)

CECILY. You must be mad.

BRUCE. (Rising.) I know it looks like it. I hadn't got time to take the usual line, situated as you are. You may commit yourself at any minute. I had to speak at once, even at the risk of appearing crazy to you.

CECILY. But - but half an hour ago I had never met you.

BRUCE. (Simply.) I know, that's what's so wonderful.

CECILY. (Desperately.) These things don't happen.

BRUCE. They do. You have happened – to me. You know that.

(There is a pause.)

You do know it, don't you?

(She turns away.)

CECILY. It isn't possible.

(He touches her arm, turning her back very gently.)

BRUCE. From the very first moment that I saw you as you turned round from the mantelpiece, I knew. I could see everything in your eyes. You thought for a moment I was your fiancé, your feelings showed so clearly the desire for escape, the unhappiness at hurting someone who cares for you, and, beneath it all, your craving for life and adventure calling to mine.

(She turns away again.)

You believe me?

CECILY. Yes, I do believe you.

(He turns away with a sigh of relief. He opens the dining room door and stands looking in, presumably at the picture.)

BRUCE. This isn't going to end here, you know.

CECILY. It must.

BRUCE. It can't. I'm going to see you again...soon...today.

CECILY. Out of the question.

BRUCE. Come and lunch with me now.

CECILY. It's no use talking like this.

BRUCE. You can write a note for him.

CECILY. I've done that already.

BRUCE. You have? Well, then –

CECILY. It would be cruel.

BRUCE. Half-measures are fatal.

CECILY. I must risk that.

(There is another pause. BRUCE comes to a decision.)

BRUCE. All right, I give in - for the moment - but I tell you what I'll do. I'm going to the Savoy Grill. I shall wait for you in the vestibule till - what's the time now? - Ten to one - till three o'clock.

CECILY. They'll have you turned out for loitering or something.

BRUCE. I shouldn't worry. Will you, in the event of things not being O.K. with your fiancé - will you promise to come and join me?

CECILY. But why?

BRUCE. You don't actually dislike me, do you?

(She hesitates. His frankness compels her, she gives a laugh.)

CECILY. No.

BRUCE. If there wasn't somebody else I might stand some sort of a chance?

CECILY. I - I don't know. You're a very impulsive creature.

BRUCE. So are you at heart, but you've never had the chance to give way to it.

CECILY. No, that's true.

BRUCE. Anyway, I want you to get to know me better, and lunch is as good a way as any - you'll be able to make sure that I don't eat peas with a knife or insult the waiters. We could go for a walk in the park afterwards, it's a lovely day.

(CECILY looks out of the window.)

CECILY. It's clouded over.

BRUCE. It's only a shower, you'll see!

CECILY. *(Laughing.)* Persuasion is your strong point, isn't it?

BRUCE. *(Sighing.)* Well, I shall have to leave it at that. If things don't pan out all right with this fellow, you'll come?