

some tea? Pip, show Duncan his rooms while the tea is coming. You don't have to go back to the office today – do you?

*Pip*: No, darling.

*Toots*: Well, put your slippers on, my son.

*Pip*: Oui, ma mère. (He puts his hand on Duncan's shoulder.) This way, old boy. (at the door) Mother, where is Laura?

*Toots*: At the Library<sup>8</sup> reading the Chinese Classics.

*Pip*: Clever Dick! Avanti – signor. Observe with what ease the young Colonial rolls the foreign tongue. (They go out.)

*Toots*: (at the door) If there is no hot water in Duncan's room – just curse down the kitchen stairs – will you? (She comes back into the room and very deliberately shuts the door.)

*Bee*: (who has been rearranging herself.) Now I really must go, Toots dear.

*Toots*: (pays no attention) Well, what do you think of him?

*Bee*: He's far better looking than his photograph made him out to be.

*Toots*: (reluctantly) Yes, I suppose he *is* what you'd call good looking.

*Bee*: And his voice is charming – a charming *english* voice.

*Toots*: (naively) Isn't it strange that I can't take to him? Somehow he doesn't seem to be in the least one of *us* – not to belong in the very faintest degree to *our tribe* if you know what I mean. But I really haven't got any right to say that about him just now – the moment he has arrived and I dare say *feels* his nose is red and is dying to – – – wash his hands and part his hair. In fact I think it's beastly of me to shut the door on him and begin criticising like that. I take back what I said Bee. I really am unscrupulous – just as bad as the children.

*Bee*: (kissing her) My dear Toots, you may always be certain that anything you ever tell me never goes the length of my little finger further.

*Toots*: Oh, that's not what I care about at all. Goodbye, dear. I'll come with you to the door. And while I remember I'll get you the pot of my new cape gooseberry jam before I forget. (The stage is empty. It gets dusky. The wind is heard rushing and hooting. Some one wrenches open the french windows and comes through, shutting them after her as though she were being pursued by the furious wind. It is Laura. She wears a big black coat. A scarf round her neck and a white woollen cap pulled over her ears. When she has shut the windows, she staggers forward, her hands clasped at the back of her head, panting and laughing silently, and saying in a breathless whisper 'How marvellous it was. How marvellous . . .' She crosses her arms over her breast hugging her shoulders. 'And how terrified I was! How absolutely terrified!' She stands quite still for a moment and then blurts out angrily 'And the joke was that some arrogant fool actually thought I was waving to him and started waving back!' It is quite dusky. Only the shapes of things are seen and Laura's white wool cap. The door