

colour and that her hands played restlessly with a platinum watch chain round her neck.

"I can think of so many things that it's difficult to choose," she answered easily. "You're going to marry him, Dina, but I'm sure I know him better than you do. If you went back now, you'd probably find him in the cellars, projecting a swimming bath and not remembering a single word of tea or us or anything; or it's quite likely that he's recollected a piece of tapestry at Ripley Court and is gaily motoring down to see if it will do for the hall. That's the sort of thing that used to make poor Sir Aylmer so angry; Deryk, of course, never noticed anything until his father used to say, 'Dinner will be at 8.30, and I shall send Benson to see that you are dressed by 8.15.' And then, of course, there was a row, and Deryk protested that he was being treated like a child. So he was, poor lamb, but then he *is* a child."

Idina did not seem to be listening, but she noticed the silence after the last words and murmured, half to herself,

"I wish he'd come!"

"L-look here, Mrs. Dawson," Felix began, struggling to his feet from a very low armchair. Yolande shook her head and pushed him back again.

"Don't fuss, good people," she begged. "If he's there, he certainly won't come until *he's* ready; if he's not there, we shan't find him. Quite seriously, Dina, I got an idea at lunch that Deryk was a bit overwrought—doing too much, you know; he was like this before his illness in the autumn. If you want my advice, you'll simply ignore him; don't let him think that you're fretting or worrying, keep yourself in the background—oh, I know you do! I was only warning you that everybody and everything are rather apt to get on his nerves this afternoon."

Idina's slow nod of acquiescence closed the discussion, and all three tried to remember what had been engaging their attention when they unexpectedly noticed the time. The conversation smouldered, however, and would not break into flame. Soon after half past six, though Idina