

why you shouldn't drop me at the club on your way.'

She looked at him, and at that moment he seemed to be standing a long way off from her. He was suddenly so small and far away that she couldn't be sure what he was doing, or what he was thinking, or even what he was.

'The club is in the city centre,' she said. 'It isn't on the way to the airport.'

'But you'll have plenty of time, my dear. Don't you want to drop me at the club?'

'Oh, yes - of course.'

'That's good. Then I'll see you in the morning at nine.' She went up to her bedroom on the second floor, and she was

so tired that she fell asleep soon after she lay down. Next morning, Mrs Foster was up early, and by 8.30 she was downstairs and ready to leave.

Shortly after nine, her husband appeared. 'Did you make any coffee?' he asked.

'No, dear. I thought you'd get a nice breakfast at the club. The car is here. It's been waiting. I'm all ready to go.'

They were standing in the hall - they always seemed to be meeting in the hall these days.

'Your luggage?'

'It's at the airport.'

'Ah, yes,' he said. 'Of course. And if you're going to take me to the club first, I suppose we'd better go fairly soon, hadn't we?'

'Yes!' she cried. 'Oh, yes - please!'

'I'm just going to get a packet of cigarettes. I'll be with you in a moment. You get in the car.'

She turned and went out to where the driver was standing, and he opened the car door for her.

'What time is it?' she asked him.

'About 9.15.'

Mr Foster came out five minutes later, and watching him as he

walked slowly down the steps, she noticed that his legs were like goat's legs in those narrow trousers that he wore. As on the day before, he paused halfway down the steps to smell the air and to examine the sky. The weather was still not quite clear, but there was a little sun forcing its way through the mist.

'Perhaps you'll be lucky this time,' he said as he settled himself beside her in the car.

'Hurry, please,' she said to the driver. 'Please start the car. I'm late.'

'Just a moment!' Mr Foster said suddenly. 'Wait a moment, driver, will you?'

'What is it, dear?' She saw him searching the pockets of his overcoat.

'I had a little present I wanted you to take to Ellen,' he said.

'Now, where is it? I'm sure I had it in my hand as I came down.'

'I never saw you carrying anything. What sort of present?'

'A little box wrapped up in white paper. I forgot to give it to you yesterday. I don't want to forget it today.'

'A little box!' Mrs Foster cried. 'I never saw any little box! She began hunting feverishly in the back of the car.'

Her husband continued searching through the pockets of his coat. Then he unbuttoned the coat and felt around in his jacket.

'I must have left it in my bedroom. I won't be a moment.'

'Oh, please!' she cried. 'We haven't got time! Please leave it! You can post it to her. It's only one of those silly combs in any case. You're always giving her combs.'

'And what's wrong with combs, may I ask?' he said, angry that she should have lost her temper for once.

'Nothing, dear, I'm sure. But ...'

'Stay here!' he commanded. 'I'm going to get it.'

'Be quick, dear! Oh, please be quick!'

She sat still, waiting and waiting.

'Driver, what time is it?'