

Kyra It wasn't a lecture.

Tom It was good of you. Henceforth I'll try not to complain. (*He looks down, quietly self-mocking.*) Of course I'm disqualified from having any feelings, because I've made some money.

Kyra I didn't say that.

Tom No, you said something near it. For you, people are no longer people, it seems. Now they're symbols. And I am a symbol of . . . what does it matter? Something you're plainly angry with.

Kyra Oh come on, you know it's not as simple as that.

Tom (*not worried by her irritation, goes on unfazed*) I can see that you're furious. I'm not sure I wholly know why.

Kyra Come with me. Just spend a day with me. Then I think it will be pretty clear.

Tom Oh I'm sure. There's plenty of injustice. God knows, it's always been there. The question is why you've gone out to look for it. (*He is suddenly quite precise.*) I think it goes back to that day.

Kyra What day?

Tom The day Alice discovered.

*Both of them know a decisive moment has been reached between them. Tom is quite calm, almost smiling.*

You see, it's a funny thing, you've always said yes to everyone. It's something I noticed right from the start. Everyone liked you for this very reason. The first time they meet you, they always say, 'Kyra, what a nice person!' Always. 'Kyra, no question, she's a good sort . . . ' (*He*

*stops, gentle, knowing where he's going.*) It's typical. Your friend needs a tenant. To you, oh, it's no problem. You'll do it. There's no inconvenience. You're happy to do it.

That's who you are. Even for us, when you started. You were happy to babysit when Alice and I wanted to go out. It used to amaze me. I used to ask myself why there was only one person, one person in the world my friend Kyra ever said no to. And that is the man who asked her if she'd be his wife.

*Kyra sits silent, just looking at him.*

I remember, I remember that morning so clearly. I remember coming downstairs. Then you were at the office. I rang you. I said, 'I'm afraid she's discovered. This is our moment. It's finally possible. So now at last we make a clean break . . .' You put down the phone. For the rest of the day I couldn't find you. At the office they said you'd simply walked out.

Kyra I did.

Tom Why? My marriage was finished. You knew that. And Alice herself had no wish to go on.

*Kyra doesn't move, just watching.*

Tom You could have had a thousand reactions. You could have gone to try and talk to Alice. You could have come to me. But no. You did something cowardly. You picked up your bags and walked out.

*Kyra looks at him darkly, not answering.*

Oh, you always said you did it for Alice.

Kyra Partly.

Tom That's what you told me. When I finally found you, you said, 'I had to do it. I did it for Alice. And for the children as well.' But that wasn't so. Well was it?

Kyra What do you want me to say?

*She looks at him resentfully, as if cornered. Tom wanders away to get more whisky, having the concession he wanted.*

Tom You didn't give a fuck about Alice's feelings. Alice's feelings were just an excuse. I mean, even tonight, you were telling me, you told me: an adulterous love is the best. Well, let me tell you it isn't. The best thing is loving with your whole heart. Yes, and what's more, out in the open. The two of you. That's when there's risk. Not the risk of discovery. But the risk of two people really setting off on their own. But that means all the things you've avoided. Really giving yourself. *(He has no need to press his argument any more. His tone is sorrowful.)* Even now you're doing it. You're telling me how much you love the people! How much you're in love with the courage of the people on the bus! Yes, of course you love them. Because in three minutes you can get off.

*Kyra stays sitting, stubborn now, her mood darkening from sadness into resentment.*

Tom Do you think I don't see it? Loving the people's an easy project for you. Loving a person . . . now that's something different. Something that will take you right to the brink.

Kyra That isn't fair.

Tom Isn't it? I think it is. You love the people because you don't have to go home with them. You love them because you don't have to commit.

Kyra *(quiet, not moving, looking down)* You're very cruel. I've made a life here.

Tom Yes. You can't open a paper, that's what you say.

You have banished papers, you tell me, you've banished TV. I mean, why? What's the reason? It's some kind of insanity. What, you feel the world is somehow *letting you down*? You go off to do what you call 'rebuilding'. But 'Rebuild your life', that's what you say. Start again. But how can you? Kyra, look at you now! It won't even work. It can't work. Because it's built on a negative. It's built on escape.

*He shakes his head, genuinely infuriated now by her apparent passivity, sitting unmoving in her chair.*

What is it in you? This thing that you have. Why doesn't it yield? I don't understand it.

Kyra No. I honestly don't think you do.

*Her tone is icy. At last something has hardened in her. Tom tries to backtrack.*

Tom Look . . .

Kyra You never will, Tom. It's the difference between us. It's kind of a gulf. *(She is deadly in her calm. She seems to be suppressing her strongest feelings.)* You're right. I've become my anger. *(She looks down.)* And now I think you should go.

Tom Go?

Kyra Yes. You got what you wanted. You wanted me to say I never loved you enough. Well, plainly, in your view, I didn't. And so that's the end of it. Isn't it?

*She moves to the other side of the table where she takes up the pile of books. She puts them down, puts on her glasses, and calmly takes the first one to work on.*

And these are books which I have to mark.

Tom is so inflamed by her control that he suddenly