

GOODBYE

TO BERLIN

CHRISTOPHER

ISHERWOOD

"The best prose writer in English."
—GORE VIDAL

GOODBYE TO BERLIN

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

Introduction by Alan Cumming

A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK

to John & Beatrix Lehmann

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Introduction

I MUST ADMIT THAT in rereading this book of memories I began to doubt my own. When I'd opened the pages I had done so with the relish of catching up with an old friend, not expecting to be surprised at the insights of someone unfamiliar.

Could there really be such a myriad of themes and tones and moments I didn't recall whatsoever something I feel so familiar with and have such an affinity for?

But worse! Have I, like Frl. Schroeder, become a bit dotty and these revelations are in fact nothing of the kind, but merely the result of me being a kind of literary goldfish swimming around the Isherwoodian bowl, rediscovering "new" insights with every lap?

I pondered this as I trudged the streets of Glasgow where I had come, like Isherwood to Berlin, in search of life and love as a very young man. I was back again thirty years later to rehearse a play, *Macbeth*, and every morning I would walk to an old swimming baths in the West End where I would swim laps and hope the lines I had learned the night before had remained whilst my raveled sleeve care was being knitted up. Every morning my walk took me past my first-ever abode in Glasgow, a room I rented in the apartment of a middle-aged woman, Miss Child, who I suddenly began to realize displayed many characteristics similar to Frl. Schroeder: she had, if not delusions, illusions of grandeur, and her young tenants were subject to her disdain and approbation in equal but never logical amounts. Like Christopher Isherwood, I had smuggled in a few late night visitors past her bedroom door, ever fearing the slit of light her bedside lamp would make at the bottom of the door should my guest and I not be able to restrain our giggles. She too had endured some hard times and she too could sashay in a housecoat.

Perhaps because of the mental activity involved in this daily flashback to my youth I also dredged up other parts of my brain pond and happily I remembered that the last time I had read *Goodbye to Berlin* I had felt the same thing. It wasn't as if I were reading it for the first time, but the bits I found new and revelatory were merely deeper insights into situations and into characters I had already met and loved. And surely that is the mark of great writing? The ability to make the reader feel as if this story is being retold not merely reread, and new, juicy additions are included for our very own personal enjoyment. And actually, isn't the regularity the work is reread the mark of a great writer, especially with the eagerness with which I fell back into these pages?

I first read this book in 1987, in preparation for playing Cliff in a production of *Cabaret* in a repertory theatre in Mussleburgh, just outside of Edinburgh. The director allowed some liberties to be taken with the musical's text: I played Cliff as an English writer, not an American; the show was bookended by pieces from the novel's opening and closing; and I generally tried to channel Isherwood rather than the American musical version of him. I didn't know it then but this was the start of a long journey together.

About six years later I read the book again when I was about to play the Emcee in Sam Mendes' production of *Cabaret* at the Donmar Warehouse in London. This time I augmented my reading with Isherwood's later book *Christopher and His Kind*, his brilliant, revelatory autobiography that gives a wiser, older, more liberated and confident man's description of the real stories of the characters we meet

Goodbye to Berlin and *All The Conspirators*, and reading it was, for me, the literary equivalent of looking behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*: by having the facts confirmed, I appreciated the fiction more. I was so happy Isherwood had moved in with the Nowaks because he was having sex with Otto! But yet I love that it is an Englishman's penury that takes him there in this book. And much as I reveled in the dirt and the sleaze and the truth about being a young, gay man in the midst of a country that was on the brink of hell, it is the poetry of *Goodbye to Berlin* that I have returned to again and again, and not the brutal truth—albeit in his clever, third-person, arm's-length literary conceit—of *Christopher and His Kind*.

In reading these pages again, I also realized the fallacy of Isherwood trying to tell us he is merely a literary vessel, the unthinking camera of the first page with its shutter open, some sort of lucky Zelig of a scribe whose age and circumstance and sexual proclivity all led him to be at the center of a social and political storm in Berlin in the late twenties which he merely records for future regurgitation. The feigned modesty combined with his casual, often impersonal, very English style belies the passion and the pain of the time he is retelling, his spare and precise descriptions so brutal in their accuracy in nailing the human condition, even in circumstances most of us will never have experienced, and certainly hope I never shall.

I can't imagine what it must have been like to have been there to feel the turn in the public conscience, to actually see the beginning of the violence and the acceptance of Nazism as a mainstream political alternative and finally a national edict. But I don't need to. Christopher Isherwood tells me, and each time I return he has more insights and revelations for me.

The last time I read this book I was far away from Glasgow, about to open the London production of *Cabaret* on Broadway, and when that happened my life changed considerably. Like Isherwood, I had found a new home in America, and like him I had come a long way from being a wide-eyed lodger in a new city.

A couple of years ago I made a documentary for the BBC called *The Real Cabaret* and went to Berlin to find out what had happened to the artistes and denizens of the Weimar cabaret clubs once the music had stopped and the lights had gone out all over Europe. It wasn't pretty. But the trip did allow me the chance to visit the apartment in the Nollendorfplatz and sit in the actual window of Isherwood's room and read aloud the first paragraph of this book whilst looking out at the actual buildings he is describing. It was an eerie and beautiful moment and something of a communion with a man who had sat in that same window more than 80 years before and with a story that inadvertently changed the life of a yet unborn Scotsman.

It's almost as though I am somehow drawn to read *Goodbye to Berlin* at intervals throughout my life and thereafter something pretty amazing happens. I can't wait to find out what it will be this time, and I truly am happy to herald you, dear reader, into a world I am sure you will, like me, want to return to again and again and again.

ALAN CUMMING

THE SIX PIECES contained in this volume form a roughly continuous narrative. They are the only existing fragments of what was originally planned as a huge episodic novel of pre-Hitler Berlin that I had intended to call it *The Lost*. My old title has been changed, however; it is too grandiose for this short loosely connected sequence of diaries and sketches.

Readers of *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (published in the United States as *The Last of Mr Norris*) may notice that certain characters and situations in that novel overlap and contradict what I have written here — Sally Bowles, for instance, would have run into Mr Norris on Fräulein Schroeder's staircase. Christopher Isherwood would certainly have come home one evening to find William Bradshaw asleep in his bed. The explanation is simple: The adventures of Mr Norris once formed part of *The Lost* itself.

Because I have given my own name to the "I" of this narrative, readers are certainly not entitled to assume that its pages are purely autobiographical, or that its characters are libellously exact portraits of living persons. "Christopher Isherwood" is a convenient ventriloquist's dummy, nothing more.

The first *Berlin Diary*, *The Nowaks*, and *The Landauers* have already appeared, in John Lehmann's *New Writing*. Of these, *Berlin Diary* and *The Nowaks* and also the second *Berlin Diary* have appeared in his Penguin *New Writing*. *Sally Bowles* was originally published as a separate volume by The Hogarth Press.

C
September 1938

GOODBYE TO BERLIN

A Berlin Diary

Autumn 1930

FROM MY WINDOW, the deep solemn massive street. Cellar-shops where the lamps burn all day, under the shadow of top-heavy balconied façades, dirty plaster frontages embossed with scroll-work and heraldic devices. The whole district is like this: street leading into street of houses like shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and secondhand furniture of a bankrupt middle class.

I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed.

At eight o'clock in the evening the house-doors will be locked. The children are having supper. The shops are shut. The electric sign is switched on over the night-bell of the little hotel on the corner where you can hire a room by the hour. And soon the whistling will begin. Young men are calling the girls. Standing down there in the cold, they whistle up at the lighted windows of warm rooms where the beds are already turned down for the night. They want to be let in. Their signals echo down the deep hollow street, lascivious and private and sad. Because of the whistling, I do not care to stay here in the evenings. It reminds me that I am in a foreign city, alone, far from home. Sometimes I determine not to listen to it, pick up a book, try to read. But soon a call is sure to sound, so piercing, so insistent, so despairingly human, that at last I have to get up and peep through the slats of the Venetian blind to make quite sure that it is not — as I know very well it could not possibly be — for me.

The extraordinary smell in this room when the stove is lighted and the window shut; not altogether unpleasant, a mixture of incense and stale buns. The tall tiled stove, gorgeously coloured, like an altar. The washstand like a Gothic shrine. The cupboard also is Gothic, with carved cathedral windows. Bismarck faces the King of Prussia in stained glass. My best chair would do for a bishop's throne. In the corner, three sham medieval halberds (from a theatrical touring company?) are fastened together to form a hatstand. Frl. Schroeder unscrews the heads of the halberds and polishes them from time to time. They are heavy and sharp enough to kill.

Everything in the room is like that: unnecessarily solid, abnormally heavy and dangerously sharp. Here, at the writing-table, I am confronted by a phalanx of metal objects — a pair of candlesticks shaped like entwined serpents, an ashtray from which emerges the head of a crocodile, a paperknife copied from a Florentine dagger, a brass dolphin holding on the end of its tail a small broken clock. What becomes of such things? How could they ever be destroyed? They will probably remain intact for thousands of years: people will treasure them in museums. Or perhaps they will merely be melted down for munitions in a war. Every morning, Frl. Schroeder arranges them very carefully in certain unvarying positions: there they stand, like an uncompromising statement of her views on Capitalism, Society, Religion and Sex.

All day long she goes padding about the large dingy flat. Shapeless but alert, she waddles from room to room, in carpet slippers and a flowered dressing-gown pinned ingeniously together, so that not an inch of petticoat or bodice is to be seen, flicking with her duster, peeping, spying, poking her short pointed nose into the cupboards and luggage of her lodgers. She has dark, bright, inquisitive eyes and pretty waved brown hair of which she is proud. She must be about fifty-five years old.

Long ago, before the War and the Inflation, she used to be comparatively well off. She went to the Baltic for her summer holidays and kept a maid to do the housework. For the last thirty years she has

lived here and taken in lodgers. She started doing it because she liked to have company.

“‘Lina,’ my friends used to say to me, ‘however can you? How can you bear to have strange people living in your rooms and spoiling your furniture, especially when you’ve got the money to be independent?’ And I’d always give them the same answer. ‘My lodgers aren’t lodgers,’ I used to say. ‘They’re my guests.’”

“You see, Herr Issyvoo, in those days I could afford to be very particular about the sort of people who came to live here. I could pick and choose. I only took them really well connected and well educated — proper gentlefolk (like yourself, Herr Issyvoo). I had a Freiherr once, and a Rittmeister and a Professor. They often gave me presents — a bottle of cognac or a box of chocolates or some flowers. And when one of them went away for his holidays he’d always send me a card — from London, it might be, or Paris, or Baden-Baden. Ever such pretty cards I used to get . . .”

And now Frl. Schroeder has not even got a room of her own. She has to sleep in the living-room behind a screen, on a small sofa with broken springs. As in so many of the older Berlin flats, our living-room connects the front part of the house with the back. The lodgers who live on the front have to pass through the living-room on their way to the bathroom, so that Frl. Schroeder is often disturbed during the night. “But I drop off again at once. It doesn’t worry me. I’m much too tired.” She has to do all the housework herself and it takes up most of her day. “Twenty years ago, if anybody had told me to scrub my own floors, I’d have slapped his face for him. But you get used to it. You can get used to anything. Why, I remember the time when I’d sooner cut off my right hand than empty this chamber-pot. . . And now,” says Frl. Schroeder, suiting the action to the word, “my goodness! It’s no more to me than pouring out a cup of tea!”

She is fond of pointing out to me the various marks and stains left by lodgers who have inhabited this room:

“Yes, Herr Issyvoo, I’ve got something to remember each of them by . . . Look here, on the rug — I’ve sent it to the cleaners I don’t know how often but nothing will get it out — that’s where Herr Noeske was sick after his birthday party. What in the world can he have been eating, to make a mess like that? He’d come to Berlin to study, you know. His parents lived in Brandenburg — a first-class family; oh, I assure you! They had pots of money! His Herr Papa was a surgeon, and of course I wanted his boy to follow in his footsteps . . . What a charming young man! ‘Herr Noeske,’ I used to say to him, ‘excuse me, but you must really work harder — you with all your brains! Think of your Herr Papa and your Frau Mama; it isn’t fair to them to waste their good money like that. Why, if you were to drop it in the Spree it would be better. At least it would make a splash!’ I was like a mother to him. And always, when he’d got himself into some scrape — he was terribly thoughtless — he’d come straight to me: ‘Schroederschen,’ he used to say, ‘please don’t be angry with me . . . We were playing cards last night and I lost the whole of this month’s allowance. I daren’t tell Father . . .’ And then he’d look at me with those great big eyes of his. I knew exactly what he was after, the scamp! But I hadn’t the heart to refuse. So I’d sit down and write a letter to his Frau Mama and beg her to forgive him just that once and send some more money. And she always would . . . Of course, as a woman, I knew how to appeal to a mother’s feelings, although I’ve never had any children of my own . . . What are you smiling at, Herr Issyvoo? Well, well! Mistakes will happen, you know!”

“And that’s where the Herr Rittmeister always upset his coffee over the wall-paper. He used to sit there on the couch with his fiancée. ‘Herr Rittmeister,’ I used to say to him, ‘do please drink your coffee at the table. If you’ll excuse my saying so, there’s plenty of time for the other thing afterwards . . .’ But no, he always would sit on the couch. And then, sure enough, when he began to get a bit

excited in his feelings, over went the coffee-cups . . . Such a handsome gentleman! His Frau Man and his sister came to visit us sometimes. They liked coming up to Berlin. 'Fräulein Schroeder,' she used to tell me, 'you don't know how lucky you are to be living here, right in the middle of things! We're only country cousins — we envy you! And now tell us all the latest Court scandals!' Of course they were only joking. They had the sweetest little house, not far from Halberstadt, in the Harz. They used to show me pictures of it. A perfect dream!

"You see those ink-stains on the carpet? That's where Herr Professor Koch used to shake his fountain-pen. I told him of it a hundred times. In the end, I even laid sheets of blotting-paper on the floor around his chair. He was so absent-minded . . . Such a dear old gentleman! And so simple. I was very fond of him. If I mended a shirt for him or darned his socks, he'd thank me with the tears in his eyes. He liked a bit of fun, too. Sometimes, when he heard me coming, he'd turn out the light and hide behind the door; and then he'd roar like a lion to frighten me. Just like a child . . ."

Frl. Schroeder can go on like this, without repeating herself, by the hour. When I have been listening to her for some time, I find myself relapsing into a curious trance-like state of depression. I begin to feel profoundly unhappy. Where are all those lodgers now? Where, in another ten years, shall I be, myself? Certainly not here. How many seas and frontiers shall I have to cross to reach that distant day; how far shall I have to travel, on foot, on horseback, by car, push-bike, aeroplane, steamer, train, lift, moving-staircase, and tram? How much money shall I need for that enormous journey? How much food must I gradually, wearily consume on my way? How many pairs of shoes shall I wear out? How many thousands of cigarettes shall I smoke? How many cups of tea shall I drink and how many glasses of beer? What an awful tasteless prospect! And yet — to have to die . . . A sudden vague pang of apprehension grips my bowels and I have to excuse myself in order to go to the lavatory.

Hearing that I was once a medical student, she confides to me that she is very unhappy because of the size of her bosom. She suffers from palpitations and is sure that these must be caused by the strain on her heart. She wonders if she should have an operation. Some of her acquaintances advise her to do so, others are against it:

"Oh dear, it's such a weight to have to carry about with you! And just think — Herr Issyvoo: used to be as slim as you are!"

"I suppose you had a great many admirers, Frl. Schroeder?"

Yes, she has had dozens. But only one Friend. He was a married man, living apart from his wife, who would not divorce him.

"We were together eleven years. Then he died of pneumonia. Sometimes I wake up in the night when it's cold and wish he was there. You never seem to get really warm, sleeping alone."

There are four other lodgers in this flat. Next door to me, in the big front-room, is Frl. Kost. In the room opposite, overlooking the courtyard, is Frl. Mayr. At the back, beyond the living-room, is Bobby. And behind Bobby's room, over the bathroom, at the top of a ladder, is a tiny attic which Frl. Schroeder refers to, for some occult reason, as "The Swedish Pavilion." This she lets, at twenty marks a month, to a commercial traveller who is out all day and most of the night. I occasionally come upon him on Sunday mornings, in the kitchen, shuffling about in his vest and trousers, apologetically hunting for a box of matches.

Bobby is a mixer at a west-end bar called the Troika. I don't know his real name. He has adopted this one because English Christian names are fashionable just now in the Berlin demi-monde. He is pale, worried-looking, smartly dressed young man with thin sleek black hair. During the ear-

afternoon, just after he has got out of bed, he walks about the flat in shirt-sleeves, wearing a hair-net.

~~Frl. Schroeder and Bobby are on intimate terms. He tickles her and slaps her bottom; she hits him over the head with a frying-pan or a mop. The first time I surprised them scuffling like this, they were both rather embarrassed. Now they take my presence as a matter of course.~~

Frl. Kost is a blonde florid girl with large silly blue eyes. When we meet, coming to and from the bathroom in our dressing-gowns, she modestly avoids my glance. She is plump but has a good figure.

One day I asked Frl. Schroeder straight out: What was Frl. Kost's profession?

"Profession? Ha, ha, that's good! That's just the word for it! Oh, yes, she's got a fine profession. Like this —"

And with the air of doing something extremely comic, she began waddling across the kitchen like a duck, mincingly holding a duster between her finger and thumb. Just by the door, she twirled triumphantly round, flourishing the duster as though it were a silk handkerchief, and kissed her hand to me mockingly:

"Ja, ja, Herr Issyvoo! That's how they do it!"

"I don't quite understand, Frl. Schroeder. Do you mean that she's a tight-rope walker?"

"He, he, he! Very good indeed, Herr Issyvoo! Yes, that's right! That's it! She walks along the line for her living. That just describes her!"

One evening, soon after this, I met Frl. Kost on the stairs, with a Japanese. Frl. Schroeder explained to me later that he is one of Frl. Kost's best customers. She asked Frl. Kost how they spend the time together when not actually in bed, for the Japanese can speak hardly any German.

"Oh, well," said Frl. Kost, "we play the gramophone together, you know, and eat chocolates, and then we laugh a lot. He's very fond of laughing . . ."

Frl. Schroeder really quite likes Frl. Kost and certainly hasn't any moral objections to her trade; nevertheless, when she is angry because Frl. Kost has broken the spout of the teapot or omitted to make crosses for her telephone-calls on the slate in the living-room, then invariably she exclaims:

"But after all, what else can you expect from a woman of that sort, a common prostitute! What Herr Issyvoo, do you know what she used to be? A servant girl! And then she got to be on intimate terms with her employer and one fine day, of course, she found herself in certain circumstances . . . And when that little difficulty was removed, she had to go trot-trot . . ."

Frl. Mayr is a music-hall *jodlerin* — one of the best, so Frl. Schroeder reverently assures me, the whole of Germany. Frl. Schroeder doesn't altogether like Frl. Mayr, but she stands in great awe of her; as well she may. Frl. Mayr has a bull-dog jaw, enormous arms, and coarse string-coloured hair. She speaks a Bavarian dialect with peculiarly aggressive emphasis. When at home, she sits up like a war-horse at the living-room table, helping Frl. Schroeder to lay cards. They are both adept fortune-tellers and neither would dream of beginning the day without consulting the omens. The chief thing they both want to know at present is: when will Frl. Mayr get another engagement? This question interests Frl. Schroeder quite as much as Frl. Mayr, because Frl. Mayr is behind-hand with the rent.

At the corner of the Motzstrasse, when the weather is fine, there stands a shabby pop-eyed man beside a portable canvas booth. On the sides of the booth are pinned astrological diagrams and autographed letters of recommendation from satisfied clients. Frl. Schroeder goes to consult him whenever she can afford the mark for his fee. In fact, he plays a most important part in her life. Her behaviour towards him is a mixture of cajolery and threats. If the good things he promises her come true she will kiss him, she says, invite him to dinner, buy him a gold watch: if they don't, she will throttle him, box his ears, report him to the police. Among other prophecies, the astrologer has told her that she will win some money in the Prussian State Lottery. So far, she has had no luck. But she

always discussing what she will do with her winnings. We are all to have presents, of course. I am to get a hat, because Frl. Schroeder thinks it very improper that a gentleman of my education should go about without one.

When not engaged in laying cards, Frl. Mayr drinks tea and lectures Frl. Schroeder on her past theatrical triumphs:

“And the Manager said to me: ‘Fritzi, Heaven must have sent you here! My leading lady’s fallen ill. You’re to leave for Copenhagen tonight.’ And what’s more, he wouldn’t take no for an answer. ‘Fritzi,’ he said (he always called me that), ‘Fritzi, you aren’t going to let an old friend down?’ And so I went . . .” Frl. Mayr sips her tea reminiscently: “A charming man. And so well-bred.” She smiles. “Familiar . . . but he always knew how to behave himself.”

Frl. Schroeder nods eagerly, drinking in every word, revelling in it:

“I suppose some of those managers must be cheeky devils? (Have some more sausage, Frl. Mayr?)”

“(Thank you, Frl. Schroeder; just a little morsel.) Yes, some of them . . . you wouldn’t believe! But I could always take care of myself. Even when I was quite a slip of a girl . . .”

The muscles of Frl. Mayer’s nude fleshy arms ripple unappetizingly. She sticks out her chin:

“I’m a Bavarian; and a Bavarian never forgets an injury.”

Coming into the living-room yesterday evening, I found Frl. Schroeder and Frl. Mayr lying flat on their stomachs with their ears pressed to the carpet. At intervals, they exchanged grins of delight and joyfully pinched each other, with simultaneous exclamations of *Ssh!*

“Hark!” whispered Frl. Schroeder, “he’s smashing all the furniture!”

“He’s beating her black and blue!” exclaimed Frl. Mayr, in raptures.

“Bang! Just listen to that!”

“Ssh! Ssh!”

“Ssh!”

Frl. Schroeder was quite beside herself. When I asked what was the matter, she clambered to her feet, waddled forward and, taking me round the waist, danced a little waltz with me: “Herr Issyvoo! Herr Issyvoo! Herr Issyvoo!” until she was breathless.

“But whatever has happened?” I asked.

“Ssh!” commanded Frl. Mayr from the floor. “Ssh! They’ve started again!”

In the flat directly beneath ours lives a certain Frau Glanterneck. She is a Galician Jewess, in itself a reason why Frl. Mayr should be her enemy: for Frl. Mayr, needless to say, is an ardent Nazi. And quite apart from this, it seems that Frau Glanterneck and Frl. Mayr once had words on the stairs about Frl. Mayr’s yodelling. Frau Glanterneck, perhaps because she is a non-Aryan, said that she preferred the noises made by cats. Thereby, she insulted not merely Frl. Mayr, but all Bavarian, all German women: and it was Frl. Mayr’s pleasant duty to avenge them.

About a fortnight ago, it became known among the neighbours that Frau Glanterneck, who is sixty years old and as ugly as a witch, had been advertising in the newspaper for a husband. What was more, an applicant had already appeared: a widowed butcher from Halle. He had seen Frau Glanterneck and was nevertheless prepared to marry her. Here was Frl. Mayr’s chance. By roundabout inquiries, she discovered the butcher’s name and address and wrote him an anonymous letter. Was he aware that Frau Glanterneck had (a) bugs in her flat, (b) been arrested for fraud and released on the ground that she was insane, (c) leased out her own bedroom for immoral purposes, and (d) slept in the bed afterwards without changing the sheets? And now the butcher had arrived to confront Frau

Glanterneck with the letter. One could hear both of them quite distinctly: the growling of the enraged Prussian and the shrill screaming of the Jewess. Now and then came the thud of a fist against wood and, occasionally, the crash of glass. The row lasted over an hour.

This morning we hear that the neighbours have complained to the portress of the disturbance and that Frau Glanterneck is to be seen with a black eye. The marriage is off.

The inhabitants of this street know me by sight already. At the grocer's, people no longer turn their heads on hearing my English accent as I order a pound of butter. At the street corner, after dark, the three whores no longer whisper throatily: "Komm, Süßer!" as I pass.

The three whores are all plainly over fifty years old. They do not attempt to conceal their age. They are not noticeably rouged or powdered. They wear baggy old fur coats and longish skirts and matronly hats. I happened to mention them to Bobby and he explained to me that there is a recognized demand for the comfortable type of woman. Many middle-aged men prefer them to girls. They even attract boys in their 'teens. A boy, explained Bobby, feels shy with a girl of his own age but not with a woman old enough to be his mother. Like most barmen, Bobby is a great expert on sexual questions.

The other evening, I went to call on him during business hours.

It was still very early, about nine o'clock, when I arrived at the Troika. The place was much larger and grander than I had expected. A commissionaire braided like an archduke regarded my hatless head with suspicion until I spoke to him in English. A smart cloak-room girl insisted on taking my overcoat, which hides the worst stains on my baggy flannel trousers. A page-boy, seated on the counter, didn't rise to open the inner door. Bobby, to my relief, was at his place behind a blue and silver bar. I made towards him as towards an old friend. He greeted me most amiably:

"Good evening, Mr Isherwood. Very glad to see you here."

I ordered a beer and settled myself on a stool in the corner. With my back to the wall, I could survey the whole room.

"How's business?" I asked.

Bobby's care-worn, powdered, night-dweller's face became grave. He inclined his head towards me, over the bar, with confidential flattering seriousness:

"Not much good, Mr Isherwood. The kind of public we have nowadays . . . you wouldn't believe it. Why, a year ago, we'd have turned them away at the door. They order a beer and think they've got the right to sit here the whole evening."

Bobby spoke with extreme bitterness. I began to feel uncomfortable:

"What'll you drink?" I asked, guiltily gulping down my beer; and added, lest there should be any misunderstanding: "I'd like a whisky and soda."

Bobby said he'd have one, too.

The room was nearly empty. I looked the few guests over, trying to see them through Bobby's disillusioned eyes. There were three attractive well-dressed girls sitting at the bar: the one nearest me was particularly elegant, she had quite a cosmopolitan air. But during a lull in the conversation, I caught fragments of her talk with the other barman. She spoke broad Berlin dialect. She was tired and bored; her mouth dropped. A young man approached her and joined in the discussion; a handsome broad-shouldered boy in a well-cut dinner-jacket, who might well have been an English public-school prefect on holiday.

"*Nee, Nee,*" I heard him say. "*Bei mir nicht!*" He grinned and made a curt, brutal gesture of the streets.

Over in the corner sat a page-boy, talking to the little old lavatory attendant in his white jacket.

The boy said something, laughed and broke off suddenly into a huge yawn. The three musicians on their platform were chatting, evidently unwilling to begin until they had an audience worth playing to. At one of the tables, I thought I saw a genuine guest, a stout man with a moustache. After a moment, however, I caught his eye, he made a little bow and I knew that he must be the manager.

The door opened. Two men and two women came in. The women were elderly, had thick legs, cropped hair, and costly evening-gowns. The men were lethargic, pale, probably Dutch. Her name, unmistakably, was Money. In an instant, the Troika was transformed. The manager, the cigarette-boy, and the lavatory attendant rose simultaneously to their feet. The lavatory attendant disappeared. The manager said something in a furious undertone to the cigarette-boy, who also disappeared. He then advanced, bowing and smiling, to the guests' table and shook hands with the two men. The cigarette-boy reappeared with his tray, followed by a waiter who hurried forward with the wine-list. Meanwhile the three-man orchestra struck briskly. The girls at the bar turned on their stools smiling a not-too-direct invitation. The gigolos advanced to them as if to complete strangers, bowed formally, and asked, in cultured tones, for the pleasure of a dance. The page-boy, spruce, discreetly grinning and swaying from the waist like a flower, crossed the room with his tray of cigarettes: "*Zigarren, Zigaretten!*" His voice was mocking, clear-pitched like an actor's. And in the same tone, yet more loudly, mockingly, joyfully so that we could all hear, the waiter ordered from Bobby: "Heidsieck Monopol!"

With absurd, solicitous gravity, the dancers performed their intricate evolutions, showing in their every movement a consciousness of the part they were playing. And the saxophonist, letting his instrument swing loose from the ribbon around his neck, advanced to the edge of the platform with his little megaphone:

*Sie werden lachen,
Ich lieb'
Meine eigene Frau . . .*

He sang with a knowing leer, including us all in the conspiracy, charging his voice with innuendo, rolling his eyes in an epileptic pantomime of extreme joy. Bobby, suave, sleek, five years younger, handled the bottle. And meanwhile the two flaccid gentlemen chatted to each other, probably about business, without a glance at the night-life they had called into being; while their women sat silently, looking neglected, puzzled, uncomfortable, and very bored.

Frl. Hippie Bernstein, my first pupil, lives in the Grönewald, in a house built almost entirely of glass. Most of the richest Berlin families inhabit the Grönewald. It is difficult to understand why. The villas, in all known styles of expensive ugliness, ranging from the eccentric-rococo folly to the cubist flat-roofed steel-and-glass box, are crowded together in this dank, dreary pinewood. Few of them can afford large gardens, for the ground is fabulously dear: their only view is of their neighbour's backyard, each one protected by a wire fence and a savage dog. Terror of burglary and revolution has reduced these miserable people to a state of siege. They have neither privacy nor sunshine. The district is really a millionaire's slum.

When I rang the bell at the garden gate, a young footman came out with a key from the house, followed by a large growling Alsatian.

"He won't bite you while I'm here," the footman reassured me, grinning.

The hall of the Bernsteins' house has metal-studded doors and a steamer clock fastened to the wall with bolt-heads. There are modernist lamps, designed to look like pressure-gauges, thermometers, and

switchboard dials. But the furniture doesn't match the house and its fittings. The place is like a power station which the engineers have tried to make comfortable with chairs and tables from an old-fashioned, highly respectable boarding-house. On the austere metal walls hang highly varnished nineteenth-century landscapes in massive gold frames. Herr Bernstein probably ordered the villa from a popular *avant-garde* architect in a moment of recklessness; was horrified at the result and tried to cover it up as much as possible with the family belongings.

Frl. Hippi is a fat pretty girl, about nineteen years old, with glossy chestnut hair, good teeth, and big cow-eyes. She has a lazy, jolly, self-indulgent laugh and a well-formed bust. She speaks schoolgirl English with a slight American accent, quite nicely, to her own complete satisfaction. She has clear no intention of doing any work. When I tried weakly to suggest a plan for our lessons, she kept interrupting to offer me chocolates, coffee, cigarettes: "Excuse me a minute, there isn't some fruit?" she smiled, picking up the receiver of the house-telephone: "Anna, please bring some oranges."

When the maid arrived with the oranges, I was forced, despite my protests, to make a regular meal with a plate, knife, and fork. This destroyed the last pretence of the teacher-pupil relationship. I felt like a policeman being given a meal in the kitchen by an attractive cook. Frl. Hippi sat watching me eat, with her good-natured, lazy smile:

"Tell me, please, why you come to Germany?"

She is inquisitive about me, but only like a cow idly poking with its head between the bars of a gate. She doesn't particularly want the gate to open. I said that I found Germany very interesting:

"The political and economic situation," I improvised authoritatively, in my schoolmaster voice "is more interesting in Germany than in any other European country.

"Except Russia, of course," I added experimentally.

But Frl. Hippi didn't react. She just blandly smiled:

"I think it shall be dull for you here? You do not have many friends in Berlin, no?"

This seemed to please and amuse her:

"You don't know some nice girls?"

Here the buzzer of the house-telephone sounded. Lazily smiling, she picked up the receiver, but appeared not to listen to the tiny voice which issued from it. I could hear quite distinctly the real voice of Frau Bernstein, Hippi's mother, speaking from the next room.

"Have you left your *red* book in here?" repeated Frl. Hippi mockingly and smiling at me as though this were a joke which I must share: "No, I don't see it. It must be down in the study. Ring up Daddy. Yes, he's working there." In dumb show, she offered me another orange. I shook my head politely. We both smiled: "Mummy, what have we got for lunch today? Yes? Really? Splendid!"

She hung up the receiver and returned to her cross-examination:

"Do you know no nice girls?"

"Any nice girls . . ." I corrected evasively. But Frl. Hippi merely smiled, waiting for the answer to her question.

"Yes. One," I had at length to add, thinking of Frl. Kost.

"Only one?" She raised her eyebrows in comic surprise. "And tell me, please, do you find German girls different than English girls?"

I blushed. "Do you find German girls . . ." I began to correct her and stopped, realizing just in time that I wasn't absolutely sure whether one says *different from* or *different to*.

"Do you find German girls different than English girls?" she repeated, with smiling persistence.

I blushed deeper than ever. "Yes. Very different," I said boldly.

“How are they different?”

~~Mercifully the telephone buzzed again. This was somebody from the kitchen, to say that lunch would be an hour earlier than usual. Herr Bernstein was going to the city that afternoon.~~

“I am so sorry,” said Frl. Hippi, rising, “but for today we must finish. And we shall see us again on Friday? Then goodbye, Mr Isherwood. And I thank you very much.”

She fished in her bag and handed me an envelope which I stuck awkwardly into my pocket and to open only when I was out of sight of the Bernsteins' house. It contained a five-mark piece. I threw it into the air, missed it, found it after five minutes' hunt, buried in sand, and ran all the way to the tramstop, singing and kicking stones about the road. I felt extraordinarily guilty and elated, as though I'd successfully committed a small theft.

It is a mere waste of time even pretending to teach Frl. Hippi anything. If she doesn't know a word she says it in German. If I correct her, she repeats it in German. I am glad, of course, that she's so lazy and only afraid that Frau Bernstein may discover how little progress her daughter is making. But that is very unlikely. Most rich people, once they have decided to trust you at all, can be imposed upon almost any extent. The only real problem for the private tutor is to get inside the front door.

As for Hippi, she seems to enjoy my visits. From something she said the other day, I gather she boasts to her school friends that she has got a genuine English teacher. We understand each other very well. I am bribed with fruit not to be tiresome about the English language: she, for her part, tells her parents that I am the best teacher she ever had. We gossip in German about the things which interest her. And every three or four minutes, we are interrupted while she plays her part in the family game of exchanging entirely unimportant messages over the house-telephone.

Hippi never worries about the future. Like everyone else in Berlin, she refers continually to the political situation, but only briefly, with a conventional melancholy, as when one speaks of religion. It is quite unreal to her. She means to go to the university, travel about, have a jolly good time and eventually, of course, marry. She already has a great many boy friends. We spend a lot of time talking about them. One has a wonderful car. Another has an aeroplane. Another has fought seven duels. Another has discovered a knack of putting out street-lamps by giving them a smart kick in a certain spot. One night, on the way back from a dance, Hippi and he put out all the street-lamps in the neighbourhood.

Today, lunch was early at the Bernsteins'; so I was invited to it, instead of giving my “lesson.” The whole family was present: Frau Bernstein, stout and placid; Herr Bernstein, small and shaky and slow. There was also a younger sister, a schoolgirl of twelve, very fat. She ate and ate, quite unmoved by Hippi's jokes and warnings that she'd burst. They all seem very fond of each other, in their cosy, stuffy way. There was a little domestic argument, because Herr Bernstein didn't want his wife to go shopping in the car that afternoon. During the last few days, there has been a lot of Nazi rioting in the city.

“You can go in the tram,” said Herr Bernstein. “I will not have them throwing stones at my beautiful car.”

“And suppose they throw stones at me?” asked Frau Bernstein good-humouredly.

“Ach, what does that matter? If they throw stones at you, I will buy you a sticking-plaster for your head. It will cost me only five groschen. But if they throw stones at my car, it will cost me perhaps five hundred marks.”

And so the matter was settled. Herr Bernstein then turned his attention to me:

“You can't complain that we treat you badly here, young man, eh? Not only do we give you a nice

dinner, but we pay you for eating it!”

I saw from Hippi's expression that this was going a bit far, even for the Bernstein sense of humour; so I laughed and said:

“Will you pay me a mark extra for every helping I eat?”

This amused Herr Bernstein very much: but he was careful to show that he knew I hadn't meant seriously.

During the last week, our household has been plunged into a terrific row.

It began when Frl. Kost came to Frl. Schroeder and announced that fifty marks had been stolen from her room. She was very much upset; especially, she explained, as this was the money she'd put aside towards the rent and the telephone bill. The fifty-mark note had been lying in the drawer of the cupboard, just inside the door of Frl. Kost's room.

Frl. Schroeder's immediate suggestion was, not unnaturally, that the money had been stolen by one of Frl. Kost's customers. Frl. Kost said that this was quite impossible, as none of them had visited her during the last three days. Moreover, she added, *her* friends were all absolutely above suspicion. They were well-to-do gentlemen, to whom a miserable fifty-mark note was a mere bagatelle. This annoyed Frl. Schroeder very much indeed:

“I suppose she's trying to make out that one of *us* did it! Of all the cheek! Why, Herr Issyvoo, would you believe it, I could have chopped her into little pieces!”

“Yes, Frl. Schroeder. I'm sure you could.”

Frl. Schroeder then developed the theory that the money hadn't been stolen at all and that this was just a trick of Frl. Kost's to avoid paying the rent. She hinted so much to Frl. Kost, who was furious. Frl. Kost said that, in any case, she'd raise the money in a few days: which she already has. She also gave notice to leave her room at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, I have discovered, quite by accident, that Frl. Kost has been having an affair with Bobby. As I came in, one evening, I happened to notice that there was no light in Frl. Kost's room. You can always see this, because there is a frosted glass pane in her door to light the hall of the flat. Later, as I lay in bed reading, I heard Frl. Kost's door open and Bobby's voice, laughing and whispering. After much creaking of boards and muffled laughter, Bobby tip-toed out of the flat, shutting the door as quietly as possible behind him. A moment later, he re-entered with a great deal of noise and went straight through into the living-room, where I heard him wishing Frl. Schroeder good night.

If Frl. Schroeder doesn't actually know of this, she at least suspects it. This explains her fury against Frl. Kost: for the truth is, she is terribly jealous. The most grotesque and embarrassing incidents have been taking place. One morning, when I wanted to visit the bathroom, Frl. Kost was using it already. Frl. Schroeder rushed to the door before I could stop her and ordered Frl. Kost to come out at once: and when Frl. Kost naturally didn't obey, Frl. Schroeder began, despite my protest, hammering on the door with her fists. “Come out of my bathroom!” she screamed. “Come out this minute, or I'll call the police to fetch you out!”

After this she burst into tears. The crying brought on palpitations. Bobby had to carry her to the sofa, gasping and sobbing. While we were all standing round, rather helpless, Frl. Mayr appeared in the doorway with a face like a hangman and said, in a terrible voice, to Frl. Kost: “Think yourself lucky, my girl, if you haven't murdered her!” She then took complete charge of the situation, ordered us all out of the room and sent me down to the grocer's for a bottle of Baldrian Drops. When I returned, she was seated beside the sofa, stroking Frl. Schroeder's hand and murmuring, in her mo-

tragic tones: “Lina, my poor little child . . . what have they done to you?”

Sally Bowles

ONE AFTERNOON, EARLY in October, I was invited to black coffee at Fritz Wendel's flat, Fritz always invited you to "black coffee," with emphasis on the black. He was very proud of his coffee. People used to say that it was the strongest in Berlin.

Fritz himself was dressed in his usual coffee-party costume — a very thick white yachting sweater and very light blue flannel trousers. He greeted me with his full-lipped, luscious smile:

"'lo, Chris!"

"Hullo, Fritz. How are you?"

"Fine." He bent over the coffee-machine, his sleek black hair unplastering itself from his scalp and falling in richly scented locks over his eyes. "This darn thing doesn't go," he added.

"How's business?" I asked.

"Lousy and terrible." Fritz grinned richly. "Or I pull off a new deal in the next month or I go as a gigolo."

"*Either . . . or . . .*" I corrected, from force of professional habit.

"I'm speaking a lousy English just now," drawled Fritz, with great self-satisfaction. "Sally says maybe she'll give me a few lessons."

"Who's Sally?"

"Why, I forgot. You don't know Sally. Too bad of me. Eventually she's coming around here this afternoon."

"Is she nice?"

Fritz rolled his naughty black eyes, handing me a rum-moistened cigarette from his patent tin:

"*Mar-vellous!*" he drawled. "Eventually I believe I'm getting crazy about her."

"And who is she? What does she do?"

"She's an English girl, an actress: sings at the Lady Windermere — hot stuff, believe me!"

"That doesn't sound much like an English girl, I must say."

"Eventually she's got a bit of French in her. Her mother was French."

A few minutes later, Sally herself arrived.

"Am I terribly late, Fritz darling?"

"Only half of an hour, I suppose," Fritz drawled, beaming with proprietary pleasure. "May I introduce Mr Isherwood — Miss Bowles? Mr Isherwood is commonly known as Chris."

"I'm not," I said. "Fritz is about the only person who's ever called me Chris in my life."

Sally laughed. She was dressed in black silk, with a small cape over her shoulders and a little cap like a page-boy's stuck jauntily on one side of her head:

"Do you mind if I use your telephone, sweet?"

"Sure. Go right ahead." Fritz caught my eye. "Come into the other room, Chris. I want to show you something." He was evidently longing to hear my first impressions of Sally, his new acquisition.

"For heaven's sake, don't leave me alone with this man!" she exclaimed. "Or he'll seduce me down the telephone. He's most terribly passionate."

As she dialled the number, I noticed that her fingernails were painted emerald green, a color unfortunately chosen, for it called attention to her hands, which were much stained by cigarette smoking and as dirty as a little girl's. She was dark enough to be Fritz's sister. Her face was long and thin, powdered dead white. She had very large brown eyes which should have been darker, to match her hair and the pencil she used for her eyebrows.

"Hilloo," she cooed, pursing her brilliant cherry lips as though she were going to kiss the

mouthpiece: "Ist dass Du, mein Liebling?" Her mouth opened in a fatuously sweet smile. Fritz and sat watching her, like a performance at the theatre. "Was wollen wir machen, Morgen Abend? Oh, wie wunderbar . . . Nein, nein, ich werde bleiben Heute Abend zu Hause. Ja, ja, ich werde wirklich bleiben zu Hause . . . Auf Wiedersehen, mein Liebling . . ."

She hung up the receiver and turned to us triumphantly.

"That's the man I slept with last night," she announced. "He makes love marvellously. He's an absolute genius at business and he's terribly rich —" She came and sat down on the sofa beside Fritz, sinking back into the cushions with a sigh: "Give me some coffee, will you, darling? I'm simply dying of thirst."

And soon we were on to Fritz's favourite topic: he pronounced it Larv.

"On the average," he told us, "I'm having a big affair every two years."

"And how long is it since you had your last?" Sally asked.

"Exactly one year and eleven months!" Fritz gave her his naughtiest glance.

"How marvellous!" Sally puckered up her nose and laughed a silvery little stage-laugh. "Doo tell me — what was the last one like?"

This, of course, started Fritz off on a complete autobiography. We had the story of his seduction in Paris, details of a holiday flirtation at Las Palmas, the four chief New York romances, disappointment in Chicago, and a conquest in Boston; then back to Paris for a little recreation, a very beautiful episode in Vienna, to London to be consoled and, finally, Berlin.

"You know, Fritz darling," said Sally, puckering up her nose at me, "I believe the trouble with you is that you've never really found the right woman."

"Maybe that's true —" Fritz took this idea very seriously. His black eyes became liquid and sentimental: "Maybe I'm still looking for my ideal. . ."

"But you'll find her one day, I'm absolutely certain you will." Sally included me, with a glance, in the game of laughing at Fritz.

"You think so?" Fritz grinned lusciously, sparkling at her.

"Don't you think so?" Sally appealed to me.

"I'm sure I don't know," I said. "Because I've never been able to discover what Fritz's ideal is."

For some reason, this seemed to please Fritz. He took it as a kind of testimonial: "And Chris knows me pretty well," he chimed in. "If Chris doesn't know, well, I guess no one does."

Then it was time for Sally to go.

"I'm supposed to meet a man at the Adlon at five," she explained. "And it's six already! Never mind, it'll do the old swine good to wait. He wants me to be his mistress, but I've told him I'll be damned if I will till he's paid all my debts. Why are men always such beasts?" Opening her bag, she rapidly retouched her lips and eyebrows: "Oh, by the way, Fritz darling, could you be a perfect angel and lend me ten marks? I haven't got a bean for a taxi."

"Why, sure!" Fritz put his hand into his pocket and paid up without hesitation, like a hero.

Sally turned to me: "I say, will you come and have tea with me sometime? Give me your telephone number. I'll ring you up."

I suppose, I thought, she imagines I've got cash. Well, this will be a lesson to her, once for all. I wrote my number in her tiny leather book. Fritz saw her out.

"Well!" He came bounding back into the room and gleefully shut the door: "What do you think of her, Chris? Didn't I tell you she was a good-looker?"

"You did indeed!"

"I'm getting crazier about her each time I see her!" With a sigh of pleasure, he helped himself to

cigarette: "More coffee, Chris?"

"No, thank you very much."

"You know, Chris, I think she took a fancy to you, too!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Honestly, I do!" Fritz seemed pleased. "Eventually I guess we'll be seeing a lot of her from now on!"

When I got back to Frl. Schroeder's, I felt so giddy that I had to lie down for half an hour on my bed. Fritz's black coffee was as poisonous as ever.

A few days later, he took me to hear Sally sing.

The Lady Windermere (which now, I hear, no longer exists) was an arty "informal" bar, just off the Tauentzeinstrasse, which the proprietor had evidently tried to make look as much as possible like the Montparnasse. The walls were covered with sketches on menu-cards, caricatures and signed theatrical photographs — ("To the one and only Lady Windermere." "To Johnny, with all my heart.") The Fairy itself, four times life size, was displayed above the bar. There was a big piano on a platform in the middle of the room.

I was curious to see how Sally would behave. I had imagined her, for some reason, rather nervous but she wasn't, in the least. She had a surprisingly deep husky voice. She sang badly, without any expression, her hands hanging down at her sides — yet her performance was, in its own way, effective because of her startling appearance and her air of not caring a curse what people thought of her. Her arms hanging carelessly limp, and a take-it-or-leave-it grin on her face, she sang:

*Now I know why Mother
Told me to be true;
She meant me for Someone
Exactly like you.*

There was quite a lot of applause. The pianist, a handsome young man with blond wavy hair, stood up and solemnly kissed Sally's hand. Then she sang two more songs, one in French and the other in German. These weren't so well received.

After the singing, there was a good deal more hand-kissing and a general movement towards the bar. Sally seemed to know everybody in the place. She called them all Thou and Darling. For a would-be-demi-mondaine, she seemed to have surprisingly little business sense or tact. She wasted a lot of time making advances to an elderly gentleman who would obviously have preferred a chat with the barman. Later, we all got rather drunk. Then Sally had to go off to an appointment, and the manager came and sat at our table. He and Fritz talked English Peerage. Fritz was in his element. I decided, so often before, never to visit a place of this sort again.

Then Sally rang up, as she had promised, to invite me to tea.

She lived a long way down the Kurfürstendamm on the last dreary stretch which rises to Halensee. I was shown into a big gloomy half-furnished room by a fat untidy landlady with a pouchy sagging jowl like a toad. There was a broken-down sofa in one corner — and a faded picture of an eighteenth-century battle, with the wounded reclining on their elbows in graceful attitudes, admiring the prancings of Frederick the Great's horse.

"Oh, hullo, Chris darling!" cried Sally from the doorway. "How sweet of you to come! I was feeling most terribly lonely. I've been crying on Frau Karpf's chest. Nicht wahr, Frau Karpf?" She appealed to the toad landlady, "ich habe geweint auf Dein Brust." Frau Karpf shook her bosom in

toad-like chuckle.

~~“Would you rather have coffee, Chris, or tea?” Sally continued. “You can have either. Only I don’t recommend the tea much. I don’t know what Frau Karpf does to it; I think she empties all the kitchen slops together into a jug and boils them up with the tea-leaves.”~~

“I’ll have coffee, then.”

“Frau Karpf, Liebling, willst Du sein ein Engel und bring zwei Tassen von Kaffee?” Sally’s German was not merely incorrect; it was all her own. She pronounced every word in a mincing, specially “foreign” manner. You could tell that she was speaking a foreign language from her expression alone. “Chris darling, will you be an angel and draw the curtains?”

I did so, although it was still quite light outside. Sally, meanwhile, had switched on the table-lamp. As I turned from the window, she curled herself up delicately on the sofa like a cat, and, opening her handbag, felt for a cigarette. But hardly was the pose complete before she’d jumped to her feet again:

“Would you like a Prairie Oyster?” She produced glasses, eggs and a bottle of Worcester sauce from the boot-cupboard under the dismantled washstand: “I practically live on them.” Dexterously she broke the eggs into the glasses, added the sauce and stirred up the mixture with the end of her fountain-pen: “They’re about all I can afford.” She was back on the sofa again, daintily curled up.

She was wearing the same black dress today, but without the cape. Instead, she had a little white collar and white cuffs. They produced a kind of theatrically chaste effect, like a nun in grand opera. “What are you laughing at, Chris?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” I said. But still I couldn’t stop grinning. There was, at that moment, something so extraordinarily comic in Sally’s appearance. She was really beautiful, with her little dark head, big eyes, and finely arched nose — and so absurdly conscious of all these features. There she lay, so complacently feminine as a turtle-dove, with her poised self-conscious head, and daintily arranged hands.

“Chris, you swine, do tell me why you’re laughing?”

“I really haven’t the faintest idea.”

At this, she began to laugh, too: “You are mad, you know!”

“Have you been here long?” I asked, looking round the large gloomy room.

“Ever since I arrived in Berlin. Let’s see — that was about two months ago.”

I asked what had made her decide to come out to Germany at all. Had she come alone? No, she had come with a girl friend. An actress. Older than Sally. The girl had been to Berlin before. She’d told Sally that they’d certainly be able to get work with the Ufa. So Sally borrowed ten pounds from a nice old gentleman and joined her.

She hadn’t told her parents anything about it until the two of them had actually arrived in Germany: “I wish you’d met Diana. She was the most marvellous gold-digger you can imagine. She could get hold of men anywhere — it didn’t matter whether she could speak their language or not. She made one nearly die of laughing. I absolutely adored her.”

But when they’d been together in Berlin three weeks and no job had appeared, Diana had got hold of a banker, who’d taken her off with him to Paris.

“And left you here alone? I must say I think that was pretty rotten of her.”

“Oh, I don’t know . . . Everyone’s got to look after themselves. I expect, in her place, I’d have done the same.”

“I bet you wouldn’t!”

“Anyhow, I’m all right. I can always get along alone.”

“How old are you, Sally?”

“Nineteen.”

“Good God! And I thought you were about twenty-five!”

“I know. Everyone does.”

Frau Karpf came shuffling in with two cups of coffee on a tarnished metal tray.

“Oh, Frau Karpf, Liebling, wie wunderbar von Dich!”

“Whatever makes you stay in this house?” I asked, when the landlady had gone out: “I’m sure you could get a much nicer room than this.”

“Yes, I know I could.”

“Well then, why don’t you?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’m lazy, I suppose.”

“What do you have to pay here?”

“Eighty marks a month.”

“With breakfast included?”

“No — I don’t think so.”

“You don’t *think* so?” I exclaimed severely. “But surely you must know for certain?”

Sally took this meekly: “Yes, it’s stupid of me, I suppose. But, you see, I just give the old girl money when I’ve got some. So it’s rather difficult to reckon it all up exactly.”

“But, good heavens, Sally — I only pay fifty a month for my room, with breakfast, and it’s ever so much nicer than this one!”

Sally nodded, but continued apologetically: “And another thing is, you see, Christopher darling, don’t quite know what Frau Karpf would do if I were to leave her. I’m sure she’d never get another lodger. Nobody else would be able to stand her face and her smell and everything. As it is, she owes me three months’ rent. They’d turn her out at once if they knew she hadn’t any lodgers: and if they did that, she says she’ll commit suicide.”

“All the same, I don’t see why you should sacrifice yourself for her.”

“I’m not sacrificing myself, really. I quite like being here, you know. Frau Karpf and I understand each other. She’s more or less what I’ll be in thirty years’ time. A respectable sort of landlady would probably turn me out after a week.”

“My landlady wouldn’t turn you out.”

Sally smiled vaguely, screwing up her nose: “How do you like the coffee, Chris darling?”

“I prefer it to Fritz’s,” I said evasively.

Sally laughed: “Isn’t Fritz marvellous? I adore him. I adore the way he says, ‘I give a damn.’ ”

“ ‘Hell, I give a damn.’ ” I tried to imitate Fritz. We both laughed. Sally lit another cigarette: she smoked the whole time. I noticed how old her hands looked in the lamplight. They were nervous, veined and very thin — the hands of a middle-aged woman. The green finger-nails seemed not to belong to them at all; to have settled on them by chance — like hard, bright, ugly little beetles. “It’s a funny thing,” she added meditatively, “Fritz and I have never slept together, you know.” She paused and asked with interest, “Did you think we had?”

“Well, yes — I suppose I did.”

“We haven’t. Not once . . .” she yawned. “And now I don’t suppose we ever shall.”

We smoked for some minutes in silence. Then Sally began to tell me about her family. She was the daughter of a Lancashire mill-owner. Her mother was a Miss Bowles, an heiress with an estate, and so when she and Mr Jackson were married, they joined their names together: “Daddy’s a terrible snob, although he pretends not to be. My real name’s Jackson-Bowles; but of course, I can’t possibly call myself that on the stage. People would think I was crazy.”

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