

I AM A CAMERA

ACT III

SCENE 1

Two days later. The room is untidy. A half-used coffee tray is on the table with a glass of brandy. The bed is unmade and clothes are strewn around the room. Sofa and table are back as in Act 1. Sally's makeup is on the table.

Schneider is picking up a pair of pants from behind couch as the curtain rises. She crosses to in front of couch, picks up shoes and puts them down in front of chair u. r. There is a knock on the door.

CHRISTOPHER. (Off.) Sally, may I come in?

SCHNEIDER. Come in, Herr Issywoo. (Christopher comes in.)

Fräulein Sally is telephoning.

CHRISTOPHER. She's up very late.

SCHNEIDER. She was in very late last night.

CHRISTOPHER. I left a manuscript in here for her yesterday afternoon.

SCHNEIDER. (Picks up Sally's hat and jacket from couch and skirt from floor r. of table.) She did not come back until almost six this morning. I think maybe she drank a little too much. And she had only half her chocolate this morning, and some brandy too. It is not good so early. (Christopher crosses up to behind couch. Sally enters, and crosses to table. She is wearing a robe, and looks hung-over. She is smoking.)

SALLY. Oh, hello, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER. Hello, Sally.

SALLY. Leave all that stuff for now, Fräulein. I'm going to wear it. I'm going out quite soon. You can do the room then. (Schneider picks clothes on chair below washstand.)

SCHNEIDER. Very good, Fräulein. (Exit. Sally drinks brandy.)

CHRISTOPHER. I haven't seen you for a day and a half.

64

SALLY. I know. I've missed you, Chris. (Sits in chair above table.)

CHRISTOPHER. (Crossing to r. of her.) I've missed you, too. I say, you don't look too well this morning.

SALLY. I've got a terrible hangover.

CHRISTOPHER. What have you been up to?

SALLY. Oh, not that.

CHRISTOPHER. I wasn't thinking of that!

SALLY. But we never stopped going around. And then I got drunk and sentimental the first night, and I telephoned Mummy in London.

CHRISTOPHER. (Lying on couch.) Good God, what for?

SALLY. I suddenly felt like it. But we had the most awful connection, and I couldn't hear a word. And last night was worse. We went to the most boring places. (Moves to couch and sits on it by Christopher.) Oh, Chris, I need someone to stop me. I really do. I wish I'd stayed home with you.

CHRISTOPHER. Well, thank you, Sally.

SALLY. But you're awfully nice to come back to.

CHRISTOPHER. You're awfully nice to have back. I say, that sounds like a popular song.

SALLY. Oh, it does. Maybe we could write it together and make a fortune. (Improvises a tune.) "You're awfully nice to come back to."

CHRISTOPHER. (Doing the same.) "You're awfully nice to have back."

SALLY. { "You're awfully nice to
CHRISTOPHER. { (Singing together.) } come back to . . . "

(They laugh.)

SALLY. (Her arms around Christopher.) I do think we belong together. Much more than if we'd ever had an affair. That little quarrel we had didn't mean anything, did it? (Rises and goes to screen for stockings and shoes.)

CHRISTOPHER. I don't think two people can live as close as we do, and not have them.

SALLY. (Comes back to couch and sits L. end of it.) But it was that that sent me out on that idiotic binge.

CHRISTOPHER. (Pause.) Did you read the article I left you?

SALLY. The what, dear?

CHRISTOPHER. My article.

SALLY. (Vaguely.) Oh, yes, I—looked at it.

65

CHRISTOPHER. Well?

SALLY. (*Too brightly.*) I'm terribly sorry, Chris. But it won't do.

CHRISTOPHER. Why, what's wrong with it? (*Goes to small table u. R. and picks up typewriter.*)

SALLY. It's not nearly snappy enough.

CHRISTOPHER. Snappy? (*Down to pouffe.*)

SALLY. But it's all right, Christopher. I've got someone else to do it. (*Polishes her shoes on her dressing gown.*)

CHRISTOPHER? Oh? Who?

SALLY. Kurt Rosenhal. I called him this morning.

CHRISTOPHER. Who's he?

SALLY. (*Turns to Christopher.*) Really, Chris, I thought you took an interest in the cinema. He's miles the best young scenario

writer. He earns pots of money.

CHRISTOPHER. Then why's he doing this?

SALLY. As a favor to me. He said he'd dictate it while he's shaving, and send it round to the editor's flat.

CHRISTOPHER. Well, journalism isn't really in my line. But I think you might have let me know. (*Sits on pouffe.*)

SALLY. (*Rises and crosses behind him.*) I didn't think you'd want to be bothered.

CHRISTOPHER. And he would? (*Sally takes off and drops dressing gown on couch. Goes up to chair for skirt.*)

SALLY. (*Starting to dress.*) He doesn't make such a fuss about writing as you do. He's writing a novel in his spare time. He's so terribly busy, he can only dictate it while he's having a bath.

(*Does skirt up.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Rises and crosses up to behind couch. Bitterly.*) I bet that makes it wonderful. Of course it depends how many baths he takes.

SALLY. He read me the first few chapters. Honestly, I think it's the best novel I've ever read.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Drops article on couch.*) But that doesn't add up to very many, does it? (*Sally comes down to table for cigarette, then goes to washstand and brushes hair.*)

SALLY. (*Her tone sharpening.*) He's the kind of author I really admire. And he's not stuck up, either. Not like one of these young men who, because they've written one book, start talking about art, and imagining they're the most wonderful authors in the world.

CHRISTOPHER. (*In to her.*) Just who are you talking about, Sally?

SALLY. (*Brushing her hair.*) Well, you do, Chris. You know you do. And it's silly to get jealous.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Angrily.*) Jealous? Who's jealous?

SALLY. There's no need to get upset, either. (*Puts hat on and crosses down to him.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Furious.*) I am not upset. You don't like my article. All right, you needn't go on about it. I can't think why I expected you to, or your rich, successful friends either, from whom you seem to have got all this stuff about me.

SALLY. (*Equally angry.*) Would you like to know what my friends said about you?

CHRISTOPHER. No, I wouldn't.

SALLY. Well, I'll tell you. They said you were ruining me. That I'd lost all my sparkle and my effervescence. And that it was all due to you. I've let you eat me up, just sitting here, pouring myself into you.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, is that what you've been doing?

SALLY. It's all you want. You're like a vampire. If you don't have someone around you, you sit about in bars waiting to devour someone. (*Sits in chair above table.*)

CHRISTOPHER. Your friends said that?

SALLY. My friends are a lot better than the tatty people you run around with. (*Spits into mascara and does her eyelashes.*) All your friends seem to be interested in, is just flopping into bed.

CHRISTOPHER. (*In to her.*) And since when have you had anything against bed?

SALLY. I haven't anything. So long as it leads somewhere.

CHRISTOPHER. You mean not just for the fun of it. (*Moves away.*)

SALLY. That's disgusting. That's like animals. (*Rises and goes to chair for jacket which she puts on, then comes back to him.*) But, you know, Chris. I'll tell you something. I've outgrown you.

CHRISTOPHER. (*Turns to her.*) You've what?

SALLY. I've gone beyond you. I'd better move away from here.

CHRISTOPHER. All right. When?

SALLY. The sooner the better, I should think.

CHRISTOPHER. That's fine with me.

SALLY. Good.

CHRISTOPHER. So, this is the end for us?

SALLY. (*Picks up handbag from table and starts moving to door.*) Yes. If you want it that way. We'll probably bump into each other somewhere, sometime, I expect.

CHRISTOPHER. Well, call me sometime, and ask me around for a cocktail.

SALLY. (*Pausing at door.*) I never know whether you're being serious, or not.

CHRISTOPHER. Try it and find out, if your friends will spare you the time.

SALLY. (*Throwing it at him.*) You know, you make me sick. Good-bye, Chris. (*Goes out slamming door.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*Moves towards door.*) What a little bitch she is! Well, I've always known that from the start. No, that's not true. I've flattered myself she was fond of me. Nothing would please me better than to see her whipped. Really whipped. Not that I care a curse what she thinks of my article . . . (*Picks it up.*) Well, not much. My literary conceit is proof against anything she could say. (*Comes down to table and throws it in waste basket.*) It's her criticism of myself. The awful, sexual flair women have for taking the stuffing out of men. It's no good telling myself that Sally had the vocabulary and mind of a twelve-year-old schoolgirl . . . I mismanaged our interview, right from the beginning. I should have been wonderful, convincing, fatherly, mature. I made the one fatal mistake. I let her see I was jealous. Vulgarly jealous. I feel prickly all over with shame. Friends, indeed! Well, I certainly won't see her again, after all this. Never. Never! (*Sally returns, very spat-tered.*)

SALLY. Chris, something awful's happened. Guess who I met on the stairs. I met Mummy.

CHRISTOPHER. What mummy?

SALLY. Mine.

CHRISTOPHER. I thought you said she was in London.

SALLY. (*Crosses to couch and puts bag down.*) She was. But that call of mine upset her. I suppose I did sound a bit drunk. Anyway, she jumped to conclusions, and into an aeroplane. Chris, you're going to have to do something for me. I've been writing her now and then . . . I mean, they do send me money from time to time. I've never had the nerve to tell you, but I sort of gave

68

her to understand, when I first moved in here, that we were engaged.

CHRISTOPHER. That who was engaged?

SALLY. You and I. To be married.

CHRISTOPHER. Sally, you didn't!

SALLY. (*Picks up dressing gown and slippers.*) Well, I needed someone who sounded like a good, steady influence, and you were the best I could think of. She's in the sitting-room. I told her this place was all untidy, but she'll be in in a minute. Oh, and her name isn't Mrs. Bowles. It's Mrs. Watson-Courtneidge. That's my real name. Only you can't imagine the Germans pronouncing it. CHRISTOPHER. And I'm supposed to stand by and pretend? Oh, no, Sally. (*Sally drops dressing gown and slippers on floor.*) SALLY. Chris, you've got to. (*In to Christopher.*) You owe it to me.

CHRISTOPHER. For what? For letting me eat you up? I'm sorry. And I'm going to my room. (*Starts to go.*)

SALLY. (*Running round back of couch and getting in his way.*) If you don't, I'll tell her the most awful things about you.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm afraid I don't care. Tell her what you like.

SALLY. (*Pleading and pushing Christopher back into the room.*) Chris, you can't do this to me.

CHRISTOPHER. After the things you just said to me? That I made you sick.

SALLY. That was just an expression.

CHRISTOPHER. No, Sally. We're through. Quite through. SALLY. Well, we still can be, after she goes home. Only, help me keep her happy. Don't believe everything I said at first. She isn't easy. Please, darling. Please! (*Throws her arms round Christopher. Christopher struggles to disengage himself. Then Mrs. Watson-Courtneidge comes in. She is a middle-aged English lady, in tweeds. She carries a cloak. She shuts the door.*)

MRS. WATSON. (*Catching sight of the embrace.*) Excuse me. SALLY. (*Extricating herself.*) Oh . . .

MRS. WATSON. (*Coming down to R. of pouffe.*) I hope this is Mr. Isherwood.

SALLY. Yes, Christopher.

MRS. WATSON. I'm Mummy. CHRISTOPHER. I imagined that. MRS. WATSON. Well—don't I deserve a kiss, too?

69