

Off we buzzed, the four of us. . . .

I'm telling you what happened, mind, not the way any of us ought to have behaved. Here had I been spending a blissful day in the country with Slim's girl. There was he with my (still) fiancée on his arm, holding it as if she were afraid to let it go. . . . As the taxi gambolled into York Road I saw him seize Phyllis's hand without worrying to hide what he was doing and hold it, cuddle it up against his coat, and, with his thumb, smooth down the seams of her glove.

Phyllis, her black eyes far, far away, didn't seem to be seeing us or him or anything. . . .

"Don't mind us," chuckled Slim, nodding at me, "I daresay you've been young, once; isn't that so?"

That was his start in. More coming. Much more. Still with his arm through Phyllis's and his hand in hers, he marched into the Croesus as though he had just bought it, threw his hat and stick into the little office, forgot to take the ticket and shooed the girls away to their cloak-room. When they'd gone I let myself be serious and looked at him for some sort of explanation of all this, while they were away.

Did I get it? No fear. He just dragged me to the buffet.

"Two sherries and Angostura, Sybil?" he cried. "Pour the bitters in the glass and pour 'em out again. Not that sherry! You know the kind I like," chucking down some more money. "Well!" he laughed over the top of his glass. "Cheero, Old Horse!"

"Cheero," said I in a dazed voice. "I say——"