

The man looked at his watch. 'Nearly 9.30.'

'Can we get to the airport in an hour?'

'Just about.'

At this point, Mrs Foster suddenly spotted a corner of something white down in the crack of the seat on the side where her husband had been sitting. She reached over and pulled out a small paper-wrapped box, and at the same time she couldn't help noticing that it was stuck down there very firmly and deep, as if with the help of a pushing hand.

'Here it is!' she cried. 'I've found it! Oh, dear, and now he'll be up there for ever, searching for it! Driver, quickly – run in and call him down, will you please?'

The driver did not care very much for any of this, but he got out of the car and went up the steps to the front door. Then he turned and came back. 'The door's locked,' he announced. 'Have you got a key?'

'Yes – wait a minute.' She began hunting in her bag. Her little face was tight with anxiety. 'Here it is! No – I'll go myself. It'll be quicker. I know where he'll be.'

She hurried out of the car and up the steps to the front door, slid the key into the keyhole, and was about to turn it – and then she stopped. Her head came up, and she stood there completely still. She waited – five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten seconds. From the way she was standing there, it seemed as if she were listening for a sound that she had heard a moment before from a place far away inside the house.

Yes – quite clearly she was listening. She appeared actually to be moving one of her ears closer and closer to the door. Now it was right up against the door, and for another few seconds she remained in that position, head up, ear to door, hand on key, about to enter but not entering, trying instead, or so it seemed, to hear these sounds that were coming faintly from some place deep inside the house.

Then, suddenly, she came to life again. She took the key out of the door and came running back down the steps.

'It's too late!' she cried to the driver. 'I can't wait for him, I simply can't. I'll miss my plane. Hurry now, driver, hurry! To the airport!'

The driver, if he had been watching her closely, might have noticed that her face had turned white and that her whole expression had suddenly changed. There was no longer that rather soft and silly look. A strange hardness had settled on her features. The little mouth was now tight and thin, the eyes were bright, and the voice, when she spoke, carried a new note of decision.

'Hurry, driver, hurry!'

'Isn't your husband travelling with you?' the man asked, surprised.

'Certainly not! I was only going to drop him at his club. Don't sit there talking, man. Let's go! I've got to catch a plane for Paris!'

The man drove fast all the way, and she just caught her plane. Soon she was high up over the Atlantic, sitting back comfortably in her seat, listening to the sound of the engines, flying to Paris at last. The new confidence was still with her. She felt extremely strong and, in a strange sort of way, wonderful. She was a little breathless with it all, but this was more from shock at what she had done than from anything else, and as the plane flew further and further away from New York and East 62nd Street, a great sense of calmness began to settle over her. By the time she reached Paris, she was just as strong and cool and calm as she could wish.

She met her grandchildren, and they were even more beautiful than in their photographs. Every day she took them for walks, and fed them cakes, and bought them presents, and told them stories.

Once a week, on Tuesdays, she wrote a letter to her husband –