

contains drinks and glasses, etc. It is heavy and not quite the same taste as the other pieces of furniture – but, it is practical.)

(In what was the smaller of the two drawing-rooms, right, there is a bay window. It reaches from floor to ceiling as was the custom in all houses during the period this one was built. It has rich velvet and net curtains. In the bay is a sofa. The walls are festooned with paintings. Not especially good, since most of them are family portraits. There are also a few late eighteenth- early nineteenth-century silhouettes, which were done when the family were not so well off as they had been. In a further attempt to disguise the fact that it was originally two rooms, the chairs are set in a semicircle. Most people will not be conscious of this and, of course, this is what was hoped for. There are quite a few interesting and comfortable chairs. Two spoon-backs. One grandmother and one grandfather. An upright “throne” chair. A low tub-shape. A fat comfortable looking button-back; and so on. In the middle of the cleverly placed semicircle there is a small centre table of good shape and nicely proportioned. It is not a big table and can easily be lifted by one person. There is a central light – probably a chandelier – and some wall lights.)

(The whole effect is of simple elegance. Not something merely to look at although pleasing to the eye – it is something to be lived in.)

(As the curtain rises, MISS BLACKLOCK is at the bay window waving good-bye to someone. She is beyond middle-age, but still a very attractive woman who has clearly looked after her figure and features. JULIA SIMMONS, her niece, aged twenty-five or twenty-six, is sitting in a chair reading a newspaper.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. Good-bye.

JULIA. You really do make too much fuss of her, Aunt Letty...

(MISS BLACKLOCK turns from the window and moves to JULIA – a small smile on her face.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. Well, Phillipa's been through rather a lot, Julia. And tell me what's wrong with trying to make life a bit more pleasant?

JULIA. Nothing – I suppose...

MISS BLACKLOCK. It's such a little thing – waving good-bye. But, it helps. I'd do the same for you.

JULIA. I'm family!

(MISS BLACKLOCK picks up a newspaper and sits in a chair.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(chuckling)* Why, Julia. It sounds as if you're jealous.

JULIA. Me? Certainly not! But, she is only a lodger.

MISS BLACKLOCK. Come to that. So are you.

(A moment passes. JULIA appears a little hurt.)

Look. I was pleased to have you here – and just as pleased to have Phillipa. She's had a lot to contend with. How would you feel if your husband had died so young leaving you with a child...

JULIA. I don't know. I wouldn't have got married in my teens. I'm not so daft.

MISS BLACKLOCK. Ah – the trouble is, we're not all as worldly as you are, Julia.

(a moment's pause as MISS BLACKLOCK's point registers)

JULIA. I'm sorry, Aunt Letty...

MISS BLACKLOCK. Oh – there's no need...

JULIA. No, no – I've been spiteful. And, believe it or not, I rather like Phillipa. We seem to be on the same wave length. But, you do make too much fuss – of all of us.

MISS BLACKLOCK. I like having young people around me. So when your mother asked if you could stay here, I was delighted. It meant I could indulge myself...

(The Main Door opens and DORA BUNNER enters. She is slightly older than MISS BLACKLOCK.)

BUNNY. I can't find it, Letty. I can't find it *anywhere*.

(MISS BLACKLOCK looks up from her newspaper and smiles benignly.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. What dear?

(BUNNY goes to her.)

BUNNY. It's Friday...

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(with a wry smile)* All day, dear.

BUNNY. Yes.

JULIA. Friday, the thirteenth to be precise. *Ominous!*

BUNNY. *(worried)* Oh, dear... What was I saying, Letty?

MISS BLACKLOCK. You couldn't find *it*, Bunny dear.

BUNNY. Exactly. I can't find it anywhere. Have you seen it?

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(smiling)* Let's start at the beginning.

BUNNY. It's Friday – I always read it Friday morning after breakfast...

MISS BLACKLOCK. Oh, the *Gazette*, you mean...

BUNNY. Of course. That's what I've been telling you...

MISS BLACKLOCK. Yes, dear...

BUNNY. I can't find the *Chipping Cleghorn Gazette* anywhere.
(with a sudden thought) You don't think they've gone on strike, do you?

MISS BLACKLOCK. They wouldn't do that, dear. Not *here*.

JULIA. What a lovely thought. A strike. Here. *Picket lines* – headlines in the national press... We might even be on the wireless. "Reporters on *Chipping Cleghorn Gazette* refuse to report Vicar's garden party."

MISS BLACKLOCK. Things like that don't happen here...

JULIA. No. *Nothing* happens here. It's another world, isn't it?

MISS BLACKLOCK. And just as well, too.