

Audition Pack

A Couple of Cowards

Private Lives and Present Laughter



By Noel Coward

**Audition venue:-Werrington Leisure Centre, Staniland Way,
Peterborough PE4 6JT (Park in Tesco car park)**

Tue21stMay and Tue28th May

7:15pm for 7:30pm start

Performances in the Key Theatre Studio

23rdOct – 26thOct and 30th Oct – 2nd Nov 2024

A Note from the Directors

Please have a look at the audition pieces and come along prepared to have fun with these fabulous characters. Familiarise yourself with them a little so you can give the audition your best shot. Print off the relevant pieces if you can but there will be copies available at the auditions. Don't worry about type. If you would like to audition for a part please do. We have no set ideas about a cast until we've seen everyone.

Di and Laura

Auditions Will start at 7.30pm at Werrington Leisure Centre. Please arrive from 7:15pm to fill in the paperwork. They are fun and enjoyable evenings with no pressure. You are more than welcome to attend both dates but you will only need to be at one to be considered for a part. If you are unable to attend either date and would like to audition, please contact us (see details below) and we can try to fix a time for you to read for the part.

Casting Everyone who auditions will be contacted by telephone to either offer them a part or to sadly say "not this time". When all parts are confirmed, the cast list will be released.

Crew If you are interested in working in a backstage capacity on this production, or you know someone who does - please either come along to the audition dates and make yourself known or contact us (see details below). Offering to help backstage will not colour any casting decisions.

Membership If you accept a part as Cast or Crew you will be required to be a member of Peterborough Mask Theatre to ensure you are covered by our insurance.

First Read Through We are auditioning very early to be able to fit in a table read and possibly one more get-together before the summer hits and the holiday season. The first read through will take place shortly after the cast is confirmed. This will be the first time the cast and crew will be together to discuss the play, costumes, rehearsal schedule etc. and we will read through the play together.

Rehearsals Will start on **Monday 26th August**. Not all cast members will be called for every rehearsal – Calls will be on the rehearsal schedule which will be issued once we know everyone's availability.

Performances Will take place in The Key Theatre Studio. Private Lives 23rd to 26th October 2024, Present Laughter 29th Oct – 2nd November. The main get-in will be on Sunday 20th October. There will be a technical rehearsal and a dress rehearsal in the performance space on the Monday and Tuesday of each production. Please Note. There will be a matinee performance as well as the evening performance on each Saturday.

Contact The directors, for any questions or queries: -
Private Lives - Di Fox difox130@hotmail.co.uk or **07856 830 614**,
Present Laughter – Laura Smyth purplepye@gmail.com or **07984 310006**

Private Lives

CAST

- Amanda:** An elegant and sophisticated woman who knows exactly what she wants and how to get it. She has been married to Elyot previously but is now newly married to Victor and believes she needs to 'settle down'.
- Victor:** A handsome man about town. A little pompous and opinionated. He has fallen head over heels for Amanda, he's essentially a good man who wants to make her happy and keep her on the straight and narrow. They are newly married.
- Sibyl:** A beautiful young woman, sophisticated but a little green. She has been swept off her feet by Elyot and they are newly married.
- Elyot:** A handsome man who knows he's attractive. A bit of a bounder but romance is his downfall. He was previously married to Amanda but has been smitten by the beauty and naivety of Sibyl and they are newly married.
- Louise/Pierre:** The French maid/man servant – They don't speak or understand English (Or at least doesn't want to). This is a tiny cameo part but needs someone who can convince the audience by their French (we can work on that!) as well as their comedy eye rolling. Ideal for someone who wants to be involved but doesn't want to learn too many lines.

Synopsis

Two married couples arrive at a beautiful French hotel only to find that half of each couple have previously been married to each other! Their passion for each other (which had been too much during their brief marriage) is reignited and they finish up running away together. We catch up with them in Paris after a couple of idyllic day but the passion that binds them together is also the fire that makes them argue and fight. Their other halves catch up with them for the final showdown. Will the fiery couple survive or will they go back to the life they were expecting at the beginning of the play?

Present Laughter

CAST

Garry	Actor, matinee idol, performer, womaniser – Celebrity!
Daphne Stillington	Coy, younger girl (CAN BE GENDER BLIND)
Miss Erikson	Housekeeper (CAN BE GENDER BLIND)
Fred	Valet / butler (CAN BE GENDER BLIND)
Monica Reed	Garry's secretary
Liz	Garry's wife
Roland Maule	Younger playwright (CAN BE GENDER BLIND)
Henry Lyppiatt	Garry's friend/ business associate
Morris Dixon	Garry's friend / business associate
Joanna Lyppiatt	Henry's wife
Lady Saltburn	Daphne's aunt

Synopsis

At the centre of his own universe sits matinee idol Garry Essendine; suave, hedonistic and too old, says his wife, to be having numerous affairs. His line in harmless, infatuated debutantes is largely tolerated but playing closer to home is not. Just before he escapes on tour to Africa the full extent of his misdemeanours is discovered, and all hell breaks loose!

Private Lives

Audition Pieces

These are the audition pieces. They cover all the characters. Some of the pieces are quite long and if we get a lot of people auditioning we may cut them down a little.

When you arrive at the audition, please let us know which parts you would like to try for.

Piece 1:- Amanda, Victor, Sibyl, Elyot

Both couples, Amanda and Victor and Sibyl and Elyot have recently arrived at their honeymoon hotel in the South of France. The setting is the two hotel balconies overlooking the bay. Amanda and Elyot have previously been married but their relationship had been too 'spirited' for them to stay together. In a terrible coincidence, they find themselves in rooms next to each other on their respective honeymoons.

Victor I'm going to make you happy.

Amanda Are you?

Victor Just by looking after you, and seeing that you're all right, you know.

Amanda (*a trifle wistfully*) No, I don't know.

Victor I think you love me quite differently from the way you loved Elyot.

Amanda Do stop harping on Elyot.

Victor It's true, though, isn't it?

Amanda I love you much more calmly, if that's what you mean.

Victor More lastingly?

Amanda I expect so.

Victor Do you remember when I first met you?

Amanda Yes. Distinctly.

Victor At Marion Vale's party.

Amanda Yes.

Victor Wasn't it wonderful?

Amanda Not really, dear. It was only redeemed from the completely commonplace by the fact of my having hiccoughs.

Victor I never noticed them.

Amanda Love at first sight.

Victor Where did you first meet Elyot?

Amanda To hell with Elyot.

Victor Mandy!

Amanda I forbid you to mention his name again. I'm sick of the sound of it. You must be raving mad. Here we are on the first night of our honeymoon, with the moon coming up, and the music playing, and all you can do is talk about my first husband. It's downright sacrilegious.

Victor Don't be angry.

Amanda Well, it's very annoying.

Victor Will you forgive me?

Amanda Yes; only don't do it again.

Victor I promise.

Amanda You'd better go and dress now, you haven't bathed yet.

Victor Where shall we dine, downstairs here, or at the Casino?

Amanda The Casino is more fun, I think.

Victor We can play Boule afterwards.

Amanda No, we can't, dear.

Victor Don't you like dear old Boule?

Amanda No, I hate dear old Boule. We'll play a nice game of Chemin de fer.

Victor (*apprehensively*) Not at the big table?

Amanda Maybe at the biggest table.

Victor You're not a terrible gambler, are you?

Amanda Inveterate. Chance rules my life.

Victor What nonsense.

Amanda How can you say it's nonsense. It was chance meeting you. It was chancing falling in love; it's chance that we're here, particularly after your driving. Everything that happens is chance.

Victor You know I feel rather scared of you at close quarters.

Amanda That promises to be very embarrassing.

Victor You're somehow different now, wilder than I thought you were, more strained.

Amanda Wilder! Oh Victor, I've never felt less wild in my life. A little strained, I grant you, but that's the newly married atmosphere; you can't expect anything else. Honeymooning is a very overrated amusement.

Victor You say that because you had a ghastly experience before.

Amanda There you go again.

Victor It couldn't fail to embitter you a little.

Amanda The honeymoon wasn't such a ghastly experience really; it was afterwards that was so awful.

Victor I intend to make you forget it all entirely.

Amanda You won't succeed by making constant references to it.

Victor I wish I knew you better.

Amanda It's just as well you don't. The 'woman' – in italics – should always retain a certain amount of alluring feminine mystery for the 'man' – also in italics.

Victor What about the man? Isn't he allowed to have any mystery?

Amanda Absolutely none. Transparent as glass.

Victor Oh, I see.

Amanda Never mind, darling; it doesn't necessarily work out like that; it's only supposed to.

Victor I'm glad I'm normal.

Amanda What an odd thing to be glad about. Why?

Victor Well, aren't you?

Amanda I'm not so sure I'm normal.

Victor Oh, Mandy, of course you are, sweetly, divinely normal.

Amanda I haven't any peculiar cravings for Chinamen or old boots, if that's what you mean.

Victor (*scandalised*) Mandy!

Amanda I think very few people are completely normal really, deep down in their private lives. It all depends on a combination of circumstances. If all the various cosmic thingummies fuse at the same moment, and the right spark is struck, there's no knowing what one mightn't do. That was the trouble with Elyot and me, we were like two violent acids bubbling about in a nasty little matrimonial bottle.

Victor I don't believe you're nearly as complex as you think you are.

Amanda I don't think I'm particularly complex, but I know I'm unreliable.

Victor You're frightening me horribly. In what way unreliable?

Amanda I'm so apt to see things the wrong way round.

Victor What sort of things?

Amanda Morals. What one should do and what one shouldn't.

Victor (*fondly*) Darling, you're so sweet.

Amanda Thank you, Victor, that's most encouraging. You really must have your bath now. Come along.

Victor Come here.

Amanda (*She goes over to him and they embrace*) There, dear, hurry now; I've only got to slip my dress on and then I shall be ready.

Victor Give me ten minutes.

Amanda I'll bring the cocktails out here when they come.

Victor All right.

Amanda Go along now, hurry.

*They both disappear into their suite. After a moment's pause **Elyot** steps carefully on to the terrace carrying a tray upon which are two champagne cocktails. He puts the tray down on the table.*

Elyot *(calling)* Sibyl.

Sibyl *(inside)* Yes.

Elyot I've brought the cocktails out here, hurry up.

Sibyl I can't find my lipstick.

Elyot Never mind, send down to the kitchen for some cochineal.

Sibyl Don't be so silly.

Elyot Hurry.

*Elyot saunters down to the balustrade. He looks casually over on to the next terrace, and then out at the view. He looks up at the moon and sighs, then he sits down in a chair with his back towards the line of tubs, and lights a cigarette. **Amanda** steps gingerly on to her terrace carrying a tray with two champagne cocktails on it. She is wearing a charmingly simple evening gown, her cloak is flung over her right shoulder. She places the tray carefully on the table, puts her cloak over the back of a chair, and sits down with her back towards **Elyot**. She takes a small mirror from her handbag, and scrutinises her face in it. The orchestra downstairs strikes up a new melody. Both **Elyot** and **Amanda** give a little start. After a moment, **Elyot** pensively begins to hum the tune the band is playing. It is a sentimental, romantic little tune. **Amanda** hears him, and clutches at her throat suddenly as though she were suffocating. Then she jumps up noiselessly, and peers over the line of tubs. **Elyot**, with his back to her, continues to sing obliviously. She sits down again, relaxing with a gesture almost of despair. Then she looks anxiously over her shoulder at the window in case **Victor** should be listening, and then, with a little smile, she takes up the melody herself, clearly. **Elyot** stops dead and gives a gasp, then he jumps up, and stands looking at her. She continues to sing, pretending not to know that he is there. At the end of the song, she turns slowly, and faces him.*

Amanda Thoughtful of them to play that, wasn't it?

Elyot *(in a stifled voice)* What are you doing here?

Amanda I'm on honeymoon.

Elyot How interesting, so am I.

Amanda I hope you're enjoying it.

Elyot It hasn't started yet.

Amanda Neither has mine.

Elyot Oh, my God!

Amanda I can't help feeling that this is a little unfortunate.

Elyot Are you happy?

Amanda Perfectly.

Elyot Good. That's all right, then, isn't it?

Amanda Are you?

Elyot Ecstatically.

Amanda I'm delighted to hear it. We shall probably meet again sometime. Au revoir!
(She turns.)

Elyot *(firmly)* Good-bye.
She goes without looking back. He stands gazing after her with an expression of horror on his face. Sibyl comes brightly on to the terrace in a very pretty evening frock.

Sibyl Cocktail, please.
(Elyot doesn't answer.)
Elli, what's the matter?

Elyot I feel very odd.

Sibyl Odd, what do you mean, Ill?

Elyot Yes, ill.

Sibyl *(alarmed)* What sort of—

Elyot We must leave at once.

Sibyl Leave!

Elyot Yes, dear. Leave immediately.

Sibyl Elli!

Elyot I have a strange foreboding.

Sibyl You must be mad.

Elyot Listen, darling. I want you to be very sweet, and patient, and understanding, and not be upset, or ask any questions, or anything. I have an absolute conviction that our whole future happiness depends upon our leaving here instantly.

Sibyl Why?

Elyot I can't tell you why.

Sibyl But we've only just come.

Elyot I know that, but it can't be helped.

Sibyl What's happened, what has happened?

Elyot Nothing has happened.

Sibyl You've gone out of your mind.

Elyot I haven't gone out of my mind, but I shall if we stay here another hour.

Sibyl You're not drunk, are you?

Elyot Of course I'm not drunk. What time have I had to get drunk?

Sibyl Come down and have some dinner, darling, and then you'll feel ever so much better.

Elyot It's no use trying to humour me. I'm serious.

Sibyl But darling, please be reasonable. We've only just arrived; everything's unpacked. It's our first night together. We can't go away now.

Elyot We can have our first night together in Paris.

Sibyl We shouldn't get there until the small hours.

Elyot (*with a great effort at calmness*) Now please, Sibyl, I know it sounds crazy to you, and utterly lacking in reason and sense, but I've got second sight over certain things. I'm almost psychic. I've got the most extraordinary sensation of impending disaster. If we stay here something appalling will happen. I know it.

Sibyl (*firmly*) Hysterical nonsense.

Elyot It isn't hysterical nonsense. Presentiments are far from being nonsense. Look at the woman who cancelled her passage on the *Titanic*. All because of a presentiment.

Sibyl I don't see what that has to do with it.

Elyot It has everything to do with it. She obeyed her instincts, that's what she did, and saved her life. All I ask is to be allowed to obey my instinct.

Sibyl Do you mean that there's going to be an earthquake or something?

Elyot Very possibly, very possibly indeed, or perhaps a violent explosion.

Sibyl They don't have earthquakes in France.

Elyot On the contrary, only the other day they felt a distinct shock at Toulon.

Sibyl Yes, but that's in the South where it's hot.

Elyot Don't quibble, Sibyl

Piece 2:- Elyot, Amanda, Sibyl, Victor

Amanda and Elyot seem to be rekindling their romance but they are aware of their other halves and are trying (not very hard but trying) to resist each other.

Ultimately they run off together and Sibyl and Victor meet, unaware of their fate.(although Sibyl may have an inkling)

Elyot I must go and find Sibyl.

Amanda I must go and find Victor.

Elyot (*savagely*) Well, why don't you?

Amanda I don't want to.

Elyot It's shameful, shameful of us.

Amanda Don't: I feel terrible. Don't leave me for a minute, I shall go mad if you do. We won't talk about ourselves any more, we'll talk about outside things, anything you like, only just don't leave me until I've pulled myself together.

Elyot Very well. (*There is a dead silence.*)

Amanda What have you been doing lately? During these last years?

Elyot Travelling about. I went round the world, you know, after –

Amanda (*hurriedly*) Yes, yes, I know. How was it?

Elyot The world?

Amanda Yes.

Elyot Oh, highly enjoyable.

Amanda China must be very interesting.

Elyot Very big, China.

Amanda And Japan –

Elyot Very small.

Amanda Did you eat sharks' fins, and take your shoes off, and use chopsticks and everything?

Elyot Practically everything.

Amanda And India, the burning Ghars, or Ghats, or whatever they are, and the Taj Mahal. How was the Taj Mahal?

Elyot (*looking at her*) Unbelievable, a sort of dream.

Amanda That was the moonlight, I expect, you must have seen it in the moonlight.

Elyot (*never taking his eyes off her face*) Yes, moonlight is cruelly deceptive.

Amanda And it didn't look like a biscuit box, did it? I've always felt that it might.

Elyot (*quietly*) Darling, darling, I love you so.

Amanda And I do hope you met a sacred Elephant. They're lint white, I believe, and very, very sweet.

Elyot I've never loved anyone else for an instant.

Amanda (*raising her hand feebly in protest*) No, no, you mustn't – Elyot – stop.

Elyot You love me, too, don't you? There's no doubt about it anywhere, is there?

Amanda No, no doubt anywhere.

Elyot You're looking very lovely, you know, in this damned moonlight. Your skin is clear and cool, and your eyes are shining, and you're growing lovelier and lovelier every second as I look at you. You don't hold any mystery for me, darling, do you mind? There isn't a particle of you that I don't know, remember, and want.

Amanda (*softly*) I'm glad, my sweet.

Elyot More than any desire anywhere, deep down in my deepest heart I want you back again – please –

Amanda (*putting her hand over his mouth*) Don't say any more, you're making me cry so dreadfully.
He pulls her gently into his arms and they stand silently, completely oblivious to everything but the moment, and each other. When, finally, they separate, they sit down, rather breathlessly, on the balustrade.

Amanda What now? Oh darling, what now?

Elyot I don't know, I'm lost, utterly.

Amanda We must think quickly, oh quickly –

Elyot Escape?

Amanda Together?

Elyot Yes, of course, now, now.

Amanda We can't, we can't, you know we can't.

Elyot We must.

Amanda It would break Victor's heart.

Elyot And Sibyl's too probably, but they're bound to suffer anyhow. Think of the hell we'd lead them into if we stayed. Infinitely worse than any cruelty in the world, pretending to love them, and loving each other, so desperately.

Amanda We must tell them.

Elyot What?

Amanda Call them, and tell them.

Elyot Oh no, no, that's impossible.

Amanda It's honest.

Elyot I can't help how honest it is, it's too horrible to think of. How should we start? What should we say?

Amanda We should have to trust to the inspiration of the moment.

Elyot It would be a moment completely devoid of inspiration. The most appalling moment imaginable. No, no, we can't, you must see that, we simply can't.

Amanda What do you propose to do then? As it is they might appear at any moment.

Elyot We've got to decide instantly one way or another. Go away together now, or stay with them, and never see one another again, ever.

Amanda Don't be silly, what choice is there?

Elyot No choice at all, come –
(He takes her hand.)

Amanda No, wait. This is sheer raving madness, something's happened to us, we're not sane.

Elyot We never were.

Amanda Where can we go?

Elyot Paris first, my car's in the garage, all ready.

Amanda They'll follow us.

Elyot That doesn't matter, once the thing's done.

Amanda I've got a flat in Paris.

Elyot Good.

Amanda It's in the Avenue Montaigne. I let it to Freda Lawson, but she's in Biarritz, so it's empty.

Elyot Does Victor know?

Amanda No, he knows I have one but he hasn't the faintest idea where.

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Elyot Better and better.

Amanda We're being so bad, so terribly bad, we'll suffer for this, I know we shall.

Elyot Can't be helped.

Amanda Starting all those awful rows all over again.

Elyot No, no, we're older and wiser now.

Amanda What difference does that make? The first moment either of us gets a bit nervy, off we'll go again.

Elyot Stop shilly-shallying, Amanda.

Amanda I'm trying to be sensible.

Elyot You're only succeeding in being completely idiotic.

Amanda Idiotic indeed! What about you?

Elyot Now look here, Amanda –

Amanda *(stricken) (rushing to her and kissing her)* Oh my God!

Elyot Darling, darling, I didn't mean it–

Amanda I won't move from here unless we have a compact, a sacred, sacred compact never to quarrel again.

Elyot Easy to make but difficult to keep.

Amanda No, no, it's the bickering that always starts it. The moment we notice we're bickering, either of us, we must promise on our honour to stop dead. We'll invent some phrase or catchword, which when either of us says it, automatically cuts off all conversation for at least five minutes.

Elyot Two minutes dear, with an option of renewal.

Amanda Very well, what shall it be?

Elyot *(hurriedly)* Solomon Isaacs.

Amanda All right, that'll do.

Elyot Come on, come on.

Amanda What shall we do if we meet either of them on the way downstairs?

Elyot Run like stags.

Amanda What about clothes?

Elyot I've got a couple of bags I haven't unpacked yet.

Amanda I've got a small trunk.

Elyot Send the porter up for it.

Amanda Oh this is terrible – terrible –

Elyot Come on, come on, don't waste time.

Amanda Oughtn't we to leave notes or something?

Elyot No, no, no, we'll telegraph from somewhere on the road.

Amanda Darling, I daren't, it's too wicked of us, I simply daren't:

Elyot *(seizing her in his arms and kissing her violently)* Now will you behave?

Amanda Yes, but Elyot – darling–

Elyot Solomon Isaacs!

They rush off together through Elyot's suite. After a moment or so Victor steps out on to the terrace and looks round anxiously. Then he goes back indoors again, and can be heard calling 'Mandy'. Finally he again comes out on to the terrace and comes despondently down to the balustrade. He hears Sibyl's voice calling 'Elli' and

looks round as she comes out of the French windows. She jumps slightly upon seeing him.

Victor Good evening.

Sibyl *(rather flustered)* Good evening – I was – er – looking for my husband.

Victor Really, that's funny. I was looking for my wife.

Sibyl Quite a coincidence.

(She laughs nervously.)

Victor *(after a pause)* It's very nice here, isn't it?

Sibyl Lovely.

Victor Have you been here long?

Sibyl No, we only arrived today.

Victor Another coincidence. So did we.

Sibyl How awfully funny.

Victor Would you care for a cocktail?

Sibyl Oh no thank you – really –

Victor There are two here on the table.

Sibyl *glances at the two empty glasses on the balustrade, and tosses her head defiantly.*

Sibyl Thanks very much, I'd love one.

Victor Good, here you are.

(Sibyl comes over to Victor's side of the terrace. He hands her one and takes one himself.)

Sibyl Thank you.

Victor *(with rather forced gaiety)* To absent friends.

(He raises his glass.)

Sibyl *(raising hers)* To absent friends.

(They both laugh rather mirthlessly and then sit down on the balustrade, pensively sipping their cocktails and looking at the view)

It's awfully pretty, isn't it? The moonlight, and the lights of that yacht reflected in the water –

Victor I wonder who it belongs to.

The curtain slowly falls.

Piece 3:- Victor, Sibyl, French maid/man servant – Louise/Pierre

Victor and Sibyl arrived in the middle of the fight at the end of Act II. They are aghast at what they see. Amanda and Elyot storm off into separate bedrooms. Act III opens the next morning. Victor and Sibyl have pushed sofas in front of each of the bedroom doors and have slept on their respective sofas. Louise/Lewis the maid/man servant is French and does not speak/understand any English. They arrive to open up and make breakfast. (Have they seen all this before or is this very very strange to them??)

Act 3

*The scene is the same as Act Two. It is the next morning. The time is about eight-thirty. **Victor and Sibyl** have drawn the two sofas across the doors right, and left, and are stretched on them, asleep. **Victor** is in front of **Amanda's** door, and **Sibyl** in front of **Elyot's***

The room is in chaos, as it was left the night before.

*As the curtain rises, there is the rattling of a key in the lock of the front door, and **Louise** enters. She carries a string bag with various bundles of eatables crammed into it, notably a long roll of bread, and a lettuce. She closes the door after her, and in the half light trips over the standard lamp lying on the floor. She puts her string bag down, and gropes her way over to the window. She draws the curtains, letting sunlight stream into the room. When she looks round, she gives a little cry of horror. Then she sees **Victor and Sibyl** sleeping peacefully, and comes over and scrutinises each of them with care, then she shakes **Sibyl** by the shoulder.*

Sibyl (waking) Oh dear.

Louise *Bon jour, Madame.*

Sibyl (bewildered) What? – Oh – bon jour.

Louise *Qu'est-ce que vous faites ici, Madame?*

Sibyl What – what? – Wait a moment, *attendez un instant* – oh dear -

Victor (sleepily) What's happening? (Jumping up) Of course, I remember now.

(He sees **Louise**)

Oh!

Louise (firmly) *Bon jour, Monsieur:*

Victor Er – bon jour – What time is it?

Louise (rather dully) Eh, Monsieur?

Sibyl (sitting up on the sofa) *Quelle heure est il s'il vous plait?*

Louise *C'est neuf heures moins dix, Madame.*

Victor What did she say?

Sibyl I think she said nearly ten o'clock.

Victor (taking situation in hand) Er – *voulez* – er – wake – *revez Monsieur et Madame – er toute suite?*

Louise (shaking her head) *Non, Monsieur. Il m'est absolument defendu de les appeler jusqu'à ce qu'ils sonnent.*

She takes her bag and goes off into the kitchen. Victor and Sibyl look at each other helplessly.

Sibyl What are we to do?

Victor *(with determination)* Wake them ourselves.
(He goes towards Amanda's door.)

Sibyl No, no, wait a minute.

Victor What's the matter?

Sibyl *(plaintively)* I couldn't face them yet, really, I couldn't; I feel dreadful.

Victor So do I.

(He wanders gloomily over to the window)

It's a lovely morning.

Sibyl Lovely.

(She bursts into tears.)

Victor *(coming to her)* I say, don't cry.

Sibyl I can't help it.

Victor Please don't, please—

Sibyl It's all so squalid, I wish we hadn't stayed; what's the use?

Victor We've got to see them before we go back to England, we must get things straightened out.

Sibyl *(sinking down on to the sofa)* Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, I wish I were dead.

Victor Hush, now, hush. Remember your promise. We've got to see this through together and get it settled one way or another.

Sibyl *(sniffing)* I'll try to control myself, only I'm so ... so tired, I haven't slept properly for ages.

Victor Neither have I.

Sibyl If we hadn't arrived when we did, they'd have killed one another.

Victor They must have been drunk.

Sibyl She hit him.

Victor He'd probably hit her, too, earlier on.

Sibyl I'd no idea anyone ever behaved like that; it's so disgusting, so degrading, Elli of all people – oh dear –

(She almost breaks down again, but controls herself.)

Victor What an escape you've had.

Sibyl What an escape we've both had.

I look forward to seeing you at the auditions.

Di Fox

Present Laughter

Audition Pieces

AUDITION PIECE 1

Daphne / Miss Erikson / Fred

The Scene is Garry Essendine's studio in London. On stage right there is a door leading into the spare bedroom. Above this is an alcove and hall leading to the front door. Just below and on the left of this is a staircase leading to Garry's bedroom. Under the stairs is a service door, below it, a large window and below that another door leading into the office. Down stage right is a fireplace. The furnishing is comfortable, if a trifle eccentric.

When the curtain rises it is about 10.30 am. The studio is rather dim as the curtains are drawn. Daphne Stillington comes out of the spare room. She is a pretty girl of about twenty-three or four. She is wearing a man's dressing-gown and pyjamas. She wanders about until she finds the telephone and then, almost furtively, dials a number.

Daphne (at telephone) Hallo – hallo! Is that you Saunders? Can I speak to Miss Cynthia? ... all right I'll hold on ... hallo ... Cynthia darling it's Daphne ... yes ... are you alone? Listen I'm you know where ... Yes I did ... No he isn't awake yet ... There's nobody about at all ... No, in the spare room, I've only just got up I'm not dressed or anything ... I can't go on about it now someone might come in ... If anybody rings up from home will you swear to say that I stayed with you ... Darling you promised ... In that case say I'm in the bath or something ... Yes, as soon as I'm dressed in about an hour I should think ... Of course ... I can't wait to tell you ... All right.

She puts down the telephone and goes over towards the service door. She has nearly reached it when Miss Erikson comes through it. Miss Erikson is a thin, vague-looking Swedish housekeeper. She is wearing a chintz smock, gloves and very tattered bedroom slippers. She is smoking a cigarette.

Daphne (a trifle nervously) Good morning.

Miss E (betraying no surprise) Good morning

She goes over to the windows and draws the curtains.

Daphne (following her) What time is Mr Essendine going to be called?

Miss E He will ring.

Daphne What time does he usually ring.

Miss E That depends what time he went to bed.

She goes over to the fireplace. Daphne follows her.

Daphne (in a rush) I'm afraid we were rather late last night you see we were at a party and Mr Essendine very kindly said he'd drive me home and

then I found I'd forgotten my latch-key and I knew I shouldn't be able to make any of the servants hear because they sleep at the top of the house so Mr Essendine said I could stay the night here – and so I did.

Miss E If you were very late he will probably sleep until the afternoon.

Daphne Oh dear. Couldn't you call him?

Miss E Alas, no, we can never call him.

Daphne Well, do you think I could have some coffee or orange juice or something.

Miss E I will see.

She goes out through the service door. Daphne left alone sits down rather gloomily on the edge of the sofa. After a few moments Fred enters. Fred is Garry's valet. He is smartly dressed and wears a black alpaca coat. Daphne gets up from the sofa.

Daphne Good morning.

Fred Good morning.

Daphne Have *you* any idea what time Mr Essendine will wake up?

Fred Might be any time, he didn't leave no note.

Daphne Couldn't you call him? It's nearly eleven o'clock.

Fred The whole place goes up in smoke if we wake him by accident let alone call 'im.

Daphne Well, do you think I could have some breakfast?

Fred What would you fancy?

Daphne Coffee, please, and some orange juice.

Fred Rightyo.

Fred goes off again.

AUDITION PIECE 2

Monica / Liz / Fred / Daphne

Monica hangs up the telephone and picks up the tray of letters. There is a ring at the front-door bell. **Miss Erikson** comes out of the service door and goes to answer it. **Liz's** voice is heard saying 'Hallo, Miss Erikson – is everybody in?' After a moment she comes in. **Miss Erikson** follows her and goes off again. **Liz** is a charming-looking woman in the thirties. She is well-dressed but not elaborate. She carries two parcels.

Liz Good morning, Monica Dear.

Monica Liz! We thought you weren't coming back until tonight.

Liz I came over on the Ferry, loaded with gifts like an Eastern potentate. Here's one for you.

Monica *(taking the parcel that Liz give her)* How lovely.

Liz It's a bottle of scent and very expensive.

Monica Thanks ever so much, Liz, you're a darling.

Liz What's God up to?

Monica In the bath

Liz I've brought him a dressing-gown.

Monica How thoughtful – he's only got eighteen.

Liz Don't be acid, Monica, you know he loves peacocking about in something new. It's nice and thin and highly suitable for Africa

She puts the other parcel on the piano and takes off her hat and coat.

Miss Erikson looked more peculiar than ever this morning. Is her spiritualism getting worse?

Monica She got in touch with a dead friend at a séance on Sunday night and all he said was, 'No, No, No', and 'Christmas Day!' It upset her very much.

Liz I do hope she won't get any dottier and do something awful.

Monica I don't think she will. Hers is quite a tranquil madness.

The telephone rings.

Monica *(going to it)* That damned thing never stops. 'Hallo – hallo – Morris? No, he's in the bath ... Liz is here if you want to talk to her – yes, she's just arrived ...' Here, Liz, it's Morris.

Monica gives **Liz** the telephone and, while she's talking, opens her present.

Liz (at telephone) Good morning, dear ... No, on the Ferry .. Yes, I saw the play twice ... We shall have to alter the end for England, but I talked to Vallion and he didn't seem to mind what happened as long as Garry played it ... I told him your idea about Janet playing Eloise and he said that although he knew she was a formidable actress he'd rather have someone who looked less like a guinea-pig? ... Cochon d'Inde ... Yes, dear, pig of India ... He's a very sweet little man and I adore him ... No, I'm lunching with poor Violet but I'll come to the office directly afterwards if you like ... Yes, I'll get rid of her, you needn't be frightened ... All right. (She hangs up).

Monica (with her bottle of scent) This looks wonderful, Liz, I shan't open it until I get home.

Fred comes down the stairs.

Liz Hallo, Fred – how's everything?

Fred Bit of a lash up, Miss, as usual.

Liz Do you think I could have a cup of coffee – I feel a sinking.

Fred Rightyo, Miss

Fred goes off through the service door.

Liz It's very resolute of Fred to go on calling me Miss, isn't it?

Monica I think he has a sort of idea that when you gave up being Garry's wife you automatically reverted to maidenhood.

Liz It's a very pretty thought.

Daphne comes out of the spare room in an evening dress and cloak. She is no longer crying but looks depressed. She jumps slightly on seeing **Liz**.

Daphne Oh!

Monica I'm so awfully sorry about the bath, Miss Stillington.

Daphne It didn't matter a bit.

Monica This is Mrs Essendine – Miss Stillington.

Daphne Oh!

Liz (amiably) How do you do.

Daphne (shattered) Mrs Essendine. Do you mean ... I mean ... Are you Garry's wife?

Liz Yes.

Daphne Oh – I thought he was divorced.

Liz We never quite got round to it.

Daphne Oh, I see.

Liz But please don't look agitated – I upped and left him years ago.

Monica *(a trifle wickedly)* Miss Stillington lost her key last night and so she slept in the spare room.

Liz (to Daphne) You poor dear, you must be absolutely congealed!

Daphne Do you think I could get a taxi?

Monica I'll ring up for one.

Liz No, don't do that, my car's downstairs, it can take you wherever you want to go.

Daphne It's most awfully kind of you.

Liz Not at all, the chauffeur's got bright red hair and his name's Frobisher – you can't miss him.

Daphne Thank you very much indeed – you're sure it's not inconvenient?

Liz *(briskly)* Not in the least – Just tell him to come straight back here after he's dropped you.

Daphne *(still floundering)* Oh – yes – of course I will – thank you again ... goodbye.

Liz *(shaking hands)* Goodbye – I do hope you haven't caught cold.

Daphne *(laughing nervously)* No, I don't think so – goodbye.

Monica I'll see you out.

Daphne Please don't trouble –

Monica It's no trouble at all.

Monica goes into the hall with **Daphne**. **Liz** lights a cigarette. **Fred** comes in with a cup of coffee

AUDITION PIECE 3

Garry / Henry / Morris / Monica

There is the sound of voices outside. Henry and Morris come in followed by Monica. Henry is rather dapper and neat. His age is about forty. Morris is a trifle younger, tall and good-looking and a little grey at the temples.

Henry There's a strange young man sitting on the stairs.

Garry What's he doing?

Henry Crying

Morris What have you been up to, Garry?

Garry I haven't been up to anything. I merely told him what I thought of his play.

Henry I'm glad to see you haven't lost your touch.

Monica Sherry, Morris?

Morris Thanks. (**Monica give him some**)

Monica Henry?

Henry Is it the same sherry that you always have?

Monica Yes.

Henry No, thank you.

Garry Why, what's the matter with it?

Henry Nothing much, it's just not very nice.

Garry You ought never to have joined the Anthenæum Club, it was disastrous.

Henry I really don't see why.

Garry It's made you pompous.

Henry It can't have. I've always been too frightened to go into it.

Morris Henry's quite right about the sherry, it's disgusting.

Garry If anybody complains about anything else I shall go mad. This studio's been like a wailing wall all the morning.

Morris Liz is back.

Garry How nice of you to let me know, Morris, I really must try to get in

touch with her.

- Morris** What's the matter with the old boy, Monica? He seems remarkably crotchety.
- Monica** Liz went for him a bit and then I told him he overacted, he really has had rather a beastly time, and then that dotty young man on top of everything.
- Morris** Never mind Garry – God's in his heaven and all's right with the world – I've got some lovely bad news for you.
- Garry** What?
- Morris** Nora Fenwick can't come to Africa.
- Garry** Why not? What's the matter with her?
- Morris** She's broken her leg.
- Garry** (*exasperated*) Well, really -!!!
- Henry** It isn't actually so terribly important.
- Garry** Oh, not at all, it couldn't matter less! It merely means that I've got to spend all the voyage out rehearsing a new woman in six different character parts! How did the silly bit do it?
- Morris** She fell down at Victoria Station.
- Garry** She'd no right to be at Victoria Station. Who can we get?
- Henry** Morris wants Beryl Willard, but I don't think she's quite right.
- Garry** (*dangerously*) So you want Beryl Willard, do you!
- Morris** Why not? She's extremely competent.
- Garry** (*with intense quietness*) I agree with you. Beryl Willard is extremely competent. She has been extremely competent for well over forty years. In addition to her competence she has contrived, with uncanny skill, to sustain a spotless reputation for being the most paralysing, epoch-making, monumental, world-shattering, God-awful bore that ever drew breath!
- Morris** Now really, Garry. I don't see -
- Garry** (*warming up*) You don't see? Very well I will explain further, just one thing and it's this. No prayer, no bribe, no threat. No power, human or divine, would induce me to go to Africa with Beryl Willard. I wouldn't go as far as Wimbledon with Beryl Willard.
- Monica** What he's trying to say is that he doesn't care for Beryl Willard.

Morris All right, she's out. Whom do you suggest?

Henry Just a minute, if you're going to start one of those casting arguments I'm going. I've got to catch a plane for Brussels, I only wanted to let you know that you can't have the Mayfair Theatre for the French play in the autumn.

Garry Why not?

Henry Because Robert's got it for the whole season, starting in September.

Garry Why did you let him? You knew I wanted it.

Henry The Forum's much nicer, anyhow, and the capacity's bigger.

Garry It's a conspiracy! You've both of you been trying to get me into that underheated morgue for years.

Morris It's being done up and redecorated.

Garry It'll have to be rebuilt brick by brick before I set foot in it.

Henry Arrange it later, will you, Morris, he's obviously in one of his states this morning. I can't stop now.

Garry What are you going to Brussels for, anyhow?

Henry Business. Nice ordinary straightforward business. Nothing to do with the theatre at all. I can't wait to get there. Goodbye, Sweetie. Try to be a little more amiable when I come back. Goodbye, Monica – goodbye, Morris – By the way, you might call up Joanna, she's all alone.

Morris I have. I'm taking her to the opening at the Haymarket tomorrow night.

Henry Fine – goodbye.

Henry *goes out.*

AUDITION PIECE 4

Garry / Fred

The time is midnight.

Three days have elapsed since Act 1.

*When the curtain rises the studio is pleasantly but not too brightly lit. **Garry**, wearing a dressing-gown over his evening clothes, is playing the piano. There is a whisky and soda by him which he sips occasionally.*

*Presently **Fred** enters from the service door. He is very smartly dressed in a dinner jacket and he carries a soft black hat.*

Fred Well, I'm off now. Got everything you want?

Garry You're very dressy! Where are you going?

Fred Tagani's.

Garry Where's that?

Fred *(laconically)* Tottenham Court Road.

Garry Is it a dance hall or a night club or what?

Fred Bit of all sorts really. Doris works there.

Garry What does she do?

Fred Sings a couple of numbers and does a dance with a skipping rope.

Garry Very enjoyable.

Fred I think it's a bit wet if you ask me, but still it goes down all right.

Garry Are you going to marry Doris?

Fred Me Marry? What a hope!

Garry You know you really are dreadfully immoral, Fred.

Fred *(cheerfully)* That's right!

Garry I know for a fact that you've been taking advantage of Doris for over two years now.

Fred Why not? She likes it, I like it and a good time's 'ad by all.

Garry Do you really mind about her at all? I mean do you ever think about her when she's not there?

Fred *(complacently)* She always is there – when I want her.

Garry What will she do when we go to Africa?

Fred She'll manage. She's got a couple of blokes running round after her now. Quite posh one of 'em is, in the silk business.

Garry Oh, I see, she's communal.

Fred Will you ring in the morning as usual or do you want to be called?

Garry I'll ring. Has Miss Erikson gone?

Fred Oh, yes, she went early. She 'ad a come over about six o'clock and 'opped it. She's gone to 'er friend in Hammersmith. They turn out all the lights, play the gramophone and talk to an Indian.

Garry I suppose if it makes her happy it's all right.

Fred She's a good worker even if she is a bit scatty, and you can't 'ave everything, can you? Will that be all?

Garry Yes, thank you, Fred. Enjoy yourself.

Fred Same to you – be good.

Fred *goes out jauntily.* **Garry** *continues to play the piano.*

AUDITION PIECE 5

Garry / Joanna

Garry I spend hours at my sampler.

Joanna Are you happy on the whole?

Garry Ecstatically.

Joanna You never get tired of fixing people's lives, of being the Boss, of everybody adoring you and obeying you?

Garry Never. I revel in it.

Joanna I suspected that you did, but I wasn't sure.

Garry Would you like me to play you something?

Joanna No, thank you.

Garry Why ever not? You must be mad!

Joanna Not mad, just musical.

Garry Snappy, too. Quite rude in fact.

Joanna Yes, that was rather rude, wasn't it? I'm sorry.

Garry Never mind. What shall we do now?

Joanna Do? Is there any necessity to do anything?

Garry I don't know, my social sense tells me that something is demanded and I'm not quite sure what it is. That's why I suggested playing to you.

Joanna There's always the radio.

Garry Not here there isn't!

Joanna I'm so glad I'm adult. You must be pretty shattering to the young and inexperienced.

Garry Is that a subtle allusion to my charm?

Joanna You glitter so brightly. You're so gaily caparisoned – all the little bells tinkling.

Garry I sound like a circus horse.

Joanna You are rather like a circus horse as a matter of fact! Prancing into the ring to be admired, jumping, with such assurance, through all the

paper hoops.

- Garry** Now listen, Joanna. You're got to make up your mind. This provocative skirmishing is getting me down. What do you want?
- Joanna** I want you to be what I believe you really are, friendly and genuine, someone to be trusted. I want you to do me the honour of stopping your eternal performance for a little, ring down the curtain, take off your make-up and relax.
- Garry** Everyone keeps on telling me to relax.
- Joanna** One can hardly blame them.
- Garry** Shouldn't I be very vulnerable, dear Deliah, shorn of my silky hair?
- Joanna** Why are you so afraid of being vulnerable? Wouldn't it be rather a relief? To be perpetually on guard must be terribly tiring.
- Garry** I was right about you from the first.
- Joanna** Were you?
- Garry** You're as predatory as hell!
- Joanna** Garry!
- Garry** You got the wretched Henry when he was convalescent, you've made a dead set at Morris, and now by God you're after me! Don't deny it – I can see it in your eye. You suddenly appear out of the night reeking with the lust of conquest, the whole atmosphere's quivering with it! You had your hair done this afternoon, didn't you? And your nails and probably your feet too! That's a new dress, isn't it? Those are new shoes! You've never worn those stockings before in your life! And your mind, even more expertly groomed to vanquish than your body. Every word, every phrase, every change of mood cunningly planned. Just the right amount of sex antagonism mixed with subtle flattery, just the right switch over, perfectly timed, from provocative implication to wistful diffidence. You want to know what I'm really like do you, under all the glittering veneer? Well, this is it. This is what I'm really like – Fundamentally honest! When I'm driven into a corner I tell the truth, and the truth at the moment is that I know you, Joanna. I know what you're after, I can see through every trick. Go away from me! Leave me alone!
- Joanna** *(laughing)* Curtain!
- Garry** *(at the drink table)* Damn it, there isn't any more soda-water.
- Joanna** Take it neat, darling.
- Garry** How dare you call me darling.
- Joanna** Because I think you are a darling – I always have.

Garry Go away immediately.

Joanna You're really the reason I married Henry.

Garry Are there no depths to which you won't descent?

Joanna Absolutely none. I'm in love with you – I've been in love with you for over seven years now, it's high time something was done about it.

Garry *(striding about)* This is the end!

Joanna *(calmly)* No, my sweet, only the beginning.

Garry Now listen to me Joanna -

Joanna I think you'd better listen to me first.

Garry I shall do not such thing.

Joanna *(rising, calmly and with great firmness)* You must, it's terribly important to all of us. Please sit down.

Garry I'd rather walk about if you don't mind.

Joanna Sit down, dear sweet Garry, please sit down. You must concentrate, things aren't nearly as bad as they look. I've got to explain and I can't if you're whirling about all the time.

Garry *(flinging himself on to the sofa)* This is dreadful!

Joanna First of all I want you to promise me to answer one question absolutely truthfully. Will you?

Garry What is it?

Joanna Will you promise?

Garry Yes – all right – go on.

Joanna If you had never seen me in your life before, if we had met for the first time tonight, if I were in no way concerned with anyone you know, would you have made love to me? Would you have wanted me?

Garry Yes.

Joanna Well, that's that. Now then -

Garry Look here, Joanna -

Joanna Shut up! You must be fair, you must let me explain. When I said just now that you were the reason I married Henry, that was only partly true. I'm devoted to Henry, much fonder of him really than he is of me. He was madly in love with me for the first two years, but he isn't now. You stood between us. Not only in my heart but in his. He hated your thinly veiled disapproval of me, and it gradually strangled

his love for me. That's the worst of people like you with damned dominant personalities, you not only affect others when they're actually with you, but when they're away from you as well. Henry had been lightly unfaithful to me eleven times to my certain knowledge during the last three years. He's probably having a high old time in Brussels at this moment.

Garry

You're lying, Joanna.

Joanna

I'm not lying. I don't mind enough to lie. Henry's a darling and I wouldn't leave him for anything in the world, we get on perfectly, better now really than we did before, but you're the one I'm in love with and always have been. I don't want to live with you, God forbid! You'd drive me mad in a week, but you are to me the most charming, infuriating, passionately attractive man I have ever known in my life -

Garry

(bitterly) What about Morris?

Joanna

Morris? Don't be so idiotic, he was only a step nearer you.

Garry

Is he in love with you? Has there been anything between you?

Joanna

Of course there hasn't. He's quite sweet, but he doesn't attract me in the least, and never could.

Garry

Do you swear that?

Joanna

There's no need for me to swear it, you can see, can't you? And even if you can't see you must at least be able to feel that what I'm saying is the truth. We're neither of us exactly adolescent, we both know enough by experience that when our instincts are pushing us with all their force in one direction that it's foolish and painful to rush off in the other.

Garry

Are you so sure it's foolish?

Joanna

It's the most foolish thing in the world to store up regrets. Who could you and I possibly harm by loving each other for a little?

Garry

Please may I get up now?

Joanna

Yes.

AUDITION PIECE 6

Lady Saltburn / Garry / Daphne / Roland / Monica / Liz / Henry / Fred

Lady Saltburn enters accompanied by **Daphne Stillington**. **Lady Saltburn** is a majestic but rather effusive society woman. **Daphne** is wearing a set expression of social poise. There is a glint in her eye.

Lady S (advancing to **Garry**) Mr Essendine, this is so charming of you.

Garry (shaking hands) Not at all – it's a pleasure.

Lady S This is my niece Daphne. I believe you knew her mother years ago, she died you know – in Africa.

Garry (shaking hands with **Daphne**) How do you do.

Daphne I've been longing to meet you Mr Essendine. (With intensity) I've loved everything you've ever done.

Garry How very nice of you.

Lady S Daphne simply wouldn't give me any peace until I had rung up your secretary and absolutely implored her for an appointment. She's so tremendously keen, you know -

Garry She must be. (He shoots **Daphne** a look of fury) I must introduce you to everybody. My wife, my secretary, Miss Reed ...

Lady S How do you do – How do you do, you were so kind on the telephone.

Garry Mr Dixon – Mr Lyppiatt – and Mr Maule.

Lady S How do you do. This is quite a peep behind the scenes, isn't it, Daphne, dear?

Daphne This is the most thrilling moment of my life, Mr Essendine. I've always wondered what you'd be like close to.

Lady S You mustn't embarrass Mr Essendine, Daphne.

Daphne I'm sure he understands – don't you, Mr Essendine?

Garry Of course, my dear, I understand perfectly, but I'm afraid I can only give you just a few minutes – you see I'm terribly busy just now making arrangements for my tour – (He shoots a look at **Lady Saltburn**) - in Africa.

Lady S I'd no idea you were going to Africa, how very interesting. You really must pay a visit to my brother-in-law, he lives on the top of the most beautiful mountain.

Henry (to **Lady Saltburn**) I do hope you'll forgive us, but we really must go

now – we have to go to the office – Goodbye.

Lady S

How sad – Goodbye.

Henry

Morris? Liz?

Liz

I'm staying here for a little – I'll come later.

Morris

Goodbye, Lady Saltburn – (*He bows to Daphne*) – Goodbye.

Garry

Goodbye, Mr Maule.

Roland

I'm staying too.

Morris and Henry go out. **Monica and Liz** exchange glances of relief.

Monica

Won't you sit down, Lady Saltburn?

Lady S

Thank you so much. (*She does so*) Are you ready, Daphne? You know how busy Mr Essendine is – I'm sure it's very sweet of him to see us at all – We mustn't impose on him.

Daphne

(*almost defiantly*) Yes – I'm ready.

Garry

What are you going to do?

Daphne

(*looking into his eyes*) Nothing very much – I'll try not to bore you. You see, I want you to hear me so very much – it means everything to me – you will hear me, won't you – you can hear me, can't you? - And you're not angry, are you?

Lady S

Daphne – really! What are you talking about?

Daphne

Mr Essendine understands, don't you, Mr Essendine?

Garry

Mr Essendine understands everything. He spends his whole life understanding absolutely everything and what nobody else seems to understand is that the strain of it is driving him step by step to a suicide's grave!

Liz

Don't be affected, Garry.

Garry

Mr wife, Lady Saltburn, left me several years ago. Gnawing regret had embittered her.

Roland

There's nothing worse than regret. Look at Chekhov! He knew.

Garry

We have no time at the moment to look at Chekhov, Mr Maule. (*To Daphne*) Please don't be nervous. What are you going to do, sing?

Daphne

I'm not nervous, but I wish you weren't so many miles away. I'm not going to sing – I'm just going to say a few lines -

Garry

(*sitting down*) Very well – fire away.

Daphne stands by the piano and looks at him fondly. She begins.

Daphne 'We meet not as we parted
We feel more than all may see;
My bosom is heavy hearted
And thine full of doubt for me
One moment has bound the free.'

'That moment has gone for ever
Like lightning that flashed and died
Like a snowflake upon the river
Like a sunbeam upon the tide
Which the dark shadows hide.'

'That moment from time was singled
As the first of a life of pain
The cup of its joy was mingled
Delusion too sweet though vain
Too sweet to be mine again ...'

During the last verse **Joanna** comes swiftly out of the spare room. She is wearing her evening dress and cloak of the night before. She is obviously extremely angry.

Joanna (*furiously*) That room is like a frigidaire and I have no intention of staying in it one minute longer. Will somebody kindly call me a taxi.

Daphne (*breaking off*) Oh! – Oh, dear!

Liz You'd better take my car, Joanna, it's downstairs.

Daphne (*violently*) The chauffeur's got red hair and his name's Frobisher!

Lady S Daphne!

Joanna Thank you very much. (*To Garry*) I shan't see you again, Garry, as I am going to Paris tomorrow for a month, so this is goodbye. I do hope that when you go to Africa you will be wise enough to take all your staunch, loyal satellites with you. It's too dangerous for a little tinsel star to go twinkling off alone and unprotected. Please don't imagine that I haven't enjoyed the circus enormously. I have. But in the circuses I've been to it was always the ringmaster who cracked the whip, not the clowns. Goodbye!

She sweeps out. **Daphne** gives a loud cry and faints dead away. **Lady Saltburn** and **Monica** run to her.

Roland (*exultantly*) This is splendid! Splendid! I feel reborn.

Garry Oh, go to hell!