

THE next day, Thursday, I was busy with lessons. On Friday, I tried three times to ring up Arthur's flat, but the number was always engaged. On Saturday, I went away for the week-end to see some friends in Hamburg. I didn't get back to Berlin until late on Monday afternoon. That evening I dialled Arthur's number, wanting to tell him about my visit; again there was no reply. I rang four times, at intervals of half an hour, and then complained to the operator. She told me, in official language, that "the subscriber's instrument" was "no longer in use."

I wasn't particularly surprised. In the present state of Arthur's finances, it was hardly to be expected that he would have settled his telephone bill. All the same, I thought, he might have come to see me or sent a note. But no doubt he was busy, too.

Three more days went by. It was seldom that we had ever let a whole week pass without a meeting or, at any rate, a telephone conversation. Perhaps Arthur was ill. Indeed, the more I thought about it, the surer I felt that this must be the explanation of his silence. He had probably worried himself into a nervous breakdown over his debts. And, all this while, I had been neglecting him. I felt suddenly very guilty. I would go round and see him, I decided, that same afternoon.

Some premonition or pang of conscience made me hurry. I reached the Courbierstrasse in record time, ran quickly upstairs, and, still panting, rang the bell. After all, Arthur was no longer young. The life he had been leading was enough to break anybody down; and he had a weak heart. I must be prepared to hear serious news.

Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin of Sally Bowles* (1935)