

Music No. 11a: AS FINE A MAN

KIPPS And now your sharp eyes have made me a rich one.

CHITTERLOW I'm glad I was of service to you.

KIPPS And I'm glad to return the favour.

CHITTERLOW I know you won't regret it. You've just backed "The Right Horse".

SCENE ELEVEN

The Walsingham House. Day.

This is a rather shabby little drawing room, on a very modest scale. HELEN is with her mother.

HELEN But suppose he never speaks out?

MRS WALS. He will. In that terrible accent. And when he does, you must do your duty.

HELEN It seems very –

MRS WALS. Helen! Don't you ever think of me?

HELEN Mother –

MRS WALS. I was gently born. I deserved a life of ease and plenty. But thanks to your father's fecklessness –

HELEN He meant well.

MRS WALS. *Meaning well is not enough!* Where am I thanks to his folly? Trapped in a suburban villa in a provincial town. I who was made to shine in Mayfair! Don't I deserve better? Don't we all?

HELEN If you say so.

MRS WALS. Then when the opportunity presents itself, remember it and don't judge me, Helen. I'm not greedy or selfish at heart. All I want is my rightful position. Is that so wrong?

HELEN Of course not, Mama.

(A slatternly MAID comes in.)

MAID Mr Kipps, Ma'am.

MRS WALS. Show him in, Mildred.

(They stand.)

This is sooner than we thought. I didn't want him to see this house, but now he's here, make the most –

(ARTHUR walks in.)

HELEN Mr Kipps! I wasn't expecting to see you today.

KIPPS No, no. I just took a chance.

MRS WALS. Can you excuse me, Mr Kipps? I have unanswered letters in a pile a mile high.

(She grabs the flowers KIPPS has brought for HELEN.)

Thank you.

(She walks out, nodding sharply at HELEN as she goes.)

KIPPS I thought I'd come to the wrong house.

HELEN Because it's so ordinary, you mean?

KIPPS I was expecting it to be more frightening.

HELEN You know our secret now. We're nothing special at all.

KIPPS You're special to me, Miss Walsingham. Very special.

HELEN Mama likes to create the impression we're grander than we really are, that's all. Won't you sit down?

(He does but gingerly. HELEN sits opposite.)

What shall we speak about?