

SIDE: SALLY & SAM #1

10 I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE [Act I

~~SAM. (by the desk). What's that got to do with it?~~

SAM. ~~Well, happen it's foreign style o' doing things. (He begins to chuckle.)~~ Nay, what tickled me was him saying he must ha' come at wrong. Now that's as good as aught I've heard o' some time. If he's going round asking for people—not friends of his, mind you—and he doesn't know where they are nor what year they'll be there—I reckon he's got his work cut out. I must tell that to some of 'em in t'bar.

SALLY. You and your bar!

(The telephone rings. SALLY crosses below SAM to answer it.)

(At the telephone.) Yes, this is the Black Bull. Yes, well I am waiting. . . . Oh, Miss Holmes, yes—this is Mrs. Pratt—we were wondering what had become of you. . . . Oh dear dear! . . . Well, I never did! . . . No, if your friend's so poorly I don't suppose you could. . . . No, well it can't be helped. . . . Yes, we're sorry to. . . . Oh, we'll manage to get somebody . . . that's right . . . good-bye. *(She puts down the telephone and turns to SAM.)* Miss Holmes—ringing up from Manchester—to say they can't come.

SAM. Nay!

SALLY. One of the other two's been suddenly taken poorly, and they don't like to leave her.

SAM. Oh!

SALLY *(indignantly)*. And I should think it is "oh!" That's all three rooms going begging, at very last minute, an' we could have let 'em four times over. *(Moving down r.)* Here we are—Friday night—Whit Saturday to-morrow—an' now only one room taken. We ought to do what everybody else does, an' charge 'em a deposit when they book rooms in advance, and then if they do give backward we're not clean out o' pocket.

SAM *(moving over to SALLY)*. Well, it's happened afore.

SALLY. Does that make it any better?

SAM. Yes, 'cos we know we'll fill 'em up easy. Black Bull's niver had rooms empty o' Whitsuntide. There'll be some motorists coming. Ay, and happen some business chaps who'll spend more nor them three women teachers. All they want is cups o' tea, an' they'd niver put their noses into t'bar.

(OLIVER FARRANT enters up l. He has been walking and wears a tweed jacket and flannel trousers, and is rather dusty. He is about twenty-eight to thirty, good-looking, with something of the boy left in him and something of the intellectual man. He has a decisive, slightly donnish manner, which shows itself least with these two, with whom he is on pleasant easy terms. He has more personal charm than would appear from his actual lines, and though he suffers from the rather priggish conceit of the successful intellectual, there is more of this in the matter than in the manner of his talk.)

Act I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE 11

FARRANT. Any sherry left, Sam?

SAM. Yes, Mr. Farrant.

(He goes out r.c. to get it. FARRANT shuts the door up l.)

SALLY *(who obviously likes him)*. Your supper'll be ready when you are.

FARRANT. Good! *(Sitting down in the chair l. of the table and relaxing.)* The last few miles were becoming a bit grim. *(Remembering, with whisper and slightly droll manner.)* Oh!—have the three females from Manchester arrived yet?

SALLY *(down r.)*. No, they're not coming. One of 'em's poorly.

FARRANT. Well, I can't say I was looking forward to them—but I'm sorry. It's bad news for you, isn't it?

SALLY. It's a nuisance, but we'll fill up to-morrow all right. I only hope whoever we do have, you can get on with 'em, Mr. Farrant.

FARRANT. Now you're not going to suggest I'm hard to get on with?

SALLY *(earnestly)*. No, I don't mean that, Mr. Farrant, but you know what it is. If we take people at last minute, we can't be too particular, and when you've all got to sit in here together, it might be a bit awkward.

FARRANT. Oh, don't worry about me. I don't suppose I shall be in much this week-end, anyhow, and if the worst comes to the worst, I can always go up to my room and read.

(SAM enters with a glass of sherry on a tray. He comes to above the table and puts the tray down.)

SALLY. I'll see if you've everything you want in there. Do you like Wensleydale cheese, Mr. Farrant, 'cos I've got some?

FARRANT. I don't know. I'd like to try it.

(SALLY goes out up r.c., shutting the door after her.)

SAM. Bit o' nice Wensleydale tak's some beating. *(Moving down l.)* Have a good walk, Mr. Farrant?

FARRANT *(sipping his sherry)*. Yes, thanks, Sam. I must have done about sixteen miles. Down the dale, then across by the church, up the moor and back over Grindle Top.

SAM. Ay, that'll be all o' sixteen mile. Did you find a bit o' bog again at the Top?

FARRANT. No, I'm getting artful, Sam. I dodged it this time—worked well over to the right. The ordnance map's all wrong about Grindle Top. *(He sips his sherry, and talks easily.)* You know, Sam, there must have been three or four times as many people living in this dale two or three hundred years ago.

SAM. I've heard 'em say that.

16 I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE [ACT I]

DR. GÖRTLER (*turning—interested*). Do you often say that?
 SAM. Say what?

DR. GÖRTLER (*slowly*). If you had your time over again.

SAM (*surprised*). Well—no—not specially. I mean to say—it's just a way—like—o' putting it. Everybody says it.

(SALLY enters up R.C., holding the door open behind her.)

SALLY (*not very cordially*). Your supper's ready, Doctor—
 er—

DR. GÖRTLER. Thank you.

(*He goes over towards the door, then stops. SAM follows him round to above the chair L. of the table.*)

(*Turning, rather mischievously, to SAM.*) My friend—perhaps you will have your time over again.

SALLY (*at the door*). In here, that's right. And if you don't find everything you want, just ring the bell. (*She watches him go, then comes in, closing the door behind her.*) If four of 'em's going to sit in here, it wants changing round a bit.

(*Throughout the following dialogue SALLY is now busy, with some small assistance from SAM, slightly re-arranging the furniture of the room. She brings the chair from up L.C. to above the table and the chair from down R. to R. of the table. In between her remarks, she is looking the place over, then going to move a chair back or forward, to put an ornament in another place, and so on.*)

What was that Doctor Görtler talking about?

SAM. Nay, I just happened to say "If I'd my time over again"—you know how you do?—and he seemed right taken up with it. (*Repeating it speculatively.*) "If I'd my time over again." Nay, it's a common enough saying.

SALLY (*in a slow, grumbling tone, as she changes the tablecloth for one in the sideboard*). Yes, it's common enough. An' it's silly enough an' all. A lot of use it is you or anybody else saying what they'd do if they had their time over again. A fat chance they have, haven't they? Time moves on and it takes you with it, whatever you say—as I know only too well. (*She is by the chair R. of the table.*)

SAM. Ay. Though it's only same for you as for onnybody else, lass.

SALLY. Well, I'm not so sure about that.

SAM. We all go on getting older, Sally.

SALLY. I didn't mean just that. (*Leaning on the table.*) Y'know, Father, it's only four years since Bob and I were staying here with you over Whitsun. And Charlie was still a little lad. The three of us here . . . laughing and talking and going on day long . . . and nothing to tell us it was nearly all over. . . . (*She moves up to turn on the lights at the switch by the door R.C.*)

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE 17

SAM (*disturbed and affectionate*). Ay—I know—lass—but don't think about it.

SALLY (*crossing over L. above the table to draw the curtains—upstage one first*). It's not so long since, but time's run on. . . . It's taken Bob from me . . . even Charlie's growing up and doesn't need me like he used to. . . . I almost might be an old woman wondering where they're going to bury me. . . . (*She draws the downstage curtain.*)

SAM (*moving to her and trying to pat her shoulder*). Now then, Sally lass, it's not so bad as it might be.

SALLY. I might have thirty years to live yet—and I'd swop the lot for just that week we had here, four years ago. . . . But what's the use? (*She crosses to the sideboard and picks up the tray with the sherry glass.*)

SAM. Ay—but give it a chance. You'll forget.

SALLY. I know I'll forget. I'm forgetting now. I can't hear Bob's voice as plain as I could a year or two since. It's taking even that from me now. . . . That's what time does to you . . . and if it's God's idea, He'll get no thanks from me. . . . (*She looks critically at the room.*) Well, I don't think I can do any better with it as it is. I've sometimes had an idea we might do better to bring the big table in and make this the dining-room—I mean, just for people who's staying here. But it's too far from the kitchen.

(*She is silent a moment, and then is heard the horn of a very large car.*)

It'll be Mr. and Mrs. Ormund.

(*She looks towards the window, and at the same time the clock chimes the half-hour.*)

Here, I must nip upstairs and see if their rooms look all right. Go and see to their luggage.

(*She hurries out up R.C. SAM goes to the outer door, leaving it open as he goes through. Voices are heard outside. A pause. Then JANET ORMUND enters slowly. She is an attractive, sensitive woman about twenty-eight, and is dressed for the country in a simple but expensive style. She enters the room with a slow indifference, leaving a book she is carrying on the L. end of the sideboard, then suddenly stiffens, frowns, looks incredulous, then examines it eagerly, without much movement. It is clear that there is some recognition, mixed with incredulity. A sudden uprush of emotion makes her feel almost faint, and she sinks into the chair above the table, exhausted, breathing heavily.*)

Her husband, WALTER ORMUND, enters. He is a biggish man in his early forties, whose manner alternates between alert, sharp command, on the one hand, and a gloomy brooding, on the other. He is dressed in quiet tweeds, the kind a man might wear at an