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GRAPES, DAVID, II. A Production Analysis of Noel Coward's Hay Fever. (1976) Directed by: Mr. Thomas Behm. Pp. 178.

This study traces the development of a production of Noel Coward's Hay Fever from pre-production research to a critical evaluation of the production in performance.

Chapter I contains all pre-production research and artistic decisions made during the pre-production stage.

Chapter II is the production prompt book containing all blocking, motivation, and technical cues.

Chapter III is a critical evaluation of the production.

A PRODUCTION ANALYSIS OF NOEL COWARD'S

HAY FEVER

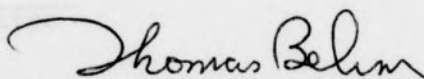
by

David Grapes, II

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1976

Approved by



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of his cast and crew in making Hay Fever such a successful production. A special note of thanks is also extended to the director's thesis committee, especially its chairman, Mr. Tom Behm.

Any endeavors I have successfully accomplished must also be credited to my parents, without whose encouragement and support my education would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

ANALYSIS OF HAY FEVERBackground of Playwright

Noel Pierce Coward was born on the morning of December 16, 1899, at a time when the Boer War was supplying the headlines; Queen Victoria was eighty; and, in Paris, Oscar Wilde was living out the last few months of his life in exile.¹

Coward's father earned a meager living selling pianos and his mother took in boarders to help make ends meet. During the time before his parents' marriage, they acted together in a number of amateur theatricals at the town hall in Teddington. In 1892, soon after their marriage, the Cowards had a son whom they christened Russell. He died at the age of six from spinal meningitis. A year later a second son was born. He was christened Noel, and given the middle name of Pierce after an old school chum of Mrs. Coward.²

With his father frequently away on business, Coward quickly developed a close relationship with his mother, who encouraged him into music and drama. He soon became devoted to her and she was to have an outstanding influence

¹Sheridan Morley, A Talent to Amuse (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1969), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 18.

on the many strong mother figures in his plays.

In the summer of 1910 the young Coward acquired his first acting job as a page boy in a play entitled The Goldfish by Lila Field. He debuted to excellent reviews. The Stage, found him "resourceful in his singing," and the Daily Telegraph thought he gave a "robust debut."³

He learned the technique of acting comedy from Charles Hawtry, one of the first actors in this century to practice a naturalistic style of acting as opposed to the popular declamatory style of Henry Irving. Hawtry once told Coward: "you can not get laughs yourself until you help others to get theirs."⁴ Coward appeared with Hawtry in The Great Name, Where the Rainbow Ends, and A Little Fowl Play. While appearing in Where the Rainbow Ends, he directed his first production, The Daisy Chain, by Dot Temple, and presented it for a group of selected friends.⁵ He soon became recognized as a distinguished child actor and won considerable praise for his performance as Slightly in Peter Pan.

Coward premiered his own three-act play, I'll Leave It to You, in London during the season of 1919 at at the tender age of twenty. The production closed after a modest run of thirty-seven performances, but helped

³Patrick Braybrook Archer, The Amazing Mr. Coward (London, 1933), p. 37.

⁴Morley, p. 37.

⁵Ibid., p. 40.

establish Coward as a playwright of future merit. In this play we can also see the rough drafts for the characters of Sorel and Simon who appear in Hay Fever some four years later.

The year 1921 found Coward in America, poor and lonely. He had ventured to New York in the hope of establishing himself as an actor and writer, but had met with disappointment in both areas. However, that summer did provide him with material for two plays. One was Sirocco, which he wrote after seeing a performance by Eva Le Gallienne as Liliom.⁶

The other play, although not written until sometime after Coward's return to England in 1922, stemmed from a number of evenings he spent as a guest of the famous actress, Laurette Taylor, and her husband, J. Hartley Manners. To be a guest of the Manners was, from Mr. Coward's description, an altogether unnerving experience. They were a highly volatile family, and deeply theatrical. The Manners also took great delight in playing very elaborate word games which had a habit of ending in hysteria with the entire family abandoning their guests to cope as best they could. This unusual behavior provides the foundation for the second act of Hay Fever.⁷

⁶Morley, p. 68.

⁷Braybrooke, p. 60.

Coward made his singing and dancing debut in 1923 with Gertrude Lawrence in a review entitled London Calling. Fred Astaire wrote the arrangements. Coward had met Miss Lawrence some ten years previously on a train to Liverpool where they both were to appear in a production of Hauptmann's Hammele. That encounter was the beginning of a lifelong friendship and one of the most successful stage partnerships in theatrical history.

Having turned his creative talents to writing, Coward had three scripts ready for production by 1924. One was a powerful drama, The Vortex, and the other two were light comedies entitled Hay Fever and Fallen Angels. Norman Macdermott, a successful producer, had shown interest in both The Vortex and Hay Fever for a fall production at the Everyman Theatre in Hampstead. Coward convinced him to produce The Vortex first, for the obvious reason that it contained a great star role for the author.

The Vortex, although a shocking play to the audiences of the mid-twenties, was an immediate success and did much to further Coward's reputation both as an actor and playwright. With The Vortex launched on a successful run, Coward's other two plays went into rapid production. By the end of June 1925, Coward had three plays and a review running simultaneously in the West End. The original production of Hay Fever shall be discussed in detail later in Chapter I.

This director could write volumes on Noel Coward and his many contributions to the theatre from 1920 to 1969, but that is not the purpose of this study. Let it suffice to say that during his six active decades in the theatre, Mr. Coward wrote over sixty major plays and operettas, two hundred pieces of music, a dozen novels, several major films, and established himself as one of the best actors and cabaret performers of the twentieth century.

Background of Play

Coward wrote Hay Fever in 1923, and took it immediately to Marie Tempest in the hope she might want to play the role of Judith. She refused saying: "There is no emotion in it, and though it might be a wonderful part for me, the play itself is too light, too plotless, and is altogether lacking in any kind of action."⁸

However, after Coward's great triumph in The Vortex in 1924, Miss Tempest changed her mind and decided that she would indeed create the role of Judith, on the condition that Coward himself direct.

Hay Fever opened at the Ambassadors Theatre on June 8, 1925, where it remained for 337 performances. Miss Tempest later wrote of that first association with Coward:

⁸Noel Coward, Present Indicative (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1937), p. 86.

"He is the most stimulating person that has come into my life in the last ten years."⁹

The reviews for the original production were mixed. Many critics felt The Vortex to be a much superior play, and felt that Coward had taken a step backward. Others marveled at his flair for comedy as well as serious drama. The general public, however, was in complete agreement and they filled the theatre for over a year.¹⁰

Hay Fever (a meaningless title substituted at the last minute for Oranges and Lemons when a short story of that name was published in 1925) is a modern comedy of "bad manners," that starts with the arrival of four guests, each invited independently by the different members of the Bliss family for a weekend at their country home in Cookham.¹¹

In a twenties version of Albee's memorable parlor game, Get the Guests, the visitors are alternately ignored and embraced, embarrassed, humiliated, and ultimately abandoned to slink away by themselves during a blazing family row.¹²

Mistakenly, many amateur groups assume that because Hay Fever is a comedy with few characters in one set, it must therefore be easy to perform. Coward knew better: "Hay Fever is far and away one of the most difficult plays

⁹Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 105.

¹¹Joe Mitchenion and Raymond Mander, Theatrical Companion to Coward (London: Rockleff Press, 1957), p. 46

¹²Noel Coward, Three Plays by Noel Coward (New York: Delta Press, 1965), p. 4.

to perform that I have ever encountered."¹³ Played to perfection, as it was during a recent revival at the English National Theatre, Hay Fever becomes one of the great light comedies of this century. If not directed and performed well, the audience can easily become bored and painfully aware of how little dramatic action and plot the play contains.

Previous Productions

Other than the original production already mentioned, Hay Fever has had three major Broadway productions, one important revival at the National Theatre, and hundreds of productions in professional stock and repertory companies.

In 1925, Coward came to New York to open The Vortex on Broadway where it received rave reviews. Soon after The Vortex had opened, Hay Fever went into rehearsals with Laura Hope Crews as Judith. This production could be termed a disaster at best, largely due to a managerial policy of precasting the play before reading it. One actress hired to play Myra, the sophisticated English vamp, had a heavy Brooklyn accent and a passion for chewing gum.¹⁴ Because of this and other problems, Miss Crews decided that the only way to save the production was to over-act her role. For her effort she received a severe

¹³Coward, Present Indicative, p. 84.

¹⁴Ibid.

roasting by the critics. The play closed after a brief run.

During the London season of 1933, Hay Fever was revived with Constance Collier as Judith. This production had a successful run until an eye infection almost blinded Miss Collier and forced her to leave the cast.

In comparing the performances of Miss Crews and Miss Collier, one critic wrote:

Miss Constance Collier is excellent. The comedy that she brings to the role of Judith is not subtle but substantial and will prove more successful than the frilliness of Laura Hope Crews.¹⁵

Perhaps the most important production of Hay Fever came in 1964 when it was staged by the National Theatre. In that year, Lawrence Olivier, then director of the National Theatre, saw in Hay Fever one of the minor comedy classics of the Twentieth Century and asked Coward to direct its revival. With this production, Coward became one of only two playwrights to ever receive such an honor in his own lifetime, and the only playwright to ever direct his own work at the National Theatre.¹⁶

Hay Fever, written some forty years earlier, was not the most obvious choice for such a revival. Most critics agree that Private Lives is funnier and Blithe Spirit more typical of the later Coward style. Yet, as Sheridan Morley, one of Coward's best biographers, says:

¹⁵"A Review of Hay Fever," Catholic World 134 (February 1932): 590-591.

¹⁶Braybrooke, p. 208.

"Of all his plays, Hay Fever is the best suited to a talented company playing together in perfect harmony."¹⁷

Originally Diana Wynward was to play Judith in the National's production, but after her tragic death in 1964, the role fell to Dame Edith Evans. The rest of the cast included Maggie Smith as Myra, Robert Stephens as Sandy, Robert Lang as David, and Lynn Redgrave as Jackie.¹⁸

After a brief provincial tour, Hay Fever opened at the Old Vic to some of the best notices Coward ever received. The cast, in particular, all received excellent notices. Coward once remarked of them: "they have given me a group of actors who could play the Albanian telephone directory and make it funny."

One critic wrote of Dame Evan's performance: "As Judith Bliss, Dame Edith Evans swept voluminously about the stage, and dared the audience to realize, strictly speaking, that she was almost twenty years too old for the part."¹⁹

The drama critic for the London Times wrote:

The centerpiece of the evening of course, is Edith Evans's Judith--a bold piece of casting that magnificently justifies itself. Dame Evans makes no attempt to present the "Monstre sacre" of the household of a middle-aged woman. She deliberately offers, and

¹⁷Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Rose Snider, Satire in the Comedies of Congreve, Sheridan, Wilde, and Coward (New York: Brown and Little, 1953), p. 89.

capitalizes on, a ravaged appearance, stamping every line with comic authority. The performance is the ultimate vindication of the play's own contempt for down-to-earth literalism and its celebration of style and art.²⁰

The other stand-out in the cast was Maggie Smith as Myra. The same critic for the London Times wrote of her performance:

Miss Smith's Myra is by far the best performance she has given for the National Theatre. Her appearance, the clenched mouth and gawkily provocative gestures presents a dazzling image of the 20s.²¹

Mr. Coward's notices were equally as good; one critic called it a "glorious production," and another put it well when he stated: "Thin and trivial is what some critics said of this play when it first appeared. So it is, and so is Beethoven's Eighth Symphony."²²

Philosophy of Playwright

Before attempting to justify any stylistic decisions, this director feels compelled to discuss Coward and his basic philosophy of theatre and playwrighting.

Coward once wrote:

I believe that the great public by which I've lived all these years should not be despised or patronized or forced to accept esoteric ideas in the theatre in the name of art, or social problems in the name of culture. I'm sick of the assumption that plays must be important and deal only with an extremely urgent problem.

²⁰"Hay Fever," London Times, 2 December 1964, p. 26.

²¹Ibid.

²²"Hay Fever," Time Magazine, December 1964, pp. 84-

I was brought up in the belief that the theatre is primarily a place of entertainment. The audience wants to laugh or cry or be amused. Swift entertainment--not strange allegories.²³

While Coward is making a strong statement, this director thinks that it is wrong to assume the only value in a production of Hay Fever is entertainment. This director finds a substantial amount of satire within the play and feels that in order to have a successful production, this element of the play must be dealt with.

Coward is not a satirist in the true sense of the word, for he offers no solutions to the problems he presents and his characters make no effort to reform themselves. His goal is to give a realistic portrayal of life, and it just so happens that this section of society in Hay Fever lends itself very well to satire.

In Hay Fever Coward pokes fun at: the manners of the smart set; a woman who will not accept her age; and the various social games that people play with one another. No one in the Bliss household ever says what he means--it is against the rules. Sorel is the only member of the family who is the least bit concerned over the lack of social grace and nonconformity to the usual social customs, but even she is guilty of being rude and playing games with guests.

²³Morely, A Talent to Amuse, p. 45.

Coward lacks the elegant wit of Wilde, but he does recognize that for this type of comedy the main ingredients are still clever insults, inverted commonplaces, and various nonsequiters. His plays also have a uniqueness of style, which lends mileage to his comedy. Some of the most humorous scenes in Hay Fever are those in which Judith slips into the part of one of her long suffering women. The rest of the family, instead of showing surprise or displeasure, simply cooperate with her, for as Sorel remarks to Richard in Act I: "One always plays up to mother, its a sort of unwritten law."

Rose Snider compares the satire of Coward to Wilde in this manner:

Like The Importance of Being Earnest, Hay Fever is satirical without being a satire. Coward enjoys ridiculing the cliches of sentimental romance as much as Wilde does, however, reform is not the motive with Coward, but rather an escape, at least for the moment into a realm of delightful irreverence and irresponsibility. Coward can not always transmit insolence into epigram or the inconsequent into crisis, but he can hold us with the conviction that to be a poseur, to be cruelly rude and egotistical, is to be charming, witty, and altogether superior to the dullards who make up the rest of society.²⁴

The aim of this production is to create an entertaining evening for the audience. We will not attempt to fill them with esoteric ideas, but to make them laugh with us, and perhaps at themselves.

²⁴ Snider, Satire in the Comedies of Congreve, p. 105.

Character Descriptions

Judith

Judith is an actress, frequently retired, whose speciality on stage is portraying long-suffering women. In Judith lies the archetypal Coward mother, exaggerated beyond life, yet still possessing a deep love for her family and a gusto for life, even though she often refers to herself as being beautiful and sad. Judith is very theatrical and slips in and out of many of her different stage roles during the course of the play. She is striking rather than beautiful, and there must be a quality in her personality that commands the audiences attention whenever she is on stage. Judith must be sleek and sophisticated. She never walks into a room, she sweeps. This role will require tremendous amounts of concentration and energy from the actress who plays it.

Sorel

Sorel is much like a younger version of her mother. She, too, is inclined to play up the theatricality of every given situation. Yet, oddly enough, Sorel is the only member of the family who says she cares about their lack of proper social grace. Unfortunately, she does not have the courage to do anything about it. She says she wants to be a "normal bouncing Englishwoman," but given the opportunity, she would never trade places with any of the guests. Sorel is an attractive girl and has the best

features of both her parents. At twenty-one, she is the youngest member of the family.

Simon

Simon is a struggling artist. He draws caricatures, and fancies himself to be a romantic idol to women. He is five years older than his sister, Sorel, and much more content with his situation than she is with hers. He is intelligent, and has a good insight into life, but lacks the desire to go out and make something of himself. He seems quite content to remain at home and play the role of the Bohemian artist. He reflects this in his personal appearance and in his lustful behavior towards Myra.

David

David is the father of this unusual family. He earns a good living by writing cheap, mediocre novels. He enjoys playing the role of the cynical author, laughing up his sleeve at the rest of the world. He likes to observe life before he becomes involved in its games. He is a bit spoiled by his success, and it takes Judith to keep his head from becoming too swelled. David is slightly older than Judith, but has retained his youth very well.

Clara

Clara must also be considered a member of the family since she has been with the family for years, first as Judith's dresser and then later as the family maid. Clara is outspoken and vivacious and has the bad habit of saying exactly what is on her mind. Clara is in her fifties, but appears to be much older. Her size should be either very large or very small to give her a contrast to the other members of the family.

Myra

Coward describes Myra as being a sophisticated vamp. She is beautiful as well as alluring. She is Simon's age, but far more worldly. She gets exactly what she wants, no matter what the cost. Judith says of her, "she uses sex as a sort of shrimping net." She is the only guest who has enough nerve to stand up to the family and call them hypocrites. Yet, she herself is guilty of the same type of behavior. She can see everyone objectively but herself.

Richard

Richard is everything Sorel thinks she would like to be. He is polite and charming and quite respectable. Richard is a diplomat by profession and has acquired the ability to always say the right thing at the right time. He is always the gentleman, remaining noncommittal as

much as possible. He is attracted to Sorel and later to Judith because they represent a type of vitality that he feels he is lacking. He strives to be correct and polite at all times. Richard is only thirty, but has a maturity far beyond his years.

Jackie

Jackie is the character most typical of this period. She is a gum-chewing flapper, cute but dumb. There is a little girl quality about her appearance and personality. She is innocent and thus an easy target for the family. She is perhaps the most likeable character in the play, because she tries so hard to make friends and belong, and she fails so miserably.

Sandy

Sandy is someone we might call a 1920's "jock." He earns a meager living as an amateur boxer and spends what little money he has on theatre tickets and music halls. He is fascinated by their glamor and excitement. He saw Judith while visiting one of the London theatres and decided that he was in love with her. He is very likeable, but slow-witted. He is not stupid, just slow to grasp what is happening around him. He needs to be a definite physical type, to separate him from the other male characters in the show.

The Setting

The set design for Hay Fever must be basically realistic. The setting should provide the director a good basic working area for movement, and still reflect the lives and attitudes of the family who inhabit it.

The setting for the play is the country home of the Bliss family; its furnishings are expensive but worn. The set should be decorated extensively with family memorabilia and personal objects, and their arrangement should give the sense of disorganization. The set should appear untidy, but not dirty.

In the script the playwright calls for a breakfast table to be brought in during the third act to replace the sofa. However, this director would hope that the designer could incorporate a dining area in the set, to eliminate the problems of moving furniture. The playwright has also incorporated two important visual elements into the action of the play. These elements are a baby grand piano, which must be played during the second act, and a staircase leading to the upstairs bedrooms and David's study. Both are important and should not be eliminated by the designer.

Lighting should be bright and realistic and set the mood for a comedy. There should also be practical lighting on the set, which can be used during the second act to help establish a time change from the first act.

Costumes for this production will be a very important visual element. Each costume must make a statement about the personality of the character who wears it. The guests are all to be dressed in very fashionable attire of the period; members of the family can wear almost any style or combination of styles. The exact date for the show shall be chosen after consultation with the scenic and costume designers.

Of vital importance is that all of the visual elements be blended into a harmony of design that will add visual impact to the style and message of Hay Fever. For this reason, the director will personally supervise all design elements, in the hope of effectively establishing a workable communications system between all those involved in this production.

Justification of Script

Hay Fever is one of the best known and most characteristic of Noel Coward's comedies, and yet one of the most difficult to produce. This play requires good actors and a director who has a feel for the unique Coward style. The director considers this play to be one of the few modern comedy classics, and therefore an appealing challenge to direct.

From the moment this director was told he might produce a directing thesis, he knew he wanted to direct a Coward script. He read all of the playwright's major

works and finally decided on Hay Fever for the following reasons: size of cast, the number of excellent roles the show offers for women, the play's adaptability to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Studio Theatre, the challenge it offers the cast and director, and because it provides the opportunity for ensemble work in a unique period and style.

CHAPTER II

PROMPT BOOK

Act I

(AS AUDIENCE ENTERS, MUSIC OF THE 1920s IS HEARD.
THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS LIGHTS FADE.)

(SIMON, IN AN EXTREMELY DIRTY TENNIS SHIRT AND
BAGGY GRAY FLANNEL TROUSERS, IS CROUCHED IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE FLOOR, CUTTING OUT SQUARES FROM CARTRIDGE PAPER.)

(SOREL, MORE NEATLY DRESSED, IS STRETCHED ON THE
SOFA, READING A VERY VIOLENTLY BOUND VOLUME OF POEMS
WHICH HAS BEEN SENT TO HER BY AN ASPIRING FRIEND.)

(MUSIC FADES OUT.)

SOREL

Listen to this, Simon. (She reads.) "Love's a Trollop
stained with wine--Clawing at the breasts of Adolescence--
Nuzzling, tearing, shrieking, beating--God, why were we
fashioned so!" (SHE LAUGHS.)

SIMON

The poor girl's potty.

SOREL

I wish she hadn't sent me the beastly book. (TOSSES BOOK
AT SIMON.) I must say something nice about it.

SIMON

The binding's very dashing. (TOSSES BOOK AT SOREL.)

SOREL

She used to be such fun before she married that gloomy
little man.

SIMON

(LOOKS UP.) She was always a fierce poseuse. It's so silly

of people to try and cultivate the artistic temperament.
Au fond she's just a normal, bouncing Englishwoman.

SOREL

You didn't shave this morning.

SIMON

I know I didn't, but I'm going to in a minute, when I've finished this.

SOREL

I sometimes wish we were more normal and bouncing,
(STANDS, CROSSES RIGHT TO PIANO.) Simon.

SIMON

Why?

SOREL

I should like to be a fresh, open-air girl with a passion
for games.

SIMON

Thank God you're not.

SOREL

It would be so soothing. (STRIKES VERY SOOTHING CHORD.)

SIMON

Not in this house.

(SOREL STRIKES A DISCHORD ON PIANO.)

SOREL

(STEPS LEFT.) Where's mother?

SIMON

In the garden, practising.

SOREL

Practising?

SIMON

She's learning the names of the flowers by heart.

SOREL

What's she up to?

SIMON

I don't know.--Damn! That's crooked.

SOREL

(CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER STAGE.) I always distrust her when she becomes the Squire's lady.

SIMON

So do I.

SOREL

She's been at it hard all day--she tapped the barometer this morning.

SIMON

She's probably got a plan about impressing somebody.

SOREL

I wonder who.

SIMON

Some dreary, infatuated young man will appear soon, I expect.

SOREL

Not today? You don't think she's asked anyone down
(SOREL CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.) today, do you?

SIMON

I don't know. Has father noticed anything?

SOREL

No, (SOREL CROSSES UP TO STAIRS.) he's too immersed in work.

SIMON

Perhaps Clara will know.

(SOREL CROSSES TO COUCH, SITS.

SOREL

Ring for her.

SIMON

(CALLING.) Clara! (SIMON STANDS, CIRCLES UP RIGHT DOOR
TO BEHIND SOREL.)

SOREL

Oh, Simon, I do hope she hasn't asked anyone down today.

SIMON

Why? Have you?

SOREL

Yes.

SIMON

(SLAPS SOREL ON ARM. CROSSLY.) Why on earth didn't you
tell me?

SOREL

I didn't think you'd care one way or another.

SIMON

Who is it?

SOREL

Richard Greatham.

SIMON

How exciting! I've never heard of him. (SIMON CROSSES
AROUND COUCH, SIT.)

SOREL

I shouldn't flaunt your ignorance if I were you--(SOREL
STANDS, CROSSES LEFT, STEPS ON SIMON'S PAPER, STEPS BACK.)
it makes you look silly.

SIMON

Well, that's done.

SOREL

(CROSSES TO SIMON AND HANDS HIM PAPER.) Everybody's heard of Richard Greatham.

SIMON

(AMIABLY.) How lovely for them. (SIMON CRUSHES PAPER, TOSSES IT TO FLOOR AND STANDS.)

SOREL

(CROSSES TO BELOW TABLE.) He's a frightfully well-known diplomatist--I met him at the Mainwarings' dance.

SIMON

He'll need all his diplomacy here. (CROSSES A STEP LEFT.)

SOREL

I warned him not to expect good manners, but I hope you'll be as pleasant to him as you can.

SIMON

(CROSSES LEFT TO SOREL. SPEAKS GENTLY.) I've never met any diplomatists, Sorel, but as a class I'm extremely prejudiced against them. They're so suave and polished and debonair.

SOREL

You could be a little more polished without losing caste.

SIMON

Will he have the papers with him?

SOREL

What papers?

SIMON

(VAGUELY.) Oh, any papers.

SOREL

(CROSSES RIGHT TO COUCH, SIT.) I wish you'd confine your biting irony to your caricatures, Simon.

SIMON

And I wish you'd confine your girlish infatuations to London, and not force them on your defenseless family.

SOREL

I shall keep him out of your way as much as possible.

SIMON

Do, darling.

(CLARA ENTERS, DUSTING AND SINGING.)

SIMON

Clara, has mother asked anyone down this week-end?

CLARA

(CROSSES LEFT TO SIMON, ABOVE RIGHT CHAIR.) I don't know, dear. There's isn't much food in the house, and Amy's got toothache.

SOREL

I've got some oil of cloves somewhere.

CLARA

(CROSSES RIGHT TO SOREL AT COUCH.) She tried that, but it only burnt her tongue. The poor girl's been writhing about in the scullery like one o'clock. (CLARA CROSSES RIGHT TO PIANO.)

SOREL

You haven't forgotten to put those flowers in the Japanese rooms?

SIMON

The Japanese room is essentially feminine, and entirely unsuited to the Pet of the Foreign Office.

SOREL

Shut up, Simon.

CLARA

The room looks lovely, dear--you needn't worry.
(CLARA PICKS UP SIMON'S PAPER, LOOKS, FINISHES CROSS TO PIANO.) Just like you mother's dressing-room on a first night.

SIMON

How restful!

CLARA

(TO SOREL.) Have you told her about your boy friend?
(CLARA CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.)

SOREL

(PAINED.) Not boy friend, Clara.

CLARA

(GOING ROUND, PICKING UP THINGS.) Oh, well, whatever he is.

SIMON

I think Sorel's beginning to be ashamed of us all, Clara--
I don't altogether blame her; we are very slapdash.

CLARA

(CROSSES LEFT TO SIMON AT TABLE.) Are you going to leave that picture in the guests' bathroom, dear? I don't know if it's quite the thing--lots of pink, naked women rolling about in a field.

SIMON

(SEVERELY.) Nudity can be very beautiful, Clara.

CLARA

Oh, can it! Perhaps being a dresser for so long 'as spoilt me eye for it. (CLARA GIVES PAPER TO SIMON. EXITS UP ALONG RIGHT WALL.)

SIMON

(TAKES A FEW STEPS RIGHT TO SOREL AROUND TABLE.) Clara's looking tired. We ought to have more servants and not depend on her so much.

SOREL

You know we can never keep them. You're right about us being slapdash, Simon. I wish we weren't.

SIMON

Does it matter? (SIMON SITS IN CHAIR AND PUTS DRAWING IN FRAME.)

SOREL

It must, I think--to other people.

SIMON

It's not our fault--it's the way we've been brought up.

SOREL

Well, if we're clever enough to realize that, we ought to be clever enough to change ourselves.

SIMON

I'm not sure that I want to.

SOREL

We're so awfully bad-mannered.

SIMON

Not to people we like.

SOREL

The people we like put up with it because they like us.

SIMON

(CROSSES ABOVE SOREL TO THE PIANO.)
What do you mean, exactly, by bad manners? Lack of social tricks and small-talk?

SOREL

We never attempt to look after people when they come here.

SIMON

Why should we? It's loathsome being looked after.

SOREL

Yes, but people like little attentions. We've never once asked anyone if they've slept well.

SIMON

I consider that an impertinence, anyhow.

SOREL

I'm going to try to improve.

SIMON

(CROSSES DOWN TO CHAIR AND SITS.) You're only going on like this because you've got a mania for a diplomatist. You'll soon return to normal.

SOREL

(EARNESTLY.) Abnormal, Simon--that's what we are.
(SOREL SITS ON LEFT END OF COUCH.) Abnormal. People stare in astonishment when we say what we consider perfectly ordinary things. I just remarked at Freda's lunch the other day how nice it would be if some one invented something to make all our faces go up like the Chinese, because I was so bored with them going down--and they all thought I was mad!

SIMON

It's no use worrying, darling; we see things differently, I suppose, and if people don't like it they must lump it.
(SIMON CROSSES BEHIND COUCH AND PUTS HAND ON SOREL'S SHOULDER.)

(JUDITH ENTERS FROM GARDEN. SHE IS CARRYING AN ARMFUL OF FLOWERS AND WEARING A TEAGOWN, A LARGE GARDEN HAT, GAUNTLET GLOVES, AND GALOSHES. SHE CROSSES TO CENTER.)

JUDITH

You look awfully dirty, Simon. What have you been doing?

SIMON

(NONCHALANTLY.) Not washing very much.

JUDITH

You should, darling, really. It's so bad for your skin to leave things about on it.

SOREL

Clara says Amy's got toothache.

JUDITH

Poor dear! There's some oil of cloves in my medicine cupboard. Who is Amy?

SOREL

The scullery maid, I think.

JUDITH

How extraordinary! She doesn't look Amy a bit, does she? Much more Flossie. (JUDITH CROSSES TO TABLE AND SITS ON RIGHT CHAIR.) --Give me a cigarette. (SIMON CROSSES TO PIANO FOR CIGARETTE.) Delphiniums are those stubby red flowers, aren't they?

SIMON

No, darling, they're tall and blue. (CROSSES BACK TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

Yes, of course. The red ones are somebody's name (SIMON KNEELS AND REMOVES JUDITH'S GALOSHES.) --asters, that's it. I knew it was something opulent. I do hope Clara has remembered about the Japanese room.

SOREL

Japanese room!

JUDITH

Yes; I told her to put some flowers in it and take Simon's flannels out of the wardrobe drawer.

SOREL

So did I.

JUDITH

(STANDS. SAYS OMINOUSLY.) Why?

SOREL

(AIRLY.) I've asked Richard Greatham down for the week-end--I didn't think you'd mind.

JUDITH

(CROSSES TO SOREL ON COUCH.) Mind! How dared you do such a thing?

SOREL

He's a diplomatist.

JUDITH

That makes it much worse. (JUDITH CROSSES ABOVE TABLE AND ARRANGES FLOWERS.) We must wire and put him off at once.

SOREL

It's too late.

JUDITH

Well, we'll tell Clara to say we've been called away.

SOREL

That would be extremely rude, and, anyhow, I want to see him.

JUDITH

You mean to sit there in cold blood and tell me you've asked a complete stranger down for the week-end, and that you want to see him!

SOREL

I've often done it before.

JUDITH

I fail to see how that helps matters. Where's he going to sleep?

SOREL

The Japanese room.

JUDITH

(CROSSES TO UP STAGE TABLE, PLACES FLOWER.) Oh no, he isn't--Sandy Tyrell is sleeping in it.

SIMON

There now! What did I tell you?

SOREL

Sandy--what?

JUDITH

Tyrell, dear.

SIMON

Why didn't you tell us, mother? (SIMON STANDS.)

JUDITH

I did. I've talked of nothing but Sandy Tyrell for days. I adore Sandy Tyrell.

SIMON

You've never mentioned him. (SIMON PUTS JUDITH'S GALOSHES IN CORNER LEFT.)

SOREL

Who is he, mother?

JUDITH

(CROSSES TO PIANO, PLACES FLOWER.) He's a perfect darling, and madly in love with me--at least, it isn't me really, it's my Celebrated Actress glamour--but it gives me a divinely cozy feeling. I met him at Nora Trent's.

SOREL

Mother, I wish you'd give up this sort of thing. (SOREL STANDS, CROSSES TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

What exactly do you mean by "this sort of thing," Sorel?

SOREL

You know perfectly well what I mean.

JUDITH

Are you attempting to criticize me?

SOREL

I should have thought you'd be above encouraging silly, callow young men who are infatuated by your name.

JUDITH

(CROSSES TO COFFEE TABLE AND PLACES A FLOWER.) That may be true, but I shall allow nobody but myself to say it. I hoped you'd grow up a good daughter to me, not a critical aunt. (JUDITH TAKES STEP LEFT.)

SOREL

(CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR AND SITS.) It's so terribly cheap.

JUDITH

Cheap! Nonsense! What about your diplomatist?

SOREL

Surely that's a little different, dear?

JUDITH

(CROSSES RIGHT TO SOREL.) If you mean that because you happen to be a vigorous ingenue of nineteen you have the complete monopoly of any amorous adventure there may be about, I feel it my firm duty to disillusion you.

SOREL

But, mother--

JUDITH

Anyone would think I was eighty, the way you go on.
(JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.) It was a great mistake
not sending you to boarding schools, and you coming back
and me being your elder sister.

SIMON

It wouldn't have been any use. Everyone knows we're your
son and daughter.

JUDITH

(CROSSES TO SIMON AT TABLE.) Only because I was stupid
enough to dandle you about in front of cameras when you
were little. I knew I should regret it.

SIMON

I don't see any point in trying to be younger than you are.

JUDITH

At your age, dear, it would be indecent if you did.

SOREL

But, mother darling, don't you see, it's awfully undigni-
fied for you to go flaunting about with young men?

JUDITH

(CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.) I don't flaunt about--I
never have. I've been morally an extremely nice woman all
my life--more or less--and if dabbling gives me pleasure,
I don't see why I shouldn't dabble.

SOREL

(CROSSES TO JUDITH AT COUCH AND SITS.) But it oughtn't
to give you pleasure any more.

JUDITH

You know, Sorel, you grow more damnably feminine every
day. I wish I'd brought you up differently.

SOREL

I'm proud of being feminine.

JUDITH

(KISSING HER.) You're a darling, and I adore you; and you're very pretty, and I'm madly jealous of you.

SOREL

(WITH HER ARMS ROUND HER.) Are you really? How lovely.

JUDITH

You will be nice to Sandy, won't you?

SOREL

(BREAKING AWAY.) Can't he sleep in "Little Hell"?

JUDITH

My dear, he's frightfully athletic, and all those hot-water pipes will sap his vitality.

SOREL

They'll sap Richard's vitality too.

JUDITH

He won't notice them; he's probably used to scorching tropical embassies with punkahs waving and everything.

SIMON

He's sure to be deadly, anyhow.

SOREL

You're getting far too blase and exclusive, Simon.

SIMON

Nothing of the sort. Only I loathe being hearty with
(SIMON TAKES A STEP RIGHT.) your men friends.

SOREL

You've never been even civil to any of my friends, men or women.

JUDITH

Don't bicker.

SIMON

Anyhow, the Japanese room's a woman's room, and (SIMON CROSSES TO PIANO. MOMENT TO JUDITH AND SOREL. LIGHTS CIGARETTE.) a woman ought to have it.

JUDITH

I promised it to Sandy--he loves anything Japanese.

SIMON

So does Myra. (SIMON AT PIANO.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH STANDS.) Myra!

SIMON

Myra Arundel. I've asked her down. (SIMON CROSSES TO DOWN-STAGE CHAIR.)

JUDITH

You've--what?

SIMON

I've asked Myra down for the week-end--she's awfully amusing.

SOREL

Well, all I can say is, it's beastly of you. You might have warned me. What on earth will Richard say?

SIMON

Something exquisitely non-committal, I expect.

JUDITH

This is too much! (JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) Do you mean to tell me, Simon--

SIMON

(FIRMLY.) Yes, mother, I do. I've asked Myra down, and I have a perfect right to. (SIMON SITS.) You've always brought us up to be free about things.

JUDITH

Myra Arundel is straining freedom to its utmost limits.

SIMON

Don't you like her?

JUDITH

No, dear, I detest her. (JUDITH STEPS RIGHT.) She's far too old for you, and she goes about using Sex as a sort of shrimping net.

SIMON

Really, mother--!

JUDITH

It's no use being cross. You know perfectly well I dislike her, and that's why you never told me she was coming until too late to stop her. (JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) It's intolerable of you.

SOREL

(GRANDLY.) Whether she's here or not is a matter of extreme indifference to me, but I'm afraid Richard won't like her very much.

SIMON

You're afraid he'll like her too much.

SOREL

That was an offensive remark, Simon, and rather silly.

JUDITH

(PLAINTIVELY.) Why on earth don't you fall in love with nice young girls, instead of self-conscious vampires?

SIMON

She's not a vampire, (SIMON STANDS--CROSSES TO TABLE UP-STAGE.) and I never said I was in love with her.

SOREL

He's crazy about her. She butters him up and admires his sketches.

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES DOWN TO CENTER.) What about you picking up old gentlemen at dances?

SOREL

(FURIOUSLY.) He's not old!

JUDITH

You've both upset me thoroughly. (JUDITH SITS AT TABLE.) I wanted a nice, restful week-end, with moments of Sandy's ingenuous affection to warm the cockles of my heart when I felt in the mood, and now the house is going to be full of discord--not enough food, everyone fighting for the bath--perfect agony! I wish I were dead!

SIMON

(SIMON STEPS LEFT.) You needn't worry about Myra and me. We shall keep out of everyone's way.

SOREL

I shall take Richard on the river all day tomorrow.

JUDITH

In what?

SOREL

The punt.

JUDITH

I absolutely forbid you to go near the punt.

SIMON

It's sure to rain, anyhow.

JUDITH

What your father will say I tremble to think. He needs complete quiet to finish off The Sinful Woman.

SOREL

I see no reason for there to be any noise, unless Sandy
What's-his-name is given to shouting.

JUDITH

If you're rude to Sandy I shall be extremely angry.

SOREL AND SIMON

(TOGETHER. JUDITH CROSSES TO SIMON AND SOREL.) Now, look
here, mother--Why you should expect--

JUDITH

He's coming all the way down specially to be nice to me--

DAVID

Why are you all making such a noise? (DAVID ENTERS AND
CROSSES LEFT AT TOP OF STAIRS.)

JUDITH

I think I'm going mad. (SIMON CROSSES RIGHT TO PIANO.)

DAVID

Why hasn't Clara brought me my tea?

JUDITH

I don't know.

DAVID

Where is Clara?

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO STAIRS.) Do stop firing questions at
me, David.

DAVID

Why are you all so irritable? What's happened?

CLARA

(CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES UP STAIRS WITH A TRAY OF TEA FOR ONE.) Here's your tea. I'm sorry I'm late with it. Amy forgot to put the kettle on--she's got terrible toothache.

DAVID

Poor girl! Give her some oil of cloves.

SOREL

(SOREL STANDS AND CROSSES TO DOWNSTAGE CHAIR.) If anyone else mentions oil of cloves, I shall do something desperate.

DAVID

It's wonderful stuff. Where's Zoe?

SIMON

She was in the garden this morning.

DAVID

I suppose no one thought of giving her any lunch?

CLARA

I put it down by the kitchen table as usual, but she never came for it.

SOREL

She's probably mousing.

DAVID

She isn't old enough yet. She might have fallen into the river, for all you care. I think it's a shame!

CLARA

Don't you worry your head--(CLARA ON LANDING CROSSES DOWN THE STAIRS AND EXITS.) Zoe won't come to any harm; she's too wily.

DAVID

I don't want to be disturbed. (HE TAKES HIS TRAY AND GOES UPSTAIRS; THEN HE TURNS.) Listen, Simon. There's a perfectly sweet flapper coming down by the four-thirty. Will

you go and meet her and be nice to her? She's an abject fool, but a useful type, and I want to study her a little in domestic surroundings. She can sleep in the Japanese room. (DAVID CROSSES UP STAIRS AND EXITS, LEAVING BEHIND HIM A DEATHLY SILENCE.)

JUDITH

I should like some one to play something very beautiful to me on the piano.

SIMON

Damn everything! Damn! Damn! Damn! (SIMON CROSSES LEFT.)

SOREL

Swearing doesn't help.

SIMON

It helps me a lot.

SOREL

What does father mean by going on like that?

JUDITH

(JUDITH SITS ON LEFT END OF COUCH.) In view of the imminent reception, you'd better go and shave, Simon.

SOREL

(BURSTING INTO TEARS OF RAGE.) It's perfectly beastly! (SOREL CROSSES TO JUDITH AT COUCH.) Whenever I make any sort of plan about anything it's always done in by some one. I wish I were earning by own living somewhere--a free agent--able to do whatever I like without (SOREL TAKES A STEP RIGHT.) being cluttered up and frustrated by the family--(SOREL CROSSES BACK TO COUCH AND SITS.)

JUDITH

(PICTURESQUELY.) It grieves me to hear you say that, Sorel.

SOREL

Don't be infuriating, mother.

JUDITH

(SADLY.) A change has come over my children of late. I have tried to shut my eyes to it, but in vain. At my time of life one must face bitter facts!

SIMON

(SIMON SITS ON THE FLOOR NEXT TO JUDITH.) This is going to be the blackest Saturday till Monday we've ever spent.

JUDITH

(TENDERLY.) Sorel, you mustn't cry.

SOREL

Don't sympathize with me; it's only temper.

JUDITH

(CLASPING HER.) Put your head on my shoulder, dear.

SIMON

(BITTERLY.) Your head like the golden fleece . . .

SOREL

Richard'll have to have "Little Hell" and that horrible flapper the Japanese room.

JUDITH

Over my dead body!

SIMON

Mother, what are we to do?

JUDITH

(DRAWING HIM FORCIBLY INTO HER ARMS SO THAT THERE IS A CHARMING LITTLE MOTHERLY PICTURE, JUDITH PULLS SIMON'S HEAD TO HER KNEE--POSE--SEE FIGURE 1.) We must all be very, very kind to everyone!

SIMON

Now then, mother, none of that!



Figure 1

JUDITH

(AGGRIEVED.) I don't know what you mean, Simon.

SIMON

(SIMON PULLS HIS HEAD AWAY.) You were being beautiful and sad.

JUDITH

But I am beautiful and sad.

SIMON

You're not particularly beautiful, darling, and you never were.

JUDITH

Never mind; I made thousands think I was.

SIMON

And as for being sad--

JUDITH

Now, Simon, I will not be dictated to like this. If I say I'm sad, I am sad. You don't understand, because you're precocious and tiresome. . . . There comes a time in all women's lives--

SOREL

Oh dear!

JUDITH

What did you say, Sorel?

SOREL

(RECOVERING, SOREL STANDS.) I said, "Oh dear!"

JUDITH

Well, please don't say it again, because it annoys me.

SOREL

You're such a lovely hypocrite.

JUDITH

(JUDITH STANDS, CASTING UP HER EYES.) I'm sure I don't know what I've done to be cursed with such ungrateful children. It's very cruel at my time of life--

SIMON

There you go again!

JUDITH

(INCONSEQUENTLY.) You're getting far too tall, Sorel.

SOREL

(SOREL SITS.) Sorry, mother.

JUDITH

Give me another of those disgusting cigarettes--(SIMON CROSSES RIGHT TO COFFEE TABLE AND BACK TO JUDITH.) I (JUDITH CROSSES TO TABLE.) don't know where they came from.

SIMON

(GIVING HER ONE.) Here. (HE LIGHTS IT FOR HER.)

JUDITH

I'm going to forget entirely about all these dreadful people arriving. My mind henceforward shall be a blank on the subject.

SOREL

It's all very fine, mother, but--

JUDITH

I made a great decision this morning.

SIMON

What kind of decision?

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO STAIRS.) It's a secret.

SOREL

Aren't you going to tell us?

JUDITH

Of course. I meant it was a secret from your father.

SIMON

What is it?

JUDITH

(JUDITH TAKES A STEP UP STAIRS--POSE.) I'm going back to the stage.

SIMON

I knew it!

JUDITH

I'm stagnating here. I won't stagnate as long as there's breath left in my body.

SOREL

Do you think it's wise? You retired so very finally last year. What excuse will you give for returning so soon?

JUDITH

My public, dear--letters from my public!

SIMON

Have you had any?

JUDITH

One or two. That's what decided me, really--I ought to have had hundreds.

SOREL

(SOREL STANDS AND CROSSES UP TO SIMON.) We'll write some lovely ones, and you can publish them in the papers.

JUDITH

Of course.

SOREL

You will be dignified about it all, won't you, darling?

JUDITH

I'm much more dignified on the stage than in the country-- it's my milieu. I've tried terribly hard to be "landed gentry," but without any real success. I long for excitement and glamour. Think of the thrill of a first night; all those ardent playgoers faces, receptive and exultant-- emitting queer little inarticulate noises as some witty line tickles their fancy. The satisfied grunt of the Daily Mail, the abandoned gurgle of the Sunday Times, and the shrill, enthusiastic scream of the Daily Express! I can distinguish them all--

SIMON

Have you got a play?

JUDITH

I think I shall revive "Love's Whirlwind."

SOREL

Oh, mother! (SHE GURGLES WITH LAUGHTER.)

SIMON

(WEAKLY.) Father will be furious.

JUDITH

I can't help that.

SOREL

It's such a fearful play.

JUDITH

It's a marvelous part. You mustn't say too much against it, Sorel. I'm willing to laugh at it a little myself, but, after all, it was one of my greatest successes.

SIMON

Oh, it's appalling--but I love it. It makes me laugh.

JUDITH

The public love it too, and it doesn't make them laugh--much. (SHE RECITES AND CROSSES UP TO LANDING.) "You are a fool, a blind, pitiable fool. You think because you have bought my body that you have bought my soul!" You must say that's dramatic.--"I've dreamed of love like this, but I never realized, I never knew how beautiful it could be in reality!" That line always brought a tear to my eye.

SIMON

The second act is the best, there's no doubt about that.

JUDITH

From the moment Victor comes in it's strong--tremendously strong. . . . (JUDITH CROSSES DOWN TO SOREL.) Be Victor a minute, Sorel--

SOREL

Do you mean when he comes in at the end of the act?

JUDITH

Yes, you know--"Is this a game?"

SOREL

(WITH FEELING.) "Is this a game?"

JUDITH

(WITH SPIRIT.) "Yes--and a game that must be played to (JUDITH CROSSES UP TO THE LANDING.) the finish."

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES TO BELOW JUDITH ON THE LANDING.) "Zara, what does this mean?"

JUDITH

"So many illusions shattered--so many dreams trodden in the dust!"

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS RIGHT.) I'm George now--"I don't understand! You and Victor--My God!"

JUDITH

"Sssh! Isn't that little Pam crying?"

SIMON

(SAVAGELY.) "She'll cry more, poor mite, when she realizes her mother is a --"

(THE DOORBELL RINGS.)

JUDITH

Damn! There's the bell.

SOREL

I look hideous!

(SOREL CROSSES TO MIRROR, THEN TO PIANO.)

SIMON

(CLARA ENTERS FROM STAIRWAY. EXITS. ENTERS.)

Yes, dear.

JUDITH

Clara--before you open the door--we shall be eight for dinner.

(JUDITH CROSSES DOWN STAIRS.)

CLARA

(ON.) My God!

SIMON

And for breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner tomorrow.

JUDITH

(VAGUELY.) Will you get various rooms ready?

CLARA

I shall have to--they can't sleep in the passage.

(CLARA EXITS AT DOOR.)

SOREL

How we've upset Clara.

JUDITH

It can't be helped--nothing can be helped. It's fate--everything that happens is fate. (JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO SIMON.) That's always a great comfort to me.

CLARA

(CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES TO JUDITH.)

More like arrant selfishness.

JUDITH

You mustn't be pert, Clara.

CLARA

Pert I may be, but I 'ave got some thought for others. Eight for dinner--Amy going home early. It's more nor less than an imposition.

(THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.)

SIMON

Hadn't you better let them all in?

(CLARA EXITS TO DOOR.)

(CLARA GOES TO THE FRONT DOOR AND ADMITS SANDY TYRELL, WHO IS A FRESH-LOOKING MAN; HE HAS AN UNSPOILED, YOUTHFUL SENSE OF HONOR AND RATHER BIG HANDS, OWING TO A MISPLACED ENTHUSIASM FOR AMATEUR BOXING.)

SANDY

(TO JUDITH.) I say, it's perfectly ripping of you to let me (SANDY ENTERS AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO JUDITH.) come down.

JUDITH

Are you alone?

SANDY

(SURPRISED.) Yes.

JUDITH

I mean, you didn't meet anyone at the station?

SANDY

I motored down; my car's outside. Would you like me to meet anybody?

JUDITH

Oh no. I must introduce you. (JUDITH AND SANDY CROSS TO SOREL AT COUCH.) This is my daughter Sorel, and my son Simon.

SANDY

(SHAKING HANDS.) How-do-you-do.

SOREL

(COLDLY.) I'm extremely well, thank you, and I hope you are.

(SIMON AND SOREL EXIT UP STAIRS.)

SIMON

So do I.

(THEY BOTH GO UPSTAIRS RATHER GRANDLY. SANDY LOOKS SHATTERED.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO STAIRS.) You must forgive me for having rather peculiar (JUDITH CROSSES TO SANDY.) children. Have you got a bag or anything?

SANDY

Yes; it's in the car.

JUDITH

We'd better leave it there for the moment, as Clara has to get the tea. We'll find you a room afterwards.

SANDY

I've been looking forward to this most awfully.

JUDITH

It is nice, isn't it? (JUDITH AND SANDY CROSS TO WINDOW. THEY STOP AT TABLE.) You can see as far as Marlow on a clear day, they tell me.

SANDY

I meant I've been looking forward to seeing you.

JUDITH

How perfectly sweet of you. Would you like a drink?

SANDY

(SANDY TAKES A STEP BACK, SPARRING.)

No thanks. I'm in training.

JUDITH

How lovely. What for?

SANDY

I'm boxing again in a couple of weeks.

JUDITH

I must come to your first night. (JUDITH CROSSES TO SANDY.)

SANDY

(SANDY STEPS DOWN TO COUCH.) You look simply splendid.

JUDITH

I'm so glad. (JUDITH CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.) You know, you mustn't mind if Simon and Sorel insult you a little-- they've been very bad-tempered lately.

SANDY

It's awfully funny you having a grown-up son and daughter at all. I can hardly believe it. (SANDY CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS OPPOSITE OF JUDITH.)

JUDITH

(QUICKLY.) I was married very young.

SANDY

I don't wonder. You know, it's frightfully queer the way I've been planning to know you for ages, and I never did until last week.

JUDITH

I liked you from the first, really, because you're such a nice shape.

SANDY

(SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED.) Oh, I see . . .

JUDITH

Small hips and lovely broad shoulders--I wish Simon had smaller hips. Do you think you could teach him to box?

SANDY

Rather--if he likes.

JUDITH

That's just the trouble--I'm afraid he won't like. He's so dreadfully un--that sort of thing. You must use your influence subtly. I'm sure David would be pleased.

SANDY

Who's David?

JUDITH

My husband.

SANDY

(SURPRISED.) Oh!

JUDITH

Why do you say "Oh" like that? Didn't you know I had a husband?

SANDY

I thought he was dead.

JUDITH

No, he's not dead; he's upstairs. (LOOKS TO STAIRS.)

SANDY

You're quite different from what you were the other day.

JUDITH

It's this garden hat--I'll take it off. (JUDITH REMOVES THE HAT.) There. I've been pruning the calceolarias.

SANDY

(PUZZLED.) Oh?--

JUDITH

I love my garden, you know--it's so peaceful and quaint. I spend long days dreaming away in it--you know how one dreams.

SANDY

Oh yes.

JUDITH

(WARMING UP.) I always longed to leave the brittle glamour of cities and theaters and find rest in some Old World nook. That's why we came to Cookham.

SANDY

It's awfully nice--Cookham.

JUDITH

Have you ever seen me on the stage?

SANDY

Rather!

JUDITH

What in?

SANDY

That thing when you pretended to cheat at cards to save your husband's good name.

JUDITH

Oh, "The Bold Deceiver." That play was never quite right.

SANDY

You were absolutely wonderful. That was when I first fell in love with you.

JUDITH

(DELIGHTED.) Was it, really?

SANDY

Yes; you were so frightfully pathetic and brave.

JUDITH

(BASKING.) Was I?

SANDY

Rather! (THERE IS A PAUSE.)

JUDITH

Well, go on. . . .

SANDY

(SANDY STANDS AND TAKES A STEP LEFT.)

I feel such a fool, telling you what I think, as though it mattered.

JUDITH

Of course it matters--to me, anyhow.

SANDY

Does it--honestly?

JUDITH

Certainly.

SANDY

(SANDY CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.)

It seems too good to be true--sitting here and talking as though we were old friends.

JUDITH

We are old friends--we probably met in another life. Reincarnation, you know--fascinating!

SANDY

You do say ripping things.

JUDITH

Do I? Give me a cigarette (SANDY GIVES JUDITH A CIGARETTE-- DOES NOT LIGHT IT UNTIL AFTER PAUSE.) and let's put our feet up.

SANDY

(SANDY GIVES JUDITH CIGARETTE AND PUTS FEET ON THE COUCH.)
All right.

JUDITH

Can you punt?

SANDY

Yes--a bit.

JUDITH

You must teach Simon--he always gets the pole stuck.

SANDY

I'd rather teach you.

JUDITH

You're so gallant and chivalrous--much more like an American than an Englishman.

SANDY

I should like to go on saying nice things to you forever.

JUDITH

Sandy! (THERE COMES A LOUD RING AT THE BELL. JUDITH JUMPS.) There now! (JUDITH AND SANDY SIT UP.)

SANDY

Is anyone else coming to stay?

JUDITH

Anyone else! You don't know-- (JUDITH STANDS AND CROSSES BEHIND THE COUCH TO BESIDE SANDY.) you just don't know.

SANDY

(MYRA ENTERS.)

You said it would be quite quiet, with nobody at all.

JUDITH

I was wrong. It's going to be very noisy, with herds of angry people stamping about. Give me my hat!

(MYRA ARUNDEL ENTERS, CONSCIOUSLY WELL DRESSED, WITH SEVERAL SUITCASES AND A TENNIS RACQUET.)

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO CENTER. ADVANCING.) Judith--my--dear-- this is divine!

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO DOOR. EMPTY.) Too, too lovely.--
(JUDITH CROSSES TO MYRA.) Where are the others?

MYRA

What others?

JUDITH

Did you come by the four-thirty?

MYRA

Yes.

JUDITH

Didn't you see anyone at the station?

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) Yes; several people, but I didn't know they were coming here.

JUDITH

Well, they are.

MYRA

Sorel said it was going to be just ourselves this week-end.

JUDITH

(SHARPLY.) Sorel?

MYRA

Yes--didn't she tell you she'd asked me? Weren't you expecting me?

JUDITH

Simon mentioned something about your coming, but Sorel didn't mention it. (JUDITH TAKES A STEP LEFT.) Wasn't that odd of her?

MYRA

You're a divinely mad family. (MYRA CROSSES TO SANDY. SANDY STANDS. TO SANDY.) How-do-you-do? It's useless to wait for introductions with the Blisses. My name's Myra Arundel.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES DOWN TO BETWEEN MYRA AND SANDY. AIRILY.)

Sandy Tyrell, Myra Arundel; Myra Arundel, Sandy Tyrell. There.

MYRA

Is that your car outside?

SANDY

Yes.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES LEFT.) Well, Judith, I do think you might have told me someone was motoring down. A nice car would have been so much more comfortable than that beastly train.

JUDITH

I never knew you were coming until a little while ago.

MYRA

(MYRA STEPS LEFT TO WINDOW.) It's heavenly here--after London. The heat was terrible when I left. You look awfully well, Judith. Rusticating obviously agrees with you.

JUDITH

I'm glad you think so. Personally, I feel that a nervous breakdown is imminent.

MYRA

My dear, how ghastly! What's the matter?

JUDITH

Nothing's the matter yet, Myra, but I have presentiments. Come upstairs, Sandy, and I'll show you your room.

(JUDITH AND SANDY CROSS UP STAIRS. THEN SHE TURNS.)

I'll send Simon down to you. He's shaving, I think, but you won't mind that, will you?

(JUDITH AND SANDY EXIT UP STAIRS.)

(MYRA MAKES A SLIGHT GRIMACE AFTER HER. MYRA CROSSES BEHIND COUCH TO PIANO DRAWING BUS. SIMON COMES DOWNSTAIRS VERY FAST, PUTTING ON HIS COAT. HE HAS APPARENTLY FINISHED HIS TOILET. SIMON ENTERS FROM STAIRS CROSSES LEFT TO MYRA, GRABS HER AND SPINS HER AROUND.)

SIMON

Myra, this is marvelous! (HE TRIES TO KISS HER.)

MYRA

(PUSHING HIM AWAY.) No, Simon dear; it's too hot.
(MYRA STEPS LEFT.)

SIMON

You look beautifully cool.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO LEFT END OF COUCH.) I'm more than cool really, but it's not climatic coolness. I've been mentally chilled to the marrow by Judith's attitude.

SIMON

Why, what did she say? (SIMON STEPS LEFT TO COUCH.)

MYRA

Nothing very much. She was bouncing about on the sofa with a hearty young thing in flannels, and seemed to resent my appearance rather. (MYRA CIRCLES AROUND COUCH AND SITS.)

SIMON

You mustn't take any notice of mother.

MYRA

I'll try not to, but it's difficult.

SIMON

(SIMON STEPS LEFT AND SITS ON ARM OF COUCH.) She adores you, really.

MYRA

I'm sure she does.

SIMON

She's annoyed to-day because father and Sorel have been asking people down without telling her. (SIMON STEPS RIGHT TO MYRA AND SITS.)

MYRA

(MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES RIGHT.) Poor dear! I quite see why.

SIMON

You look enchanting.

MYRA

Thank you, Simon.

SIMON

Are you pleased to see me? (SIMON POSES.)

MYRA

Of course. That's why I came.

SIMON

Darling!

MYRA

Sssh! Don't shout.

SIMON

(SIMON SLIDES OFF COUCH TO KNEES AND GRABS MYRA.) I feel most colossally temperamental--I should like to kiss you and kiss you and kiss you and break everything in the house and then jump into the river.

MYRA

Dear Simon!

SIMON

You're everything I want you to be--absolutely everything. Marvelous clothes, marvelous looks, marvelous brain--Oh, God, it's terrible. . . .

MYRA

I dined with Charlie Templeton last night. (SIMON RELEASES MYRA AND MYRA CROSSES UP TO PIANO.)

SIMON

(SIMON, ON KNEES, DOES IMITATION OF TEMPLETON.) Well, you're a devil. You only did it to annoy me. He's far too plump, and he can't do anything but dither about the Embassy in badly cut trousers. (SIMON STANDS AND CROSSES LEFT.) You loathe him, really; you know you do--you're too intelligent not to. You couldn't like him and me at the same time--it's impossible! (SIMON STEPS RIGHT TO CENTER.)

MYRA

Don't be so conceited.

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES RIGHT TO MYRA.) Darling--I adore you.

MYRA

That's right.

SIMON

(SIMON TURNS AWAY AND CROSSES TO COUCH.) But you're callous--that's what it is, callous! You don't care a damn. You don't love me a bit, do you?

MYRA

Love's a very big word, Simon.

SIMON

It isn't--it's tiny. What are we to do?

MYRA

What do you mean?

SIMON

We can't go on like this.

MYRA

I'm not going on like anything.

SIMON

Yes, you are; you're going on like Medusa, and there are awful snakes popping their heads out at me from under your hat--(SIMON CROSSES DOWN TO RIGHT CORNER OF COUCH AND SITS.) I shall be turned to stone in a minute, and then you'll be sorry.

MYRA

(LAUGHING.) You're very sweet, and I'm very fond of you.
(MYRA CROSSES TO SIMON.)

SIMON

Tell me what you've been doing--everything.

MYRA

Nothing.

SIMON

(SIMON STANDS AND CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) What did you do after you'd dined with Charlie Templeton?

MYRA

Supped with Charlie Templeton.

SIMON

Well, I don't mind a bit. I hope you ate a lot and enjoyed yourself--there!

MYRA

Generous boy! Come and kiss me.

SIMON

You're only playing up to me now; you don't really want to a bit.

MYRA

I'm aching for it. (SIMON CROSSES TO MYRA.)

SIMON

I love you. (MYRA AND SIMON FALL ON COUCH. MYRA PUSHES SIMON OFF AND SITS.)

MYRA

This week-end's going to be strenuous.

SIMON

Hell upon earth--(SIMON SITS AND GRABS MYRA'S LEGS.) fifteen million people in the house. We'll get up at seven and rush away down the river.

MYRA

No, we won't.

SIMON

Don't let either of us agree to anything we say--we'll both be difficult. (SIMON SITS ON COUCH.) I love being difficult.

MYRA

You certainly do.

SIMON

But I'm in the most lovely mood now. Just seeing you makes me feel grand--

MYRA

Is your father here? (MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES LEFT TO BEHIND COUCH.)

SIMON

Yes; he's working on a new novel.

MYRA

He writes brilliantly.

SIMON

Doesn't he? He drinks too much tea, though.

MYRA

It can't do him much harm, surely?

SIMON

It tans the stomach.

MYRA

Who is Sandy Tyrell? (MYRA STEPS RIGHT.)

SIMON

Never heard of him.

MYRA

He's here, with Judith.

SIMON

Oh, that poor thing with hot hands! We'll ignore him.

MYRA

I thought he looked rather nice.

SIMON

You must be mad. He looked disgusting.

MYRA

(LAUGHING.) Idiot! (MYRA CROSSES BEHIND COUCH, HAND TO HAIR.)

SIMON

(FLINGING HIMSELF ON THE SOFA.) Smooth my hair with your soft white hands.

MYRA

(RUFFLING IT.) It's got glue on it.

SIMON

(CATCHING HER HAND AND KISSING IT.) You smell heavenly. What is it?

MYRA

Borgia of Rosine.

SIMON

How appropriate. (HE PULLS HER DOWN AND KISSES HER.)

MYRA

(BREAKING AWAY.) You're too demonstrative to-day, Simon.

(THE FRONT DOOR BELL RINGS. SIMON STANDS AND CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.)

SIMON

Damn, damn! It's those drearies.

(CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES TO DOOR. RICHARD AND JACKIE ENTER.)

RICHARD

This is Mrs. Bliss's house.

CLARA

(OFFHAND.) Oh yes, this is it.

RICHARD

Is Miss Sorel Bliss in?

CLARA

I expect so. I'll see if I can find her. (CLARA EXITS HUMMING A TUNE.)

SIMON

Hallo. Did you have a nice journey?

RICHARD

Yes, thank you, very nice. I met Miss Coryton at the station. We introduced ourselves while we were waiting for the only taxi to come back.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO RICHARD.) Oh, I took the only taxi. How maddening of me.

RICHARD

Mrs. Arundell! How-do-you-do. I never recognized you.

(THEY SHAKE HANDS. SIMON CROSSES BEHIND TO THE
OPPOSITE SIDE OF JACKIE.)

JACKIE

I did.

MYRA

Why? Have we met anywhere?

JACKIE

No; I mean I recognized you as the one who took the taxi.

RICHARD

(TO SIMON.) You are Sorel's brother?

SIMON

Yes; she'll be down in a minute. (SIMON CROSSES TO MYRA.)
Come out into the garden, Myra--

MYRA

But, Simon, we can't. . . .

SIMON

(GRABBING HER HAND AND DRAGGING HER OFF.) Yes, we can.
I shall go mad if I stay in the house a moment longer.
(CROSSING OUT, OVER HIS SHOULDER TO RICHARD AND JACKIE.)
Tea will be here soon. (SIMON AND MYRA EXIT TO GARDEN.)

JACKIE

Well!

RICHARD

A strange young man.

JACKIE

Very rude, I think.

RICHARD

Have you ever met him before?

JACKIE

No; I don't know any of them except Mr. Bliss--he's a wonderful person.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES TO COFFEE TABLE AND PLACES BRIEFCASE.)
I wonder if he knows you're here.

JACKIE

Perhaps that funny woman who opened the door will tell him.

RICHARD

It was fortunate that we met at the station.

JACKIE

I'm frightfully glad. I should have been terrified arriving all by myself. (JACKIE AND RICHARD SIT ON COUCH. PAUSE.)

RICHARD

I do hope the weather will keep good over Sunday--the country round here is delightful.

JACKIE

Yes.

(PAUSE.)

RICHARD

There's nowhere like England in the spring and summer.

JACKIE

No, there isn't, is there?

(PAUSE.)

RICHARD

There's a sort of quality you find in no other countries.

JACKIE

Have you traveled a lot?

RICHARD

(MODESTLY.) A good deal.

JACKIE

How lovely.

(PAUSE.)

RICHARD

Spain is very beautiful.

JACKIE

Yes, I've always heard Spain was awfully nice.

RICHARD

Except for the bull-fights. No one who ever really loved horses could enjoy a bull-fight.

JACKIE

Nor anyone who loved bulls, either.

RICHARD

Exactly. (RICHARD LOOKS.)

(PAUSE.)

JACKIE

Italy's awfully nice, isn't it?

RICHARD

Oh yes, charming.

JACKIE

I've always wanted to go to Italy.

(PAUSE.)

RICHARD

Rome is a beautiful city.

JACKIE

Yes, I've always heard Rome was lovely.

RICHARD

And Naples and Capri--Capri's enchanting.

JACKIE

It must be.

(PAUSE.)

RICHARD

Have you ever been abroad at all?

JACKIE

Oh yes: I went to Dieppe once--we had a house there for the summer.

RICHARD

(KINDLY.) Dear little place--Dieppe. (See Figure 2.)

JACKIE

Yes, it was lovely.

(JUDITH AND SANDY ENTER AT TOP OF STAIRS AND EXIT TO GARDEN. RICHARD STANDS AT JUDITH'S ENTRANCE AND SITS ON EXIT.)

JACKIE

Well!

(PAUSE.)

RICHARD

Russia used to be a wonderful country before the war.

JACKIE

It must have been. . . . Was that her?

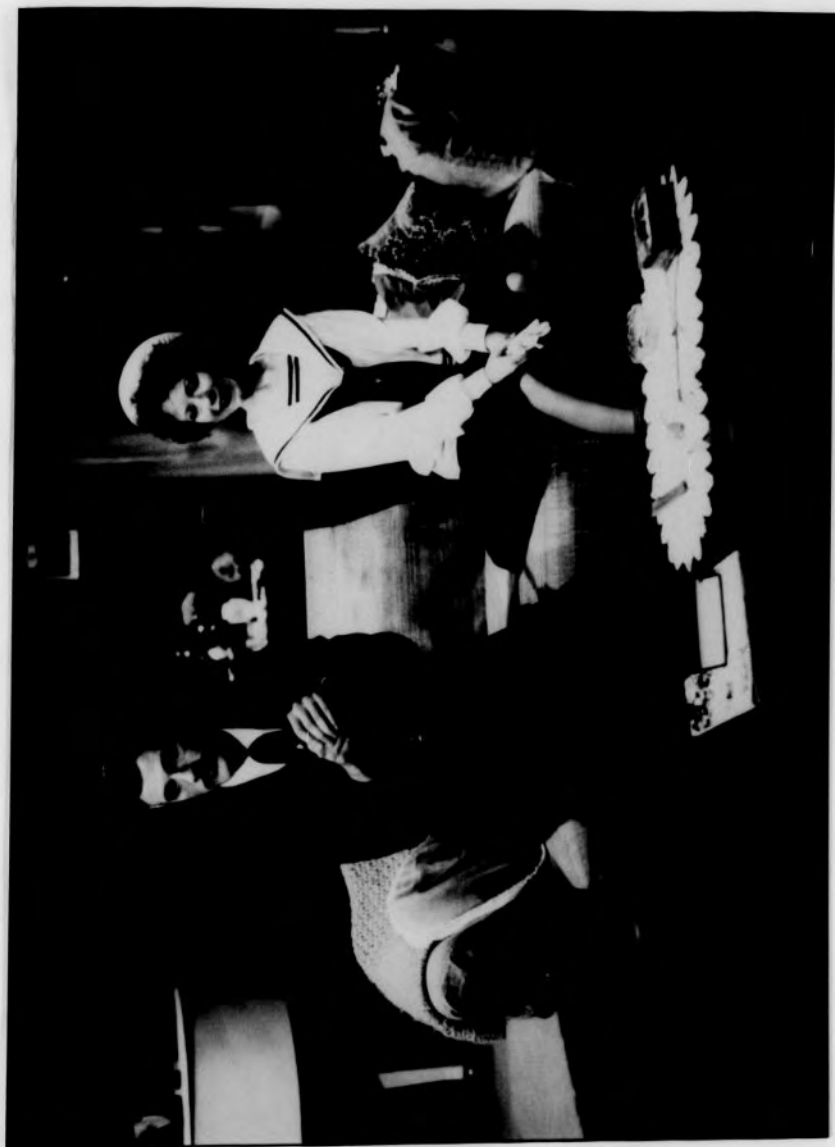


Figure 2

RICHARD

Who?

JACKIE

Judith Bliss.

RICHARD

Yes, I expect it was.

JACKIE

I wish I'd never come.

RICHARD

You mustn't worry. They're a very Bohemian family, I believe.

JACKIE

I wonder if Mr. Bliss knows I'm here.

RICHARD

I wonder.

JACKIE

Couldn't we ring a bell, or anything?

RICHARD

(RICHARD STANDS AND CROSSES UP TO BELL CORD. HANGS UMBRELLA ON RACK.) Yes, perhaps we'd better.

JACKIE

I don't suppose it rings.

RICHARD

You mustn't be depressed.

JACKIE

I feel horrid.

RICHARD

It's always a little embarrassing coming to a strange house for the first time. You'll like Sorel--she's charming.

JACKIE

(DESPERATELY.) I wonder where she is.

RICHARD

(CONSOLINGLY.) I expect tea will be here soon.

JACKIE

Do you think they have tea?

RICHARD

(ALARMED.) Oh yes--they must. (RICHARD CROSSES DOWN TO BEHIND COUCH.)

JACKIE

Oh, well, we'd better go on waiting, then.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CIRCLES LEFT AROUND COUCH.) Do you mind if I smoke?

JACKIE

Not a bit.

RICHARD

Will you? (RICHARD SITS.)

JACKIE

No, thank you.

RICHARD

I got this case in Japan. It's pretty, isn't it?

JACKIE

Awfully pretty.

(THEY LAPSE INTO HOPELESS SILENCE. SOREL ENTERS AT TOP OF STAIRS AND CROSSES DOWN TO RICHARD. RICHARD STANDS.)

SOREL

Oh, Richard, I'm dreadfully sorry. I didn't know you were here.

RICHARD

We've been here a good while.

SOREL

How awful! Please forgive me. I was upstairs.

RICHARD

This is Miss Coryton. (JACKIE STANDS AND HOLDS OUT HAND.)

SOREL

Oh!

JACKIE

How-do-you-do.

SOREL

Have you come to see father?

JACKIE

Yes.

SOREL

He's in his study--you'd better go up.

JACKIE

I don't know the way.

SOREL

(IRRITABLY.) Oh, well--(SOREL TAKES JACKIE'S HAND, CROSSES TO STAIRS AND PUSHES JACKIE UP STAIRS.) I'll take you. Come on. Wait a minute, Richard. It's along that passage, and the third door on the right.

JACKIE

(JACKIE CROSSES UPSTAIRS AND EXITS.) Oh, thank you.
(DESPONDENTLY.)

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES DOWN TO RICHARD.) The poor girl looks half-witted.

RICHARD

She's shy, I think.

SOREL

I hope father will find her a comfort.

RICHARD

Tell me one thing, Sorel, did your father and mother know I was coming?

SOREL

Oh yes; they were awfully pleased.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES LEFT AND LOOKS OUT TO GARDEN.) A rather nice-looking woman came down, in a big hat, and went into the garden with a young man, without saying a word.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES TO RICHARD.) That was mother, I expect. We're an independent family--we entertain our friends sort of separately.

RICHARD

Oh, I see.

SOREL

It was sweet of you to come.

RICHARD

I wanted to come--I've thought about you a lot.

SOREL

Have you, really? That's thrilling.

RICHARD

I mean it. You're so alive and vital and different from other people.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) I'm so frightened that you'll be bored here.

RICHARD

Why should I be? (RICHARD CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER.)

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES LEFT TO RICHARD.) Oh, I don't know. But you won't be, will you?--or if you are, tell me at once, and we'll do something quite different.

RICHARD

You're rather a dear, you know.

SOREL

I'm not--I'm devastating, entirely lacking in restraint. So's Simon. It's father's and mother's fault, really; you see, they're so vague--they've spent their lives cultivating their arts and not devoting any time to ordinary conventions and manners and things. I'm the only one who sees that, so I'm trying to be better. I'd love to be beautifully poised and carry off difficult situations with a lift of the eyebrows--

RICHARD

I'm sure you could carry off anything.

SOREL

There you are, you see, saying the right thing! You always say the right thing, and no one knows a bit what you're really thinking. That's what I adore.

RICHARD

I'm afraid to say anything now, in case you think I'm only being correct.

SOREL

But you are correct. I wish you'd teach Simon to be correct too.

RICHARD

It would be uphill work, I'm afraid.

SOREL

Why, don't you like him?

RICHARD

I've only met him for a moment.

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS LEFT TAKING RICHARD'S HAND.) Would you like to see the garden?

RICHARD

Very much indeed.

SOREL

As a matter of fact, we'd better wait until after tea. Shall I sing you something?

RICHARD

Please--I should love it.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES RIGHT TO PIANO.) I don't want to really a bit--only I'm trying to entertain you. It's as easy as pie to talk in some one else's house, like at the dance the other night, but here on my own ground I'm finding it difficult.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES TOWARD SOREL. PUZZLED.) I'm sorry.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES TO RICHARD.) Oh, it isn't your fault; honestly, it isn't--you're awfully kind and responsive. What shall we do?

RICHARD

I'm quite happy talking--to you.

SOREL

Can you play Mah Jong?

RICHARD

No, I'm afraid I can't.

SOREL

I'm so glad--I do hate it so.

(CLARA ENTERS FROM DOOR AND CROSSES ALONG WALL TO TABLE.)

Here's tea.

CLARA

Where's your mother, dear?

SOREL

Out in the garden, I think.

CLARA

It's starting to rain.

SOREL

Oh, everyone will come dashing in, then. How awful!

RICHARD

Won't the luggage get rather wet, out there?

SOREL

What luggage?

CLARA

I'll bring it in when I've made the tea.

RICHARD

(RISING.) Oh, don't trouble; (RICHARD CROSSES UP TOWARD DOOR.) I'll do it now.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES TO RICHARD.) We ought to have got William up from the village.

CLARA

It's Saturday.

SOREL

I know it is.

CLARA

He's playing cricket.

(CLARA SETS TEA. SOREL EXITS OUT DOOR.)

SOREL

Do sit down and smoke. I can easily manage it.

RICHARD

(SOREL ENTERS. RICHARD CROSSES TO SOREL. THEY CROSS TO CENTER.) Certainly not.

SOREL

How typical of Myra to have so many bags. . . . Ooh! There now!--we've probably broken something.

RICHARD

Its not my bag, so it doesn't matter. (RICHARD EXITS OUT DOOR. ENTERS AND CROSSES TO SOREL.) This is the last one. . . . (WIPES HIS HANDS ON HIS HANDKERCHIEF.)

SOREL

Do you know where to wash if you want to?

RICHARD

No--but I'm all right. (SOREL AND RICHARD STEP BACK TO FRONT STAIRS.)

MYRA

(SIMON AND MYRA ENTER FROM GARDEN. SIMON CROSSES TO COUCH. MYRA TO SOREL.) Hullo, Sorel, how are you?

SOREL

I'm splendid. Do you know Mr. Greatham?

MYRA

Oh yes; we've met several times.

SIMON

Come and sit down, Myra. (SIMON AND SOREL SIT AT COUCH.)

DAVID

(DAVID AND JACKIE ENTER TOP OF STAIRS AND CROSS DOWN TO BEHIND COUCH.) Is tea ready?

SOREL

Yes; just.

DAVID

Simon, come and be nice to Miss Coryton.

SIMON

We've met already. (MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES TO DAVID.)

DAVID

That's no reason for you not to be nice to her.

MYRA

(FIRMLY.) How-do-you-do.

DAVID

How-do-you-do. Are you staying here.?

MYRA

I hope so.

DAVID

You must forgive me for being rather frowsy, but I've been working hard.

SOREL

Father, this is Mr. Greatham. (SOREL AND RICHARD STEP AROUND TABLE.)

DAVID

How are you? When did you arrive?

RICHARD

This afternoon.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES TO TABLE. JACKIE FOLLOWS AT HIS ELBOW. DAVID SEATS JACKIE.) Good. Have some tea. Everyone had better put their own sugar and milk in, or we shall get muddled. Where's your mother, Simon?

SIMON

She was last seen in the punt.

DAVID

How extraordinary! She can't punt.

SOREL

Sandy Tyrell's with her.

DAVID

Oh, well, she'll be all right then. Who is he?

SOREL

I don't know.

DAVID

(MYRA CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.) Do sit down, everybody.

JUDITH

(JUDITH AND SANDY ENTER AND CROSS TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.)
There's going to be a thunderstorm. I felt sick this morning. This is Sandy Tyrell--everybody--

SOREL

Mother, I want you to meet Mr. Greatham.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO CENTER.) Oh yes. You were here before, weren't you?

SIMON

Before what, darling?

JUDITH

Before I went out in the punt. There was somebody else here too--a fair girl--(SHE SEES JACKIE. JUDITH CROSSES TO JACKIE AND PATS ON HEAD.) Oh, there you are. How-do-you-do. Sit down, Sandy, (SANDY SITS.) and eat anything you want. Give Sandy some bread-and-butter, Simon. (SIMON CROSSES LEFT TO TRAY, THEN TO SANDY, THEN TO COUCH. HE SITS.)

SIMON

(UNGRACIOUSLY.) Here you are.

SANDY

Thanks.

(THERE IS A LONG PAUSE; THEN MYRA AND RICHARD SPEAK TOGETHER. TEN COUNT.)

RICHARD

How far are you from Maidenhead exactly?

MYRA

What a pity it's raining--we might have had some tennis--

(THEY BOTH STOP, TO LET THE OTHER GO ON. THERE IS ANOTHER TERRIBLE SILENCE. TEN COUNT.)

MYRA

I adore the shape of this hall--it's so--

RICHARD

The train was awfully crowded coming down--

(THEY BOTH STOP AGAIN, AND THERE IS ANOTHER DEAD SILENCE. THE LIGHTS FADE SLOWLY. TWENTIES MUSIC IS PLAYED THROUGHOUT THE INTERMISSION.)

Act II

(AT RISE THEY ARE ALL SEATED: JACKIE, CHAIR RIGHT, RICHARD, SOFA RIGHT, JUDITH, SOFA CENTER, SANDY, SOFA LEFT, SIMON, SITS CENTER, SOREL, CHAIR UP CENTER, DAVID, CHAIR LEFT, AND MYRA, CHAIR LEFT.)

(IT IS AFTER DINNER IN THE EVENING. EVERYONE IS TALKING AND ARGUING. THE FOLLOWING SCENE SHOULD BE PLAYED WITH GREAT SPEED.)

SIMON

(SIMON STANDS.) Who'll go out?

SOREL

I don't mind.

SIMON

No; you always guess it too quickly.

JACKIE

What do we have to do?

JUDITH

Choose an adverb, and then--

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES BEHIND COUCH RIGHT TO BETWEEN JACKIE AND RICHARD.) Some one goes out, you see, and comes in, and you've chosen a word among yourselves, and she or he or whoever it is asks you some sort of questions and you have to--

SOREL

Not an ordinary question, Simon; they have to ask them to do something in the manner of the word, and then--

SIMON

Then, you see, you act whatever it is--

SOREL

The answer to the question, you see?

RICHARD

(APPREHENSIVELY.) What sort of thing is one expected to do?

JUDITH

Quite usual things, like reciting "If," or singing.

RICHARD

I can't sing.

SIMON

Never mind; you can fake it, as long as it conveys an idea of the word.

JACKIE

The word we've all thought of?

SOREL

(IMPATIENT.) Yes, the word we've chosen when whoever it is is out of the room.

JACKIE

I'm afraid I don't quite understand yet.

SIMON

Never mind; I'll explain. You see, some one goes out. . . .

SOREL

(SOREL STANDS AND STEPS RIGHT.) I'll go out the first time, just to show her.

JUDITH

It's quite simple--all you have to do is just act in the manner of the word.

SOREL

Look here, everybody, I'm going out. (SOREL CROSSES RIGHT TO BEHIND SANDY.)

SIMON

All right; go on.

MYRA

The History game's awfully good--when two people go out, and come back as Mary Queen of Scots and Crippen or somebody.

SANDY

(DESPONDENTLY.) I'm no earthly good at this sort of thing.

SOREL

I'll show you, Sandy. You see. . . .

JUDITH

There's always "How, When and Where?" We haven't played that for ages.

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES UP LEFT BEHIND COUCH.) We will afterwards. We'll do this one first.--Go on, Sorel.

SOREL

Don't be too long. (SOREL EXITS RIGHT TO LIBRARY.)

SIMON

Now then.

JUDITH

"Bitterly."

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.) No, we did that last week; she'll know.

DAVID

"Intensely."

JUDITH

Too difficult.

RICHARD

There was an amusing game I played once at the Harringtons' house. Everyone was blindfolded except--

SIMON

This room's not big enough for that. What about "winsomely"?

JACKIE

I wish I knew what we had to do.

JUDITH

You'll see when we start playing.

MYRA

(MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES TO TABLE.) If we start playing.
(See Figure 3.)

SIMON

Mother's brilliant at this. Do you remember when we played it at the Mackenzies'?

JUDITH

Yes, and Blanche was so cross when I kissed Freddie's ear in the manner of the word.

RICHARD

What was the word?

JUDITH

I can't remember.



Figure 3

MYRA

Perhaps it's as well.

DAVID

What about "drearily"?

JUDITH

Not definite enough.

SIMON

"Winsomely" is the best.

JUDITH

She's sure to guess it straight off.

SANDY

(CONFIDENTIALLY.) These games are much too brainy for me.

DAVID

Young Norman Robertson used to be marvelous--do you remember?

SIMON

Yes, wonderful sense of humor.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES DOWN TO CHAIR AND SITS.) He's lost is all since his marriage.

JUDITH

I didn't know you knew him.

MYRA

Well, considering he married my cousin--

RICHARD

We don't seem to be getting on with the game.

JUDITH

We haven't thought of a word yet.

MYRA

"Brightly."

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES LEFT TO BEHIND MYRA.) Too obvious.

MYRA

Very well--don't snap at me!

JUDITH

"Saucily." I've got a lovely idea for "saucily." (JUDITH STANDS.)

MYRA

I should think "rudely" (JUDITH SITS.) would be the easiest.

SIMON

Don't be sour, Myra.

JUDITH

The great thing is to get an obscure word.

SIMON

What a pity Irene isn't here--she knows masses of obscure words.

MYRA

She's probably picked them up from her obscure friends.

SIMON

It's no use being catty about Irene; she's a perfect darling.

MYRA

I wasn't being catty at all.

SIMON

Yes, you were.

SOREL

(OFF.) Hurry up!

JUDITH

Quickly, now! We must think--

JACKIE

(JACKIE STANDS. HELPFULLY.) "Appendicitis."

JUDITH

(WITHERINGLY.) That's not an adverb. (JACKIE SITS.)

SIMON

You're thinking of charades.

SANDY

Charades are damned good fun.

SIMON

(SIMON STEPS RIGHT.) Yes, but we don't happen to be doing them at the moment.

SANDY

Sorry.

JUDITH

"Saucily."

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES RIGHT TO CORNER OF COUCH.) No, "winsomely" is better.

JUDITH

All right. Call her in.

SIMON

(CALLING.) Sorel--come on; we're ready.

SANDY

(HOARSELY TO SIMON.) Which is it?--"saucily" or "winsomely"?

SIMON

(WHISPERING.) "Winsomely."

SOREL

(SOREL ENTERS AND CROSSES LEFT TO COUCH. TO JUDITH.) Go and take a flower out of that vase and (SIMON CROSSES UP TO BELOW STAIRS.) give it to Richard.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO TABLE LEFT AND THEN BACK TO BEHIND COUCH ABOVE RICHARD.) Very well. (SHE TRIPS LIGHTLY OVER TO THE VASE, GURGLING WITH COY LAUGHTER, SELECTS A FLOWER, THEN GOES OVER TO RICHARD; PURSING HER LIPS INTO A MOCK SMILE, SHE GIVES HIM THE FLOWER, WITH A LITTLE GIRLISH GASP AT HER OWN DARING, AND WAGS HER FINGER ARCHLY AT HIM.)

SIMON

Marvelous, mother!

SOREL

(LAUGHING.) Oh, lovely! . . . Now, Myra, get up and say good-bye to everyone in the manner of the word.

MYRA

Good-bye. It really has been (MYRA STANDS AND STEPS UP TO DAVID. DAVID STANDS.) most delightful--

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO CENTER.) No, no, no!

MYRA

Why--what do you mean?

JUDITH

You haven't got the right intonation a bit.

SIMON

Oh, mother darling, do shut up!

MYRA

(ACIDLY.) Remember what an advantage you have over (MYRA
CROSSES RIGHT UP TO JUDITH.) us poor amateurs, Judith,
having been a professional for so long.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES RIGHT TO BEHIND SANDY.) I don't like "so
long" very much.

SOREL

Do you think we might go on now?

MYRA

Go to the next one; I'm not going to do any more. (MYRA
CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO BEHIND CHAIR #1.)

SIMON

Oh, please do. You were simply splendid.

SOREL

It doesn't matter. (TO RICHARD.) Light a cigarette in
the manner of the word.

RICHARD

I've forgotten what it is.

JUDITH

(GRIMACING AT HIM VIOLENTLY.) You remember. . . .

RICHARD

Oh yes. (HE PROCEEDS TO LIGHT A CIGARETTE WITH GREAT
ABANDON, WINKING HIS EYE AND CHUCKING SOREL UNDER THE CHIN.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH STEPS RIGHT TO CENTER OF COUCH.) Oh, no, no, no!

MYRA

I can't think what that's meant to be.

RICHARD

(OFFENDED.) I was doing my best.

JUDITH

It's so frightfully easy, and nobody can do it right.

SIMON

I believe you've muddled it up.

RICHARD

You'd better go on to the next one.

JUDITH

Which word were you doing? Whisper--

RICHARD

(WHISPERING.) "Saucily."

JUDITH

I knew it!--He was doing the wrong word. (SHE WHISPERS TO HIM.)

RICHARD

Oh, I see. I'm so sorry.

JUDITH

Give him another chance.

SIMON

(SIMON STEPS DOWN TO CENTER.) No, it's Jackie's turn now; it will come round to him again, I'm afraid.

SOREL

(TO JACKIE.) Do a dance in the manner of the word. (SOREL STEPS DOWN TO JACKIE.)

JACKIE

(GIGGLING.) I can't. (JACKIE STANDS AND STEPS LEFT.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO BEHIND JACKIE.) Nonsense!
Of course you can.

JACKIE

I can't--honestly--I . . .

SIMON

Go on; have a shot at it. (SIMON CROSSES RIGHT TO ABOVE
JACKIE.)

JACKIE

No, I'd much rather not. Count me out.

JUDITH

Really, the ridiculous fuss everyone makes--

JACKIE

I'm awfully stupid at anything like this.

SOREL

It's only a game, after all.

DAVID

Come along--try.

JACKIE

(DRAGGING BACK.) I couldn't--please don't ask me to. I
simply couldn't.

SIMON

Leave her alone if she doesn't want to.

SOREL

(IRRITABLY.) What's the use of playing at all, if people
won't do it properly?

JUDITH

It's so simple.

SANDY

It's awfully difficult if you haven't done it before.

SIMON

Go on to the next one.

SOREL

(FIRMLY.) Unless everyone's in it we won't play at all.

SIMON

Now don't lose your temper.

SOREL

Lose my temper! I like that! No one's given me the slightest indication of what the word is--you all argue and squabble--

DAVID

(DAVID STANDS AND CROSSES UP RIGHT TO BELOW STAIRS.) Talk, talk, talk! Everybody talks too much.

JUDITH

It's so surprising to me when people won't play up.
(JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.) After all--

JACKIE

(WITH SPIRIT.) It's a hateful game, anyhow, and I don't want to play it again ever.

SOREL

You haven't played it at all yet.

SIMON

Don't be rude, Sorel.

SOREL

Really, Simon, the way you go on is infuriating!

SIMON

It's always the way; whenever Sorel goes out she gets quarrelsome.

SOREL

Quarrelsome!

SIMON

Don't worry, Jackie; you needn't do anything you don't want to.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO CHAIR #1 AND SITS.) I think, for the future, we'd better confine our efforts to social conversation and not attempt anything in the least intelligent.

SIMON

How can you be so unkind, mother?

JUDITH

(SHARPLY.) Don't speak to me like that.

JACKIE

(JACKIE STANDS.) It's all my fault--I know I'm awfully silly, but it embarrasses me so terribly doing anything in front of people.

SOREL

(WITH ACIDITY.) I should think the word was "winsomely."
(SOREL STEPS DOWN RIGHT.)

SIMON

You must have been listening outside the door, then. (SIMON CROSSES TO SOREL.)

SOREL

Not at all--Miss Coryton gave it away.

SIMON

Why "Miss Coryton" all of a sudden? You've been calling her Jackie all the evening. You're far too grand, Sorel.

SOREL

And you're absolutely maddening--I'll never play another game with you as long as I live.

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES TO JACKIE.) That won't break my heart.

JUDITH

Stop, stop, stop!

SIMON

(GRABBING JACKIE'S HAND.) Come out in the garden. I'm sick of this. (SIMON AND JACKIE CROSS AND EXIT TO THE GARDEN.)

SOREL

Don't let him take you on the river; he isn't very good at it.

SIMON

(OVER HIS SHOULDER.) Ha, ha!--very funny.

JUDITH

Sorel, you're behaving disgracefully.

SOREL

Simon ought to go into the army, or something.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES DOWN TO CENTER.) You both ought to be in reformatories.

SOREL

This always happens whenever we play a game. We're a beastly family, and I hate us.

JUDITH

Speak for yourself, dear.

SOREL

I can't, without speaking for everyone else too--we're all exactly the same, and I'm ashamed of us.--Come into the library, Sandy. (SOREL AND SANDY EXIT RIGHT TO LIBRARY.)

MYRA

Charming! It's all perfectly charming.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES LEFT TO JUDITH.) I think it would be better, Judith, if you exercised a little more influence over the children.

JUDITH

That's right--blame it all on me.

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS AROUND JUDITH.) After all, dear, you started it, by snapping everybody up.

JUDITH

You ought never to have married me, David; it was a great mistake.

DAVID

The atmosphere of this house is becoming more (DAVID STEPS LEFT.) unbearable every day, and all because Simon and Sorel are allowed to do exactly what they like.

JUDITH

You sit upstairs all day, writing your novels.

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS RIGHT.) Novels which earn us our daily bread.

JUDITH

(JUDITH STANDS AND CROSSES TO DAVID.) "Daily bread" nonsense! We've enough money to keep us in comfort until we die.

DAVID

That will be very soon, if we can't get a little peace.
(TO MYRA.) Come out into the garden--(DAVID CROSSES
DOWN LEFT TO MYRA.)

JUDITH

I sincerely hope the night air will cool you.

DAVID

I don't know what's happened to you lately, Judith.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO DAVID.) Nothing's happened to me--
nothing ever does. You're far too smug to allow it.

DAVID

Smug! Thank you.

JUDITH

Yes, smug, smug, smug! And pompous!

DAVID

I hope you haven't been drinking, dear.

JUDITH

Drinking! Huh! that's very amusing!

DAVID

I think it's rather tragic, at your time of life. (DAVID
AND MYRA EXIT TO GARDEN. JUDITH FOLLOWS TO ENTRANCE.)

JUDITH

David's been a good husband to me, but he's wearing a bit
thin now.

RICHARD

Would you like me to go? (RICHARD STANDS AND STEPS DOWN.)
To leave you alone for a little?

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO CENTER.) Why? Are you afraid I shall become violent?

RICHARD

(SMILING.) No; I merely thought perhaps I was in the way.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO BEHIND COUCH.) I hope you're not embarrassed--I couldn't bear you to be embarrassed.

RICHARD

Not in the least. (JUDITH CROSSES TO RICHARD.)

JUDITH

Marriage is a hideous affair altogether, don't you think?

RICHARD

I'm really hardly qualified to judge, you see. (RICHARD STEPS DOWN RIGHT.)

JUDITH

Do stop being non-committal, just for once; it's doubly annoying in the face of us all having lost control so lamentably.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

JUDITH

There's nothing to be sorry for, really, because, after all, it's your particular "thing," isn't it?--observing everything and not giving yourself away an inch.

RICHARD

I suppose it is.

JUDITH

You'll get used to us in time, you know, and then (JUDITH CROSSES AROUND COUCH LEFT AND SITS.) you'll feel cozier. Why don't you sit down?

RICHARD

(RICHARD STEPS TO COUCH AND SITS.) I'm enjoying myself very much.

JUDITH

It's very sweet of you to say so, but I don't see how you can be.

RICHARD

(LAUGHING SUDDENLY.) But I am!

JUDITH

There now! that was quite a genuine laugh. We're getting on. Are you in love with Sorel?

RICHARD

(SURPRISED AND EMBARRASSED.) In love with Sorel?

JUDITH

(REPENTANTLY.) Now I've killed it--I've murdered the little tender feeling of comfort that was stealing over you, by sheer tactlessness! Will you teach me to be tactful?

RICHARD

Did you really think I was in love with Sorel?

JUDITH

It's so difficult to tell, isn't it?--I mean, you might not know yourself. She's very attractive.

RICHARD

Yes, she is--very.

JUDITH

Have you heard her sing?

RICHARD

No, not yet.

JUDITH

She sings beautifully. Are you susceptible to music?

RICHARD

What do you mean; susceptible?

JUDITH

You probably are, then. I'll sing you something.

RICHARD

Please do.

JUDITH

(JUDITH STANDS AND CROSSES BEHIND COUCH RIGHT.) It's awfully sad for a woman of my temperament to have a grown-up daughter, you know. I have to put my pride in my pocket and develop in her all the charming little feminine tricks which will eventually cut me out altogether.

RICHARD

That wouldn't be possible.

JUDITH

I do hope you meant that, because it was a sweet remark.
(JUDITH CROSSES TO PIANO. TURNING OVER MUSIC.)

RICHARD

(RICHARD STANDS.) Of course I meant it.

JUDITH

Will you come play the piano in an attentive attitude?
It's such a help.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES LEFT TO PIANO AND SITS.) You're an extraordinary person.

JUDITH

In what way extraordinary?

RICHARD

When I first met Sorel, I guessed what you'd be like.

JUDITH

Did you, now? And am I?

RICHARD

(SMILING.) Exactly.

JUDITH

Oh, well. . . . (SHE SINGS "MAD ABOUT THE BOY." THERE IS A SLIGHT PAUSE WHEN IT IS FINISHED.)

RICHARD

(WITH FEELING.) Thank you.

JUDITH

It's pretty, isn't it?

RICHARD

Perfectly enchanting.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO RICHARD.) Shall we sit down again?

RICHARD

Won't you sing any more? (RICHARD STEPS TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

No, no more--(JUDITH AND RICHARD STEP DOWN LEFT.) I want you to talk to me and tell me all about yourself, and the things you've done.

RICHARD

I've done nothing.

JUDITH

What a shame! Why not?

RICHARD

I never realize how dead I am until I meet people like you. It's depressing, you know.

JUDITH

What nonsense! You're not a bit dead.

RICHARD

Do you always live here?

JUDITH

I'm going to, from now onwards. I intend to sink into a (JUDITH AND RICHARD CROSS TO COUCH AND SIT.) very beautiful old age. When the children marry, I shall wear a cap.

RICHARD

How absurd!

JUDITH

I don't mean a funny cap.

RICHARD

You're far too full of vitality to sink into anything.

JUDITH

It's entirely spurious vitality. If you troubled to look below the surface, you'd find a very wistful and weary spirit. I've been battling with life for a long time.

RICHARD

Surely such successful battles as yours have been are not wearying?

JUDITH

Yes, they are--frightfully. I've reach an age now when I just want to sit back and let things go on around me--and they do.

RICHARD

I should like to know exactly what you're thinking about--really.

JUDITH

I was thinking of calling you Richard. It's such a nice uncompromising name.

RICHARD

I should be very flattered if you would.

JUDITH

I won't suggest you calling me Judith until you feel really comfortable about me.

RICHARD

But I do--Judith.

JUDITH

I'm awfully glad. Will you give me a cigarette?

RICHARD

(PRODUCING CASE.) Certainly.

JUDITH

(TAKING ONE.) That's a divine case.

RICHARD

It was given to me in Japan three years ago. All those little designs mean things.

JUDITH

(BENDING OVER IT.) What sort of things?

RICHARD

Charms for happiness, and luck, and--love.

JUDITH

Which is the charm for love?

RICHARD

That one.

JUDITH

What a dear!

RICHARD

(KISSING HER GENTLY.) Judith!

JUDITH

(JUMPING.) Richard! (JUDITH LAYS IN RICHARD'S LAP.)

RICHARD

I'm afraid I couldn't help it.

JUDITH

(DRAMATICALLY.) What are we to do? What are we to do?

RICHARD

I don't know.

JUDITH

David must be told--everything!

RICHARD

(RICHARD STANDS. JUDITH HANGS ON. ALARMED.) Everything?

JUDITH

(ENJOYING HERSELF.) Yes, yes. There come moments in life when it is necessary to be honest--absolutely honest. I've trained myself always to shun the underhand methods other women so often employ--the truth must be faced fair and square--(JUDITH STEPS TO RIGHT CORNER OF COUCH.)

RICHARD

(EXTREMELY ALARMED.) The truth? I don't quite understand.

JUDITH

Dear Richard, you want to spare me, I know--you're so chivalrous; but it's no use. After all, as I said before, David has been a good husband to me, according to his lights. (JUDITH STEPS TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) This may, of course,

break him up rather, but it can't be helped; he must be told. I wonder--oh, I wonder how he'll take it. They say suffering's good for writers, it strengthens their psychology. Oh my poor, poor David!--(JUDITH STEPS LEFT TO RICHARD.) Never mind. You'd better go out into the garden and wait--

RICHARD

(FLUSTERED.) Wait? What for? (RICHARD STEPS BACK.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO RICHARD.) For me, Richard, for me. I will come to you later. Wait in the summer-house. I had begun to think that Romance was dead, that I should never know it again. Before, of course, I had my work and my life in the theatre, but now, nothing--nothing! Everything is empty and hollow, (JUDITH SITS ON COUCH.) like a broken shell.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES TO JUDITH DOWN RIGHT.) Look here, Judith, I apologize for what I did just now. I--

JUDITH

(IGNORING ALL INTERRUPTION.) But now you have come, and (JUDITH STANDS.) it's all changed--it's magic. I'm under a spell that I never thought to recapture again. Go along--

RICHARD

(PROTESTING.) But, Judith--(RICHARD CROSSES TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH PUSHES RICHARD LEFT TO GARDEN EXIT. RICHARD EXITS.) Don't--don't make it any harder for me. I am quite resolved, and it's the only possible way!

(SHE WAVES TO HIM BRAVELY WITH HER HANDKERCHIEF; THEN SHE COMES BACK INTO THE ROOM AND POWDERS HER NOSE BEFORE THE GLASS AND PATS HER HAIR INTO PLACE. THEN, ASSUMING AN EXPRESSION OF RESTRAINED TRAGEDY, SHE OPENS THE LIBRARY DOOR, FROM WHICH SHE RECOILS GENUINELY SHOCKED. AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO SOREL AND SANDY COME OUT RATHER SHEEPISHLY. JUDITH CROSSES RIGHT TO LIBRARY, OPENS THE DOOR, SCREAMS, AND CROSSES LEFT TO COUCH.)

SOREL

(SOREL ENTERS AND CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT CORNER OF COUCH.
SANDY ENTERS AND CROSSES TO BEHIND CENTER OF COUCH.)
Look here, mother, I--

JUDITH

Sorel, what am I to say to you?

SOREL

I don't know, mother.

JUDITH

Neither do I.

SANDY

It was my fault, Mrs. Bliss--Judith--

JUDITH

What a fool I've been! What a blind fool!

SOREL

Mother, are you really upset?

JUDITH

(WITH FEELING.) I'm stunned.

SOREL

But, darling--

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO SOREL. GENTLY.) Don't speak for a moment, Sorel; we must all be very quiet and, think--

SOREL

It was nothing, really. For Heaven's sake--

JUDITH

Nothing! I open the library door, casually, and what do I see? I ask you, what do I see?

SANDY

I'm most awfully sorry. . . . (SANDY STEPS DOWN BEHIND JUDITH.)

JUDITH

Ssshh! It has gone beyond superficial apologies. (JUDITH STEPS TO SANDY.)

SOREL

Mother, be natural for a minute.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO #2 CHAIR.) I don't know what you mean, Sorel. I'm trying to realize a very bitter truth as calmly as I can.

SOREL

There's nothing so very bitter about it. (SOREL CROSSES LEFT TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

My poor child!

SOREL

(SUDDENLY.) Very well, then! I love Sandy, and he loves me!

JUDITH

That would be the only possible excuse for your behavior.

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS TO SANDY.) Why shouldn't we love each other if we want to?

JUDITH

Sandy was in love with me this afternoon.

SOREL

Not real love--you know it wasn't.

JUDITH

(BITTERLY.) I know now.

SANDY

(SANDY CROSSES TO CENTER.) I say--look here--I'm most awfully sorry.

JUDITH

There's nothing to be sorry for, really; it's my fault for (JUDITH CROSSES RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) having been so--so ridiculous.

SOREL

Mother!

JUDITH

(SADLY.) Yes, ridiculous. I'm getting old, old, and the (JUDITH STEPS DOWN LEFT.) sooner I face it the better.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES RIGHT TO JUDITH. HOPELESSLY.) But, darling . . .

JUDITH

(SPLENDIDLY.) Youth will be served. (JUDITH STEPS RIGHT TO SOREL.) You're so pretty, Sorel, far prettier than I ever was--I'm very glad you're pretty.

SANDY

I feel a fearful cad.

JUDITH

Why should you? (JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO SANDY.) You've answered the only call that really counts--the call of Love, and Romance, and Spring. I forgive you, Sandy, completely. There.

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.) Well, that's all right, then.

JUDITH

I resent your tone, Sorel; (JUDITH STEPS UP RIGHT TO COUCH.) you seem to be taking things too much for granted. Perhaps you don't realize that I am making a great sacrifice!

SOREL

Sorry, darling.

JUDITH

It's far from easy, at my time of life, to--

SOREL

(PLAYING UP.) Mother--mother, say you understand and forgive!

JUDITH

Understand! You forget, dear, I am a woman.

SOREL

I know you are, mother. That's what makes it all so poignant.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO SANDY. MAGNANIMOUSLY, TO SANDY.) If you want Sorel, truly, I give her to you--unconditionally.

SANDY

(DAZED.) Thanks--awfully, Mrs. Bliss. (JUDITH PUSHES SANDY TO SOREL.)

JUDITH

You can still call me Judith, can't you?--it's not much to ask.

SANDY

Judith.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES BEHIND COUCH BETWEEN SOREL AND SANDY. BRAVELY.) There, now. Away with melancholy. This is all tremendously exciting, and we must all be very happy.

SOREL

Don't tell father--yet.

JUDITH

We won't tell anybody; it shall be our little secret.

SOREL

You are splendid, mother.

JUDITH

Nonsense. I just believe in being honest with myself--it's awfully good for one, you know, so cleansing. I'm going upstairs now to have a little aspirin--Ah, Youth, Youth, what a strange, mad muddle you make of things! (JUDITH CROSSES UP STAIRS AND EXITS.)

SOREL

(SOREL STANDS.) Well, that's that.

SANDY

Yes.

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS TO SANDY.) It's all right. Don't look so gloomy--I know you don't love me really.

SANDY

(STARTLED.) I say, Sorel--

SOREL

Don't protest; you know you don't--any more than I love you.

SANDY

But you told Judith--

SOREL

(SOREL CROSSES LEFT. NONCHALANTLY.) I was only playing up--one always plays up to mother in this house; it's a sort of unwritten law.

SANDY

(SANDY CROSSES TO SOREL AT COUCH.) Didn't she mean all she said?

SOREL

No, not really; we none of us ever mean anything.

SANDY

She seemed awfully upset.

SOREL

It must have been a slight shock for her to discover us clasped tightly in each other's arms.

SANDY

I believe I do love you, Sorel.

SOREL

A month ago I should have let you go on believing that, but now I can't--I'm bent on improving myself. (SOREL SITS RIGHT CORNER OF COUCH.)

SANDY

(SANDY SITS.) I don't understand.

SOREL

Never mind--it doesn't matter. You just fell a victim to the atmosphere, that's all. There we were alone in the library, with the windows wide open, and probably a nightingale somewhere about--

SANDY

I only heard a cuckoo.

SOREL

Even a cuckoo has charm, in moderation. You kissed me because you were awfully nice and I was awfully nice and we both liked kissing very much. It was inevitable. Then mother found us and got dramatic--her sense of the theater is always fatal. She knows we shan't marry, the same as you and I do. You're under absolutely no obligation to me at all.

SANDY

I wish I understood you a bit better.

SOREL

Never mind about understanding me. Let's go back into the library. (SOREL AND SANDY STAND, CROSS RIGHT, AND EXIT INTO LIBRARY.)

SANDY

All right.

DAVID

(DAVID AND MYRA ENTER FROM GARDEN AND CROSS UP TO CENTER.)

. . . And, you see, he comes in and finds her there waiting for him.

MYRA

She hadn't been away at all?

DAVID

No; and that's psychologically right, I'm sure. No woman, under those circumstances, would.

MYRA

It's brilliant of you to see that. I do think the whole thing sounds most excellent.

DAVID

I got badly stuck in the middle of the book, when the (DAVID CROSSES RIGHT TO COUCH.) boy comes down from Oxford--but it worked out all right eventually.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO COUCH.) When shall I be able to read it?

DAVID

I'll send you the (DAVID PULLS MYRA DOWN TO SIT ON COUCH.) proofs--you can help me correct them.

MYRA

How divine! I shall feel most important.

DAVID

Would you like a cigarette, or anything?

MYRA

No, thank you.

DAVID

(DAVID RISES AND CROSSES TO BAR AT UP STAGE TABLE.) I think I'll have a drink.

MYRA

Very well; give me some plain soda-water, then.

DAVID

There isn't any ice--d'you mind?

MYRA

Not a bit.

DAVID

(BRINGING HER THE DRINK.) Here you are. (DAVID CROSSES TO MYRA AT COUCH.)

MYRA

Thank you. (SHE SIPS IT. MYRA CROSSES BEHIND COUCH TO DAVID.) I wonder where everybody is.

DAVID

(DAVID SITS.) Not here, thank God.

MYRA

It must be dreadfully worrying for you, having a houseful of people.

DAVID

It depends on the people.

MYRA

I have a slight confession to make.

DAVID

Confession?

MYRA

Yes. Do you know why I came down here?

DAVID

Not in the least. I suppose one of us asked you, didn't they?

MYRA

Oh yes, they asked me, but--

DAVID

Well?

MYRA

I was invited once before--last September.

DAVID

I was in America then.

MYRA

Exactly.

DAVID

How do you mean "exactly"?

MYRA

I didn't come. I'm a very determined woman, you know, and I made up my mind to meet you ages ago.

DAVID

That was charming of you. I'm not much to meet really.

MYRA

You see, I'd read Broken Reeds. (MYRA STEPS RIGHT.)

DAVID

Did you like it?

MYRA

Like it! I think it's one of the finest novels I've ever read.

DAVID

There now!

MYRA

How do you manage to know so much about women?

DAVID

I'm afraid my knowledge of them is sadly superficial.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES BEHIND COUCH.) Oh no; you can't call Evelyn's character superficial--it's amazing.

DAVID

Why are you being so nice to me? Have you got a plan about something?

MYRA

(LAUGHING. MYRA CROSSES AROUND COUCH AND SITS.) How suspicious you are!

DAVID

I can't help it--you're very attractive, and I'm always suspicious of attractive people, on principle.

MYRA

Not a very good principle.

DAVID

I'll tell you something--strictly between ourselves.

MYRA

Do.

DAVID

You're wrong about me.

MYRA

Wrong? In what way?

DAVID

I write very bad novels.

MYRA

Don't be so ridiculous.

DAVID

And you know I do, because you're an intelligent person.

MYRA

I don't know anything of the sort.

DAVID

Tell me why you're being so nice to me?

MYRA

Because I want to be.

DAVID

Why?

MYRA

You're a very clever and amusing man.

DAVID

Splendid. (DAVID STANDS AND STEPS RIGHT.)

MYRA

And I think I've rather lost my heart to you.

DAVID

(DAVID PULLS MYRA UP.) Shall we elope?

MYRA

David!

DAVID

There now, you've called me David!

MYRA

Do you mind?

DAVID

Not at all.

MYRA

I'm not sure that you're being very kind. (MYRA CROSSES LEFT AND DAVID STEPS LEFT TO CORNER OF COUCH.)

DAVID

Why makes you think that?

MYRA

You're being rather the cynical author laughing up his sleeve at a gushing admirer.

DAVID

I think you're a very interesting woman, and extremely nice-looking.

MYRA

Do you?

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES TO MYRA.) Yes. Would you like me to make love to you?

MYRA

Really--I wish you wouldn't say things like that. (MYRA CROSSES RIGHT TO CHAIR DOWN RIGHT.)

DAVID

I've knocked you off your plate--I'll look away for a minute while you climb on to it again. (HE DOES SO.)

MYRA

(LAUGHING AFFECTEDLY.) This is wonderful!

DAVID

(TURNING.) That's right. Now then--(DAVID CROSSES RIGHT TO MYRA.)

MYRA

Now then, what?

DAVID

You're adorable--you're magnificent--you're (DAVID CROSSES RIGHT TO MYRA.) tawny--

MYRA

I'm not tawny. (MYRA CIRCLES AROUND CHAIR.)

DAVID

Don't argue.

MYRA

This is sheer affectation. (MYRA CIRCLES AROUND CHAIR.)

DAVID

Affectation's very nice.

MYRA

(DAVID CROSSES TO BEHIND MYRA.) No, it isn't--it's odious.

DAVID

You mustn't get cross.

MYRA

I'm not in the least cross.

DAVID

Yes, you are--but you're very alluring.

MYRA

(PERKING UP.) Alluring?

DAVID

Terribly.

MYRA

(DAVID STEPS BACK.) I can hear your brain clicking--it's very funny.

DAVID

That was rather rude.

MYRA

You've been consistently rude to me for hours. (MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES LEFT.)

DAVID

Never mind.

MYRA

Why have you?

DAVID

I'm always rude to people I like.

MYRA

Do you like me?

DAVID

Enormously.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO COUCH.) How sweet of you!

DAVID

But I don't like your methods. (DAVID CROSSES TO CORNER OF COUCH.)

MYRA

Methods? (MYRA SITS.) What methods?

DAVID

You're far too pleasant to occupy yourself with the (DAVID CROSSES BEHIND COUCH TO MYRA.) commonplace.

MYRA

And you spoil yourself by trying to be clever.

DAVID

Thank you.

MYRA

Anyhow, I don't know what you mean by commonplace.

DAVID

You mean you want me to explain? (DAVID STEPS LEFT.)

MYRA

Not at all.

DAVID

Very well; I will.

MYRA

I shan't listen. (SHE STOPS UP HER EARS.)

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.) You'll pretend not to, but you'll hear every word really.

MYRA

(SARCASTICALLY.) You're so inscrutable and quizzical-- just what a feminine psychologist should be.

DAVID

Yes, aren't I? (DAVID STEPS TO MYRA.)

MYRA

You frighten me dreadfully.

DAVID

(DAVID SITS.) Darling!

MYRA

Don't call me darling. (MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES LEFT TO #2 CHAIR.)

DAVID

That's unreasonable. You've been trying to make me--all the evening.

MYRA

Your conceit is outrageous!

DAVID

It's not conceit at all. You've been firmly buttering me up because you want a nice little intrigue.

MYRA

How dare you!

DAVID

(DAVID STANDS AND CROSSES LEFT TO MYRA.) It's true, it's true. If it weren't, you wouldn't be so angry.

MYRA

I think you're insufferable!

DAVID

(TAKING HER HAND.) Myra--dear Myra--

MYRA

(SNATCHING IT AWAY. MYRA CROSSES RIGHT TO FRONT OF COFFEE TABLE.) Don't touch me.

DAVID

Let's have that nice little intrigue. The only reason I've been so annoying is that I love to see things as they are first, and then pretend they're what they're not.

MYRA

Words! Masses and masses of words!

DAVID

They're great fun to play with.

MYRA

I'm glad you think so. Personally, they bore me stiff.

DAVID

(CATCHING HER HAND AGAIN. DAVID CROSSES TO MYRA AND SWINGS HER AROUND.) Myra--don't be statuesque.

MYRA

Let go my hand!

DAVID

You're charming.

MYRA

(FURIOUSLY.) Let go my hand.

DAVID

I won't.

MYRA

You will! (MYRA SLAPS DAVID. DAVID GRABS MYRA, STRUGGLES, AND KISSES HER.)

DAVID

(BETWEEN KISSES.) You're--perfectly--sweet.

(JUDITH ENTERS AT TOP OF STAIRS.)

MYRA

(GIVING IN.) David!

DAVID

You must say it's an entrancing amusement. (HE KISSES HER AGAIN.)

JUDITH

Forgive me for interrupting. (JUDITH CROSSES TO LANDING.)

DAVID

Are there any chocolates in the house?

JUDITH

No, David.

DAVID

I should like a chocolate more than anything in the world, at the moment.

JUDITH

This is a very unpleasant situation, David.

DAVID

(AGREEABLY.) Horrible.

JUDITH

We'd better talk it all over. (JUDITH CROSSES TO CENTER.)

MYRA

I shall do nothing of the sort.

JUDITH

Please--please don't be difficult.

DAVID

I apologize, Judith.

JUDITH

Don't apologize--I quite understand.

MYRA

Please let go of my hand, David; I should like to go to
(MYRA STEPS RIGHT.) bed.

JUDITH

I should stay if I were you--it would be more dignified.

DAVID

There isn't any real necessity for a scene.

JUDITH

I don't want a scene. I just want to straighten things
out.

DAVID

Very well--go ahead.

JUDITH

June has always been an unlucky month for me.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO JUDITH.) Look here, Judith, I'd like to
explain one thing--

JUDITH

(AUSTERELY.) I don't wish to hear any explanations or
excuses--they're so cheapening. (JUDITH CROSSES TO ABOVE
DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) This was bound to happen sooner or
later--it always does, to everybody. The only thing is
to keep calm.

DAVID

I am--perfectly.

JUDITH

(SHARPLY.) There is such a thing as being too calm.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES LEFT TO CORNER OF COUCH.) Sorry, dear.

JUDITH

Life has dealt me another blow, but I don't mind.
(JUDITH STEPS TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.)

DAVID

What did you say?

JUDITH

(CROSSLY.) I said Life has dealt me another blow, but I didn't mind.

DAVID

Rubbish.

JUDITH

(GENTLY. JUDITH CROSSES TO COUCH, RIGHT CORNER.) You're probably irritable, dear, because you're in the wrong. It's quite usual.

DAVID

No, Judith--

JUDITH

Ssshhh! Let me speak--it is my right.

MYRA

I don't see why.

JUDITH

(SURPRISED.) I am the injured party, am I not?

MYRA

Injured?

JUDITH

(FIRMLY.) Yes, extremely injured.

DAVID

(CONTEMPTUOUSLY.) Injured! (DAVID STEPS LEFT.)

JUDITH

Your attitude, David, is nothing short of deplorable.

DAVID

It's all nonsense--sheer, unbridled nonsense.

JUDITH

No, David, you can't evade the real issues as calmly as that. (JUDITH CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) I've known for a long time--I've realized subconsciously for years that you've stopped caring for me in "that way." (DAVID CROSSES DOWN TO CENTER.)

DAVID

(IRRITABLY.) What do you mean--"that way"?

JUDITH

(WITH A WAVE OF THE HAND.) Just that way. . . . It's rather tragic, but quite inevitable. I'm growing old now--men don't grow old like women, as you'll find to your cost, Myra, in a year or two. David has retained his youth astonishingly, perhaps because he has had fewer responsibilities and cares than I--

MYRA

This is all ridiculous hysteria. (MYRA STEPS RIGHT.)

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS TO MYRA.) No, Myra--Judith is right. What are we to do?

MYRA

(FURIOUS.) Do? Nothing!

JUDITH

(IGNORING HER.) Do you love her truly, David?

DAVID

Madly.

MYRA

(ASTOUNDED.) David!

DAVID

(INTENSELY.) You thought just now that I was joking. Couldn't you see that all my flippancy was only a mask, hiding my real emotions--crushing them down desperately--?

MYRA

(SCARED.) But, David, I--

JUDITH

I knew it! (JUDITH SITS IN DOWN RIGHT CHAIR AND POSES.) The time has come for the dividing of the ways.

MYRA

What on earth do you mean? (MYRA STEPS RIGHT.)

JUDITH

I mean that I am not the sort of woman to hold a man against his will.

MYRA

You're both making a mountain out of a molehill. (MYRA CROSSES TO JUDITH.) David doesn't love me madly, and I don't love him. It's--

JUDITH

(JUDITH STANDS, STEPS TO MYRA AND PUSHES MYRA TO COUCH.) Ssshhh!--you do love him. I can see it in your eyes-- in your every gesture. (JUDITH CROSSES TO DAVID.) David, I give you to her--freely and without rancor. We must all be good friends, always.

DAVID

Judith, do you mean this?

JUDITH

(WITH A MELTING LOOK.) You know I do.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES TO MYRA, DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) How can we ever repay you?

JUDITH

Just by being happy. I may leave this house later on-- (JUDITH CROSSES UP CENTER AROUND, DOWN TO COUCH.) I have a feeling that its associations may become painful, specially in the autumn--

MYRA

Look here, Judith-- (MYRA CROSSES TO JUDITH AT COUCH.)

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES DOWN TO FRONT OF TABLE. SHOUTING HER DOWN.) October is such a mournful month in England. I think I shall probably go abroad--perhaps a pension somewhere in Italy, with cypresses in the garden. I've always loved cypresses. They're such sad weary trees. (JUDITH SITS IN CHAIR #2.)

DAVID

What about the children? (DAVID STEPS TO COUCH.)

JUDITH

We must share them, dear.

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS LEFT.) I'll pay you exactly half the royalties I receive from everything, Judith.

JUDITH

(BOWING HER HEAD.) That's very generous of you.

DAVID

You have behaved magnificently. This is a crisis in our lives, and thanks to you--

MYRA

(ALMOST SHRIEKING.) Judith--I will speak--I-- (MYRA CROSSES TO JUDITH.)

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES TO MYRA.) Ssshhh, Myra darling--we owe it to Judith to keep control of our emotions--a scene would be agonizing for her now. She has been brave and absolutely splendid throughout. Let's not make things harder for her than we can help. Come, we'll go out into the garden. (DAVID AND MYRA CROSS TO DOWN CENTER RIGHT.)

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT CHAIR.) I will not go out into the garden.

JUDITH

Please go--I don't think (JUDITH STANDS.) I can bear any more just now.

DAVID

So this is the end, Judith? (DAVID TURNS TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

Yes, my dear,--the end. (JUDITH AND DAVID CROSS TO CENTER AND SHAKE HANDS.)

SIMON

(SIMON ENTERS FROM THE GARDEN.) Mother--mother, I've got something important to tell you.

JUDITH

(SMILING BRAVELY.) Very well, dear. (MYRA STEPS DOWN RIGHT BELOW CHAIR.)

SIMON

Where's Sorel.

JUDITH

In the library, I'm afraid.

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES RIGHT TO LIBRARY DOOR.) Sorel, come out-- I've got something vital to tell you.

DAVID

(FATHERLY.) You seem excited, my boy. What has happened?

SOREL

What's the matter? (SOREL AND SANDY ENTER AND CROSS LEFT TO ABOVE COUCH.)

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES BEHIND COUCH TO DOWN RIGHT.) I wish you wouldn't all look so depressed--it's good news!

DAVID

Good news! I thought perhaps Jackie had been drowned--

SIMON

No, Jackie hasn't been drowned--she's been something else.

JUDITH

Simon, what do you mean?

SIMON

(CALLING.) Jackie--Jackie! (JACKIE ENTERS FROM THE GARDEN AND CROSSES TO SIMON.) She has become engaged--to me! (SIMON ARMS AROUND JACKIE.)

JUDITH

(IN HEARTFELT TONES.) Simon!

SOREL

Good heavens!

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES TO SIMON AND JACKIE.) Simon, my dear! Oh, this is too much!

SIMON

What on earth are you crying about, mother?

JUDITH

(JUDITH STEPS RIGHT. PITURESQUELY.) All my chicks are

leaving the nest. Now I shall only have my memories left. Jackie, come and kiss me. You must promise to make my son happy--

JACKIE

(WORRIED.) But, Mrs. Bliss--

JUDITH

Ssshhh! I understand. I have not been a mother for nothing.

JACKIE

(WILDLY.) But it's not true--we don't--

JUDITH

You're trying to spare my feelings--I know--

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO CENTER. FURIOUSLY.) Well, I'm not going to spare your feelings, or anyone else's. You're the most infuriating set of hypocrites I've ever seen. (MYRA CROSSES UP BEHIND COUCH.) This house is a complete feather bed of false emotions--you're posing, self-centered, egotists, and I'm sick to death of you.

SIMON

Myra!

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO CENTER.) Don't speak to me. I've been working up for this, only every time I opened my mouth I've been mowed down by theatrical effects. (MYRA CROSSES RIGHT.) You haven't got one sincere or genuine feeling among the lot of you--you're artificial to the point of lunacy. It's a great pity you ever left the stage, Judith--it's your rightful home. You can rant and roar there as much as ever you like--

JUDITH

Rant and roar! May God forgive you! (JUDITH STEPS LEFT.)

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES TO JUDITH.) And let me tell you this: You don't seem to grasp one thing that--

SIMON

(INTERRUPTING.) I'm not going to allow you to say another word to mother--

(TOGETHER.)

SOREL

You ought to be ashamed of yourself--

MYRA

Let me speak--I will speak--

DAVID

Look here, Myra--

JUDITH

This is appalling--appalling!

SOREL

You must be stark, staring mad--

MYRA

Never again--never as long as I live--

SIMON

Why are you behaving like this, anyhow?

(IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PANDEMONIUM OF EVERYONE TALKING AT ONCE, RICHARD COMES IN FROM THE GARDEN. HE LOOKS EXTREMELY APPREHENSIVE, IMAGINING THAT THE NOISE IS THE OUTCOME OF JUDITH'S HYSTERICAL CONFESSION OF THEIR LUKEWARM PASSION. HE GOES TO JUDITH'S SIDE, SUMMONING ALL HIS DIPLOMATIC FORCES. AT HIS ENTRANCE EVERYONE STOPS TALKING.)

RICHARD

(RICHARD ENTERS FROM GARDEN AND CROSSES BEHIND JUDITH TO CENTER. WITH FORCED CALM.) What's happened? Is this a game?

(JUDITH'S FACE GIVES A SLIGHT TWITCH; THEN WITH A MEANING LOOK AT SOREL AND SIMON, SHE ANSWERS HIM.)

JUDITH

(WITH SPIRIT.) Yes, and a game that must be played to
(JUDITH CROSSES DOWN CENTER.) the finish!

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES TO JUDITH. GRASPING THE SITUATION.) Zara!
What does this mean?

JUDITH

(IN BELL-LIKE TONES.) So many illusions shattered--so
many dreams trodden in the dust--

DAVID

Love's whirlwind! (DAVID CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.)
Dear old Love's whirlwind!

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS LEFT.) I don't understand. You and Victor--
My God!

JUDITH

Hush! Isn't that little Pam crying--? (JUDITH CROSSES
UP STAIRS.)

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES UP TO BELOW LANDING. SAVAGELY.) She'll
cry more, poor mite, when she realizes her mother is a--
a--

JUDITH

(SHRIEKING.) Don't say it! Don't say it!

SOREL

Spare her that. (SOREL CROSSES TO STAIRS' ENTRANCE.)

JUDITH

I've given you all that makes life worth living--my youth,
my womanhood, and now my child. Would you tear the very
heart out of me? I tell you, it's infamous that men like
you should be allowed to pollute Society. You have ruined
my life. I have nothing left--nothing. God in heaven,
where am I to turn for help . . . (See Figure 4.)

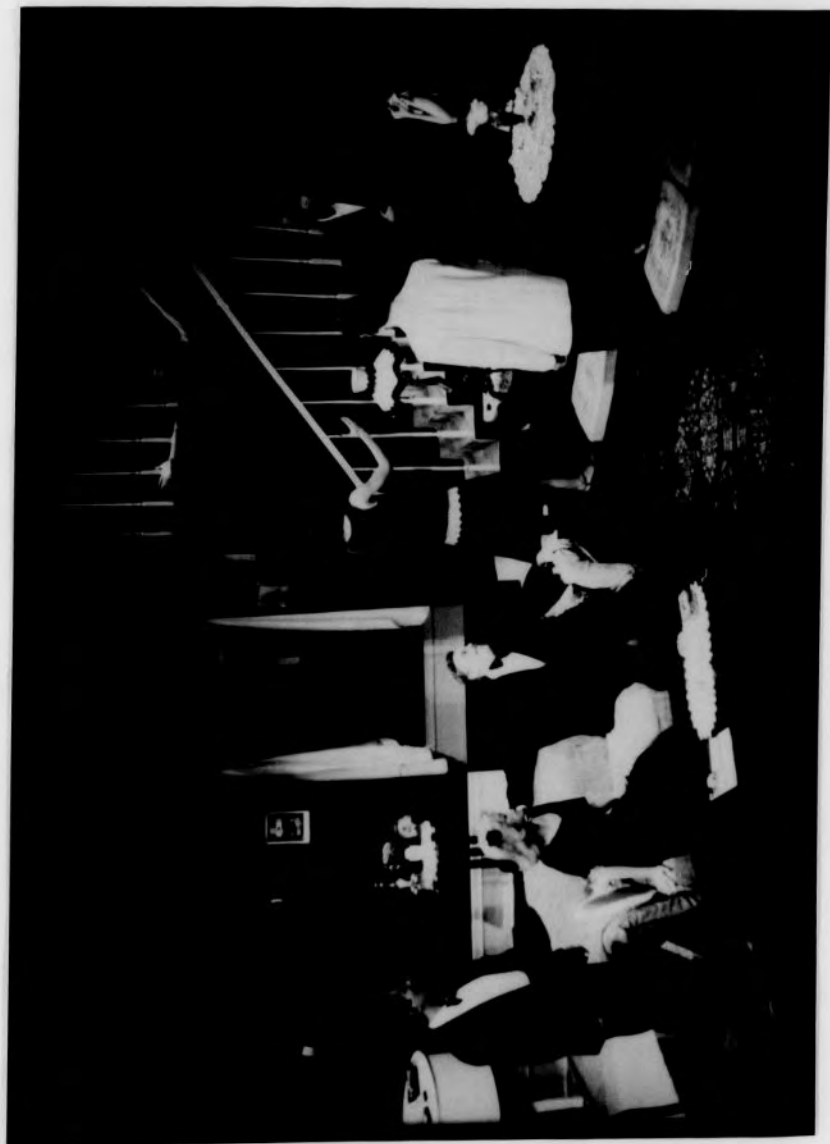


Figure 4

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS LEFT TO SIMON. THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH.) Is this true? Answer me--is this true?

JUDITH

(WAILING.) Yes, Yes!

SOREL

(SPRINGING AT SIMON.) You cur!!!

JUDITH

Don't strike! He is your father! (SHE TOTTERS AND FALLS IN A DEAD FAINT.)

(MYRA, JACKIE, RICHARD, AND SANDY LOOK ON, DAZED AND AGHAST. CURTAIN.)

(TWENTIES MUSIC IS PLAYED THROUGHOUT INTERMISSION. FINAL SONG IS CRAZY PEOPLE AS LIGHTS FADE.)

Act III

(IT IS MORNING, ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK. THERE ARE VARIOUS BREAKFAST DISHES ON A BIG TABLE.)

(SANDY APPEARS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. ON SEEING NO ONE ABOUT, HE COMES DOWN QUICKLY AND FURTIVELY HELPS HIMSELF TO EGGS AND BACON AND COFFEE, AND SEATS HIMSELF AT THE TABLE. HE EATS VERY HURRIEDLY, CASTING OCCASIONAL GLANCES OVER HIS SHOULDER. A DOOR BANGS SOMEWHERE UP-STAIRS, WHICH TERRIFIES HIM; HE CHOKES VIOLENTLY. WHEN HE HAS RECOVERED, HE TEARS A BIT OF TOAST FROM A RACK, BUTTERS IT AND MARMALADES IT AND CRAMS IT INTO HIS MOUTH. THEN, HEARING SOMEBODY APPROACHING, HE DARTS INTO THE LIBRARY.)

(JACKIE COMES DOWNSTAIRS TIMOROUSLY; HER EXPRESSION IS DISMAL, TO SAY THE LEAST OF IT. SHE LOOKS MISERABLY OUT OF THE WINDOW AT THE POURING RAIN, THEN, ASSUMING AN AIR OF SPURIOUS BRAVADO, SHE HELPS HERSELF TO SOME BREAKFAST AND SITS DOWN, AND LOOKS AT IT. AFTER ONE OR TWO ATTEMPTS TO EAT IT, SHE BURSTS INTO TEARS.)

JACKIE

(SANDY ENTERS FROM LIBRARY.) Oh, it's only you--you frightened me! (JACKIE STEPS BEHIND CHAIR.)

SANDY

What's the matter? (SANDY CROSSES TO COUCH.)

JACKIE

(SNIFFING.) Nothing.

SANDY

(SANDY CROSSES TO TABLE.) I say, don't cry.

JACKIE

I'm not crying.

SANDY

You were--I heard you.

JACKIE

It's this house. It gets on my nerves.

SANDY

I don't wonder--after last night.

JACKIE

What were you doing in the library just now?

SANDY

Hiding.

JACKIE

Hiding?

SANDY

Yes; (SANDY STEPS TO JACKIE LEFT.) I didn't want to run up against any of the (SANDY STEPS RIGHT.) family.

JACKIE

I wish I'd never come. (JACKIE STEPS RIGHT TO SANDY.) I had horrible nightmares with all those fearful dragons crawling across the wall.

SANDY

Dragons?

JACKIE

(JACKIE CROSSES TO COUCH AND SITS.) Yes; I'm in a Japanese room--everything in it's Japanese, even the bed.

SANDY

How awful! (SANDY CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.)

JACKIE

I believe they're all mad, you know.

SANDY

The Blisses?

JACKIE

Yes--they must be.

SANDY

I've been thinking that too. (SANDY STEPS RIGHT AND SITS ON COUCH.)

JACKIE

Do you suppose they know they're mad?

SANDY

No; people never do.

JACKIE

It was Mr. Bliss asked me down, and he hasn't paid any attention to me at all. I went into his study soon after I arrived yesterday, and he said, "Who the hell are you?"

SANDY

Didn't he remember?

JACKIE

He did afterwards; then he brought me down to tea and left me.

SANDY

Are you really engaged to Simon?

JACKIE

(BURSTING INTO TEARS AGAIN.) Oh no--I hope not!

SANDY

You were, last night.

JACKIE

So were you--to Sorel.

SANDY

Not properly. We talked it over.

JACKIE

(JACKIE STANDS AND STEPS DOWN RIGHT.) I don't know what happened to me. I was in the garden with Simon, and he was being awfully sweet, and then he suddenly kissed me, and rushed into the house and said we were engaged--and that hateful Judith asked me to make him happy!

SANDY

(SANDY STANDS AND CROSSES TO JACKIE.) That's exactly what happened to me and Sorel. Judith gave us to one another before we knew where we were.

JACKIE

How frightful!

SANDY

I like Sorel, though; she was jolly decent about it
(SANDY STEPS LEFT.) afterwards.

JACKIE

I think she's a cat.

SANDY

Why?

JACKIE

Look at the way she lost her temper over that beastly game.

SANDY

All the same, she's better than the others.

JACKIE

That wouldn't be very difficult.

SANDY

Hic!

JACKIE

I beg your pardon?

SANDY

(ABASHED.) I say--I've got hiccoughs.

JACKIE

Hold your breath.

SANDY

It was because I bolted my breakfast. (HE HOLDS HIS BREATH. PAUSE.)

JACKIE

Hold it as long as you can. (THERE IS A PAUSE. POSE.)

SANDY

(LETTING HIS BREATH GO WITH A GASP.) I can't any more--hic!

JACKIE

(JACKIE CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) Eat a lump of sugar.

SANDY

(TAKING ONE.) I'm awfully sorry. Hic! (SANDY CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.)

JACKIE

(JACKIE CROSSES RIGHT TO SANDY.) I don't mind--but it's a horrid feeling, isn't it?

SANDY

Horrid--hic!

JACKIE

(CONVERSATIONALLY.) People have died from hiccoughs, you know.

SANDY

(GLOOMILY.) Have they? Hic!

JACKIE

Yes. An aunt of mine once had them for three days without stopping.

SANDY

How beastly.

JACKIE

(WITH RELISH.) She had to have the doctor, and everything.

SANDY

I expect mine will stop soon.

JACKIE

I hope they will.

SANDY

Hic!--Damn!

JACKIE

(JACKIE CROSSES TO TABLE.) Drink some water the wrong way round.

SANDY

(SANDY CROSSES TO TABLE.) How do you mean--the wrong way round?

JACKIE

The wrong side of the glass. I'll show you. There isn't any water.

SANDY

Perhaps coffee would do as well.

JACKIE

I've never tried coffee, but it might. (SHE POURS HIM OUT SOME.) There you are. (See Figure 5.)

SANDY

(ANXIOUSLY.) What do I do?

JACKIE

Tip it up and drink from the opposite side, sort of upside down.

SANDY

(TRYING.) I can't reach any--(A DOOR SLAMS.)

JACKIE

(SUDDENLY.) Look out--somebody's coming. Bring it into the library--quick. . . .

SANDY

(SANDY AND JACKIE CROSS RIGHT AND EXIT INTO LIBRARY.)

Bring the sugar--I might need it again--hic! Oh God!

JACKIE

All right.

(RICHARD ENTERS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. HE CROSSES DOWN TO WINDOW, THEN TO TABLE, AND THEN TO BAROMETER. HE TAPS IT--IT FALLS. A DOOR SLAMS. MYRA ENTERS TO RIGHT OF STAIRS. RICHARD GOES TO COUCH.)

MYRA

(MYRA ENTERS AND CROSSES TO LANDING. VIVACIOUSLY.) Good morning.



Figure 5

RICHARD

Good morning.

MYRA

Are we the first down? (MYRA CROSSES DOWN STAIRS.)

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) No, I don't think so.

MYRA

Isn't this rain miserable? (MYRA CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.)

RICHARD

Appalling!

MYRA

Where's the barometer?

RICHARD

Here it is. (RICHARD TURNS TO MYRA.)

MYRA

What a queer place for it to be.

RICHARD

I tapped it, and it fell down.

MYRA

(MYRA SITS.) Typical of this house. Are you having eggs and bacon, or haddock?

RICHARD

(RICHARD SITS.) Haddock.

MYRA

I'll have haddock too. I simply couldn't strike out a line for myself this morning. (SHE HELPS HERSELF TO HADDOCK AND COFFEE.) Have you seen anybody?

RICHARD

No.

MYRA

Good. We might have a little peace.

RICHARD

Have you ever stayed here before?

MYRA

No, and I never will again.

RICHARD

I feel far from well this morning.

MYRA

I'm so sorry, but not entirely surprised.

RICHARD

You see, I had the boiler room.

MYRA

How terrible!

RICHARD

The window stuck, and I couldn't open it--I was nearly suffocated. The pipes made peculiar noises all night, as well.

MYRA

There isn't any sugar.

RICHARD

Oh--we'd better ring.

MYRA

I doubt if it will be the slightest use, but we'll try.

RICHARD

(RINGING AND RINGING THE BELL.) Do the whole family have breakfast in bed?

MYRA

I neither know--nor care.

RICHARD

They're strange people, aren't they?

MYRA

I think "strange" is putting it mildly.

(CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES TO CENTER.)

CLARA

What's the matter?

MYRA

There isn't any sugar.

CLARA

There is--I put it 'ere myself. (CLARA CROSSES LEFT BETWEEN RICHARD AND MYRA.)

MYRA

Perhaps you'd find it for us, then?

CLARA

(SEARCHING.) That's very funny. I could 'ave sworn on my Bible oath I brought it in.

MYRA

Well, it obviously isn't here now.

CLARA

Someone's taken it--that's what it is.

RICHARD

It seems a queer thing to do.

MYRA

Do you think you could get us some more?

CLARA

(CLARA CROSSES RIGHT TO STAIRS.) Oh yes, I'll fetch you some; (CLARA CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) but mark my words, there's been some 'anky-panky somewhere. (CLARA EXITS TO KITCHEN.)

MYRA

Clara is really more at home in a dressing-room than a house.

RICHARD

Was she Judith's dresser?

MYRA

Of course. What other excuse could there possibly be for her?

RICHARD

She seems good-natured, but quaint.

MYRA

This haddock's disgusting.

RICHARD

It isn't very nice, is it?

CLARA

(CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE.) There you are, dear.

MYRA

Thank you.

CLARA

It's a shame the weather's changed--you might 'ave 'ad such fun up the river. (THERE COMES THE SOUND OF A CRASH FROM THE LIBRARY, AND A SCREAM.) What's that? (CLARA CROSSES

RIGHT TO BEHIND COUCH. RICHARD AND MYRA STAND.) Come out! What are you doing?

JACKIE

(JACKIE AND SANDY ENTER FROM LIBRARY AND CROSS LEFT, RATHER SHAMEFACED.) Good morning. I'm afraid we've broken a coffee-cup.

CLARA

Was there any coffee in it?

SANDY

Yes, a good deal.

CLARA

Oh dear! all over the carpet! (CLARA CROSSES RIGHT AND EXITS INTO LIBRARY.)

SANDY

(SANDY STEPS RIGHT TO LIBRARY.) It was my fault. I'm most awfully sorry.

CLARA

How did you come to do it? (CLARA ENTERS FROM LIBRARY.)

JACKIE

Well, you see, he had the hiccoughs, and I was showing him how to drink upside down.

MYRA

How ridiculous!

CLARA

Well, thank 'Eaven it wasn't one of the Crown Derbys. (CLARA EXITS TO DOOR.)

SANDY

They've gone now, anyhow.

JACKIE

It was the sudden shock, I expect.

SANDY

(OBSERVANTLY.) I say--it's raining!

MYRA

It's been raining for hours.

RICHARD

(RICHARD CROSSES TO RIGHT OF MYRA.) Mrs. Arundel--

MYRA

Yes?

RICHARD

What are you going to do about--about to-day?

MYRA

Nothing, except go up to London by the first train possible.

RICHARD

Do you mind if I come too? I don't think I could face another day like yesterday.

JACKIE

Neither could I.

SANDY

(SANDY STEPS RIGHT TO JACKIE. EAGERLY.) Let's all go away--quietly!

RICHARD

Won't it seem a little rude if we all go?

MYRA

Yes, it will. (TO SANDY.) You and Miss Coryton must stay.

JACKIE

I don't see why.

SANDY

I don't think they'd mind very much.

MYRA

Yes, they would. You must let Mr. Greatham and me get away first, anyhow. Ring for Clara. (SANDY CROSSES LEFT TO BELL CORD.) I want to find out about trains.

RICHARD

I hope they won't all come down now.

MYRA

(MYRA CROSSES RIGHT TO COUCH AND SITS.) You needn't worry about that; they're sure to roll about in bed for hours--they're such a slovenly family.

RICHARD

Have you got much packing to do? (RICHARD STEPS RIGHT TO COUCH.)

MYRA

No; I did most of it before I came down.

CLARA

(CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES DOWN TO COUCH.) What is it now?

MYRA

Can you tell me what trains there are up to London?

CLARA

When?

MYRA

This morning.

CLARA

Why? You're not leaving, are you?

MYRA

Yes; Mr. Greatham and I have to be up by lunch time.

CLARA

Well, you have missed the ten-fifteen.

MYRA

Obviously.

CLARA

There isn't another till twelve-thirty.

RICHARD

Good heavens!

CLARA

(CLARA EXITS UP TO COUCH.) And that's a slow one.

SANDY

(TO JACKIE.) Look here; I'll take you up in my car as
(SANDY CROSSES RIGHT TO JACKIE.) soon as you like.

JACKIE

All right; lovely!

MYRA

(MYRA STANDS AND CROSSES RIGHT TO SANDY.) You've got a
car, haven't you?

SANDY

Yes.

MYRA

Will it hold all of us?

JACKIE

You said it would be rude for us all to go. Hadn't you
and Mr. Greatham better wait for the train?

MYRA

Certainly not.

RICHARD

(TO SANDY.) If there is room, we should be very, very grateful.

SANDY

I think I can squeeze you in.

MYRA

Then that's settled, then.

JACKIE

When shall we start?

SANDY

As soon as you're ready.

JACKIE

Mrs. Arundel, what are you going to do about tipping Clara?

MYRA

I don't know. (TO RICHARD.) What do you think?

RICHARD

I've hardly seen her since I've been here.

JACKIE

Isn't there a housemaid or anything?

RICHARD

I don't think so.

SANDY

Is ten bob enough?

JACKIE

Each?

MYRA

Too much.

RICHARD

We'd better give her one pound ten between us.

MYRA

Very well, then. (MYRA STEPS TO RIGHT CORNER OF COUCH.)
Will you do it, and we'll settle up in the car?

RICHARD

Must I?

MYRA

Yes. Ring for her.

RICHARD

You'd do it much better.

MYRA

Oh no, I shouldn't. (MYRA AND JACKIE CROSS UP STAIRS. TO
JACKIE.) Come on; we'll finish our packing.

JACKIE

All right.

(THEY BEGIN TO GO UPSTAIRS.)

RICHARD

Here--don't leave me. (RICHARD CROSSES TO BELL CORD.)

SANDY

I'll just go and look at the car. Will you all be ready
in ten minutes?

MYRA

Yes, ten minutes. (JACKIE AND MYRA EXIT.)

SANDY

(SANDY EXITS OUT HALLWAY.) Righto.

CLARA

'Allo, where's everybody gone? (CLARA ENTERS AND CROSSES
TO RICHARD.)

RICHARD

They've gone to get ready. We're leaving in Mr. Tyrell's car.

CLARA

A bit sudden, isn't it?

RICHARD

This is from all of us, Clara. Thank you very much for all your trouble. (MONEY BUSINESS.)

CLARA

Aren't you a dear, now! There wasn't any trouble.

RICHARD

There must have been a lot of extra work.

CLARA

(CLARA CLEARS TABLE AND SINGS.) One gets used to that 'ere.

RICHARD

Good morning, Clara.

CLARA

Good morning. Hope you were comfortable.

RICHARD

Comfortable . . . ? Oh, yes. . . . (RICHARD EXITS UP STAIRS.)

(JUDITH ENTERS AT TOP OF STAIRS, CROSSES DOWN AND STEPS LEFT TO CLARA.)

JUDITH

Good morning, Clara. Have the papers come?

CLARA

Yes--I'll fetch them.

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES RIGHT TO COUCH AND SITS.) Thank you.
You've forgotten my orange juice.

CLARA

No, I 'aven't, dear; it's just outside. (CLARA EXITS UP
LEFT ALONG WALL.)

(JUDITH TURNS TO THE THEATRICAL COLUMN OF THE
SUNDAY TIMES.)

SOREL

Good morning, darling. (SOREL ENTERS TOP OF STAIRS,
CROSSES DOWN TO TABLE AND SITS.)

JUDITH

Listen to this. (SHE READS.) "We saw Judith Bliss in a
box at the Haymarket on Tuesday, looking as lovely as ever."
There now! I thought I looked hideous on Tuesday.

SOREL

You looked sweet.

CLARA

Did you see that nice bit in the Referee? (CLARA ENTERS,
CROSSES TO JUDITH, TO SIDE TABLE LEFT AND TO SOREL.)

JUDITH

No--the Times.

CLARA

The Referee's much better.

SOREL

(READING.) "I saw gay and colorful Judith Bliss at the
Waifs and Strays matinee last week. She was talking
vivaciously to Producer Basil Dean. 'I' sooth,' said I
to myself, 'where ignorance is Bliss, 'tis folly to be
wise.'"

JUDITH

Dear Referee! It's so unself-conscious.

CLARA

If you want any more coffee, ring for it. (CLARA EXITS TO KITCHEN.)

SOREL

I wish I were sitting on a lovely South Sea island, with masses of palm trees and cocoanuts and turtles--

JUDITH

It would be divine, wouldn't it?

SOREL

I wonder where everybody is?

JUDITH

(STILL READING.) I wonder . . . Mary Saunders has got another failure.

SOREL

She must be used to it by now.

SIMON

(SIMON ENTERS TOP OF STAIRS AND CROSSES DOWN TO JUDITH. KISSING JUDITH.) Good morning, darling.--Look! (HE SHOWS HER A NEWLY COMPLETED SKETCH.)

JUDITH

Simon! How lovely! When did you do it?

SIMON

This morning--I woke early.

SOREL

Let's see.

SIMON

(SIMON CROSSES LEFT TO SOREL.) I'm going to alter Helen's face; it's too pink.

SOREL

(LAUGHING.) It's exactly like her.

JUDITH

What a clever son I have!

SIMON

(SIMON SITS.) Now then, mother!

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO BETWEEN SOREL AND SIMON.) It's too wonderful--when I think of you both in your perambulators. . . . Oh dear, it makes me cry! (SHE SNIFFS.)

SOREL

I don't believe you ever saw us in our perambulators.

JUDITH

I don't believe I did.

DAVID

(DAVID ENTERS TOP OF STAIRS AND CROSSES TO LANDING. HILARIOUSLY.) It's finished!

JUDITH

(JUDITH CROSSES UP TO BELOW LANDING.) What, dear?

DAVID

The Sinful Woman. (DAVID CROSSES DOWN TO JUDITH.)

JUDITH

How splendid. Read it to us now.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES TO LEFT CORNER OF COUCH.) I've got the last chapter here.

JUDITH

Go on, then. (JUDITH CROSSES LEFT TO TABLE AND SITS.)

SANDY

(SANDY ENTERS AND CROSSES UP STAIRS. EXITS.) Good morning.

JUDITH

I seem to know that boy's face.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES LEFT TO JUDITH. PREPARING TO READ.)
Listen. You remember when Violet was taken ill in Paris?

JUDITH

Yes, dear.--Marmalade, Simon. (SIMON STANDS, STEPS UP TO SERVING TABLE AND THEN BACK TO SEAT.)

DAVID

Well, I'll go on from there.

JUDITH

Do, dear.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES LEFT TO AROUND TABLE. READING.) "Paris in spring, with the Champs Elysees alive and dancing in the sunlight; lightly dressed children like gay painted butterflies--"

SIMON

(WHISPERING TO SOREL.) What's happened to the barometer?

SOREL

(SIBILANTLY.) I don't know.

DAVID

Damn the barometer! (DAVID STEPS UP TO SIMON.)

JUDITH

Don't get cross, dear.

DAVID

Why can't you keep quiet, Simon, or go away!

SIMON

Sorry, father.

DAVID

Well, don't interrupt again. . . . (SIMON DROPS BAROMETER. READING.) ". . . gay (DAVID STEPS DOWN RIGHT.) painted butterflies; the streets were thronged with hurrying vehicles, the thin peek-peek of taxi-hooters--"

SOREL

I love "peek-peek."

DAVID

(IGNORING HER.) "--seemed to merge in with the other vivid noises weaving a vast pattern of sound which was Paris.

JUDITH

What was Paris?

DAVID

Which was Paris.

JUDITH

What was Paris?

DAVID

You can't say a vast pattern of sound what was Paris.

JUDITH

Yes, but--What was Paris?

DAVID

A vast pattern of sound which was Paris.

JUDITH

Oh, I see.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES RIGHT TO BELOW COUCH. READING.) "Jane Sefton, in her scarlet Hispano, swept out of the Rue St.-Honore into the Place de la Concorde--"

JUDITH

She couldn't have.

DAVID

Why?

JUDITH

The Rue st.-Honore doesn't lead into the Place de la Concorde.

DAVID

Yes, it does. (DAVID STEPS TO RIGHT CORNER OF COFFEE TABLE.)

SOREL

You're thinking of the Rue Boissy d'Anglas, father.

DAVID

I'm not thinking of anything of the sort.

JUDITH

David darling, don't be obstinate.

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES UP LEFT TO ABOVE COUCH. HOTLY.) Do you think I don't know Paris as well as you do?

SIMON

Never mind. Father's probably right.

SOREL

He isn't right--he's wrong!

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS LEFT.) Go on with your food, Sorel.

JUDITH

Don't be testy, David: it's a sign of age.

DAVID

(FIRMLY.) "Jane Sefton, in her scarlet Hispano, swept out (DAVID CIRCLES LEFT TO JUDITH.) of the Rue St.-Honore into the Place de la Concorde--"

JUDITH

That sounds absolutely ridiculous. Why don't you alter it?

DAVID

It isn't ridiculous; it's perfectly right.

JUDITH

Very well, then; get a map, and I'll show you.

SIMON

We haven't got a map.

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS LEFT TO BETWEEN JUDITH AND SOREL. PUTTING HIS MS. DOWN.) Now, look here, Judith--here's the Rue Royale--(HE ARRANGES THE BUTTER-DISH AND MARMALADE-POT.) --here's the Crillon Hotel, and here's the Rue St.-Honore--

JUDITH

It isn't--it's the Boissy d'Anglas.

DAVID

That runs parallel with the Rue de Rivoli.

JUDITH

You've got it all muddled.

DAVID

(LOUDLY.) I have not got it all muddled.

JUDITH

Don't shout. You have.

SIMON

Why not let father get on with it?

JUDITH

It's so silly to get cross at criticism--it indicates a small mind.

DAVID

(DAVID STEPS RIGHT.) Small mind my foot!

JUDITH

That was very rude. I shall go to my room in a minute.

DAVID

I wish you would. (DAVID CROSSES RIGHT TO COUCH.)

JUDITH

(OUTRAGED.) David!

SOREL

(SOREL STANDS.) Look here, father, mother's right--here's the Place de la Concorde--

SIMON

Oh, shut up, Sorel. (SIMON STANDS AND STEPS LEFT.)

SOREL

Shut up yourself, you pompous little beast. (SOREL STEPS LEFT TO SIMON.)

SIMON

You think you know such a lot about everything, and you're as ignorant as a frog.

SOREL

Why a frog?

JUDITH

I give you my solemn promise, David, that you're wrong.

DAVID

I don't want your solemn promise, because I know I'm right.

SIMON

It's no use arguing with father, mother.

SOREL

(SOREL STEPS RIGHT TO TABLE AND SITS.) Why isn't it any use arguing with father?

SIMON

Because you're both so pig-headed! (SIMON STEPS RIGHT TO TABLE AND SITS.)

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES RIGHT TO COUCH.) Are you content to sit here, Judith, and let your son insult me?

JUDITH

He's your son as well as mine.

DAVID

I begin to doubt it.

JUDITH

(BURSTING INTO TEARS OF RAGE.) David!

SIMON

(CONSOLING HER.) Father, how can you!

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES UP TO STAIRS, STEPS UP TWO.) I'll never attempt to read any of you anything again as long as I live. You're not a bit interested in my work, and you don't give a damn whether I'm a success or a failure.

JUDITH

You're dead certain to be a failure if you cram your books with inaccuracies.

DAVID

I am not inaccurate!

JUDITH

Yes, you are; and you're foul-tempered and spoilt.
(JUDITH CROSSES UP TO DAVID AT STAIRS.)

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES DOWN TO JUDITH.) Spoiled! I like that!
Nobody here spoils me--you're the most insufferable family to live with--

JUDITH

Well, why in Heaven's name don't you go and live somewhere else?

DAVID

There's gratitude!

JUDITH

Gratitude for what, I'd like to know?

SOREL

Mother, keep calm.

JUDITH

Calm! I'm furious.

DAVID

What have you got to be furious about? Everyone rushing round adoring you and saying how wonderful you are--

JUDITH

I am wonderful, Heaven knows, to have stood you for all these years. (See Figure 6.)

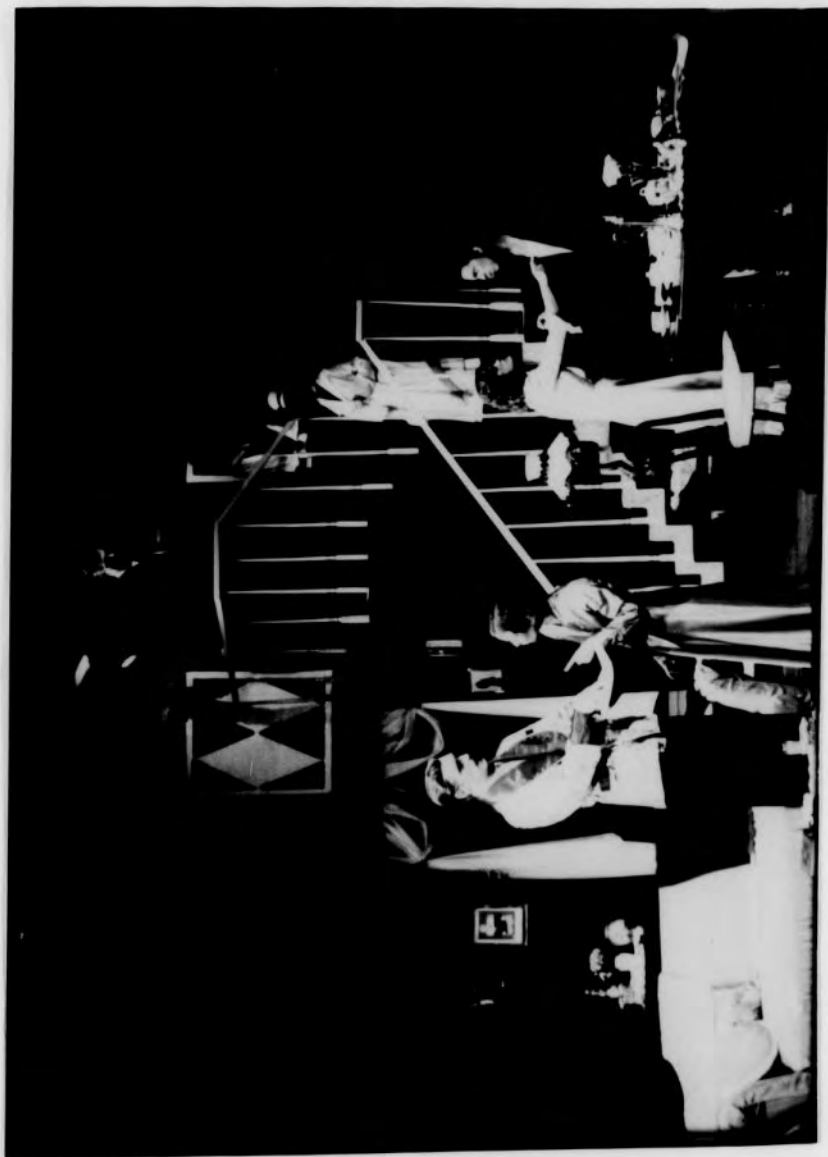


Figure 6

SOREL

Mother, do sit down and be quiet.

SIMON

How dare you speak to mother like that!

(DURING THIS SCENE MYRA, JACKIE, RICHARD, AND SANDY CREEP DOWNSTAIRS, WITH THEIR BAGS, UNPERCEIVED BY THE FAMILY. THEY MAKE FOR THE FRONT DOOR.)

JUDITH

(WAILING.) Oh, oh! (JUDITH CROSSES TO SOREL.) To think that my daughter should turn against me!

DAVID

Don't be theatrical.

JUDITH

I'm not theatrical--I'm wounded to the heart.

DAVID

Rubbish--rubbish--rubbish!

JUDITH

Don't you say Rubbish to me!

DAVID

I will say Rubbish!

(DAVID, JUDITH, SOREL AND SIMON ALL STEP TO CENTER.)

SOREL

Ssshhh, father!

SIMON

That's right! Be the dutiful daughter and encourage your father--

DAVID

Listen to me, Judith--

JUDITH

Oh, this is dreadful--dreadful!

SOREL

The whole thing doesn't really matter in the least--

SIMON

--to insult your mother--

DAVID

The Place de la Concorde--

JUDITH

I never realized how small you were, David. You're tiny--

(RICHARD, MYRA, SANDY AND JACKIE ALL EXIT OUT DOOR.)

(THE UNIVERSAL PANDEMONIUM IS SUDDENLY BROKEN BY THE FRONT DOOR SLAMMING. THERE IS DEAD SILENCE FOR A MOMENT, THEN THE NOISE OF A CAR IS HEARD. SOREL RUNS AND LOOKS OUT OF THE WINDOW.)

SIMON

There now!

SOREL

They've all gone!

JUDITH

(JUDITH STEPS TO SOREL.) How very rude!

DAVID

People really do behave in the most extraordinary manner these days--

JUDITH

(JUDITH, SOREL AND SIMON CROSS TO TABLE AND SIT.) Come back and finish your breakfast, Sorel.

SOREL

All right.

JUDITH

Go on, David; I'm dying to hear the end--

DAVID

(DAVID CROSSES LEFT TO ABOVE TABLE. READING.) "Jane Sefton, in her scarlet Hispano, swept out of the Rue St. Honore into the Place de la Concorde--"

(CURTAIN.)

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

The final chapter of this thesis will deal with four specific areas. They are: (1) achievement of interpretation, (2) actor-director relationship, (3) audience response, and (4) personal comments.

Achievement of Interpretation

The main objective of this director was to entertain his audience, by telling the story as written down by the playwright. For this reason the director chose to put particular emphasis on the setting and other technical aspects of the production. The director wished to create a space in which the lives of the various characters could realistically unfold for the audience.

It was decided at the first production meeting that all parties connected with this production of Hay Fever should use the date of 1929 as their starting point for designing the show. The director was very fortunate in finding such a hard working group of designers. The scenic designer, in particular, created a lovely set which the director felt enhanced the style and mood of the production. The setting did create some blocking and sight-line problems for the director. Most of the problems, however, seemed to be

created by the structural design of the theatre, rather than by the design itself. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Studio Theatre is a limited space in which to work. There is virtually no way to seat a large audience comfortably and still have room to construct a set. The director felt that the seating as originally designed for the production was much too close to the acting area itself. It did not provide the front rows with enough esthetic distance from the actors and at the same time created sight line problems for this section of the audience, and those audience members who were forced to sit directly behind them. The director discussed the possibility of removing the first two rows of seats with the designer and the director of theatre, however, it was later decided that because of financial considerations such a change would not be possible. The director made an attempt to correct part of the problem by re-blocking sections of the script, and feels that he was at least partially successful in solving the problem.

To accent the setting, which had been designed using black curtains for walls, the director made a request to his costume designer that he provide the actors with costumes which were bright enough in color to stand out against the black surroundings. He responded by creating a costume design that was rich and alive with color. The only difficulties that the director experienced with his costume designer were over certain short cuts that the designer

wished to take regarding some of the costumes. The designer was an undergraduate with almost no experience in the area of actual costume design. For this reason he seemed to lack initiative. The director was able to solve this problem by being very explicit as to what he wanted in each characters costume. The director personally supervised and approved each costume that was built or borrowed for the production. The director was very pleased with the ultimate costume designs for Hay Fever. He believes both he and his costume designer were able to benefit from their close relationship.

One of the most satisfying technical areas of the production was props. The graduate student in charge of properties did an outstanding job in locating authentic period set decorations and properties. He seemed to understand immediately what the director wanted for props and was willing to spend long hours trying to locate just the right items.

Another hard worker was the sound designer. The director felt that music should be a very important element of his production. However, the director wanted each piece of music to make a statement about the section of play it was to precede. For this reason the director and the sound designer would spend long hours listening to selection after selection until just the right piece was found for every spot in the show. All of the music selection for Hay Fever was taken from original recordings of the late 1920's. No

effort was made to improve the sound quality of the selections. Both the director and the sound designer felt that the flat and rather "tinny" sound of the recordings of that era, best suited the mood of the production. The director was very fortunate to receive considerable praise for his use of music and the manner in which it was integrated into the production.

The director believes that the long hours he spent in consultation with his designers enabled him to achieve a very unified production in terms of design. The director found it much more difficult to unify his production in terms of acting and style.

As the director stated in Chapter I, his goal was to produce Hay Fever in a realistic manner. The director wanted his actors to create real people, who found themselves in some rather unusual situations. The director, however, ran into some problems in producing the play in an entirely realistic style. The script itself presented the major problem. Although it was written in a manner that was considered highly realistic in 1925, the director felt that his audience would not accept a production that did not in some way make an attempt to stretch beyond the confines of pure realism as we know it today. For this reason the director decided to produce Hay Fever in a style that has been termed exaggerated realism. Exaggerated realism takes the basic elements of a realistic style and expands them, with

the ultimate goal of maintaining believability. There are many dangers inherent in this style, the most obvious being the tendency to slip into melodrama. The director tried to eliminate this problem by encouraging his actors to believe in their characters and their actions.

The director reinforced this acting style through his design concepts and through his direction. Special attention was given to the physical nature of the play and its characters. The director inserted a great deal of movement and physical business into the production. The goal was to produce a physical pattern for the production that went just slightly beyond the realm of realism. The director was confident that an American audience would accept this style whereas an English audience might not.

This exaggerated style also served to bring out the satirical elements of the play, in the manner in which the director had hoped for. By making every situation too real for the characters to cope with, the situation becomes that much funnier for the audience. This style worked particularly well for Judith, because being an actress of the 1920's she would have been trained in the art of melodrama, and it seems only natural that some melodramatic tendencies should have rubbed off on her and the other members of the Bliss family. However, the director did not want Judith or any other character to remain on one level. All of the characters in Hay Fever have moments when they speak the

truth, and must be very real and believable for the audience. For this reason the director used theatre games in an attempt to help the actors find truth and believability within their characters. These games shall be discussed later in section two of this chapter.

The only disappointment of this director concerning his production was that he was not able to achieve the consistency of style which he had hoped for. Certain characters became far more believable than others, because certain actors were better able to master the exaggerated style than others. The director feels that he may have solved these problems had he been able to have a longer rehearsal period; however, the director is confident that every actor was able to expand himself artistically by the work done on this production.

There was room for improvement in Hay Fever, as there is with any theatrical production. Often a director must sacrifice certain details in order to achieve others. Nevertheless, this director firmly believes that his production was a highly successful one. He was able to achieve the desired audience response, while at the same time providing an effective learning experience for his cast, and just as importantly for himself.

Actor-Director Relationship

The actor-director relationship during the production of Hay Fever was very satisfying. The entire cast and

crew shared a spirit of enthusiasm which is rare in theatre. The cast was chosen from the auditions of over sixty theatre majors. The cast consisted of four graduate and five undergraduate students. This director found his cast to be loyal, dedicated, and professional in every way.

In the hope of creating an ensemble cast, the director began a series of exercises at the first rehearsal which were continued throughout the rehearsal and production period. These exercises consisted of vocal and physical warm-ups as well as exercises designed to strengthen the actor's mental concentration. At the beginning of each rehearsal and performance, a different member of the cast would lead the group in physical warm-ups. Next, a cast member who was also serving as assistant vocal coach would concentrate on vocal exercises designed to help the actors master an English dialect. She was later assisted by a trained vocal coach, who would observe rehearsals and then take diction and dialect notes.

The director had chosen Hay Fever partly because of the stylistic possibilities inherent within the script. It afforded him great opportunities to work with actors in a style which was foreign to them. The major problem that the actors seemed to have during the rehearsal period, was how to make their characters into believable people that the audience would be able to recognize. In an effort to assist his cast with this problem the director would hold individual

conferences with each member of the cast at least once a week to discuss any problems they were having. These sessions proved to be a valuable aid to the director, because they enabled the director to establish a firm basis of communication between himself and his actors.

Another effective tool for helping the actors find truth in their characters was the use of theatre games. The actors played two games taken from Spolin's book, Improvisation For The Theatre, which the director felt were very helpful. The first game used was one that involved the use of a ball. In this game, members of the cast would pass a small ball to the character which they were addressing at the time. The object of the game was to pass the ball in the true manner in which the character felt about the line or the person he was talking to, and not in the manner that was perhaps indicated in the line itself. The manner in which the ball was passed served to establish the sub-text for the scene. The director found this game to be very helpful in determining places in the script where the actors were unclear of their sub-text or had perhaps made a wrong choice regarding sub-text. When the director spotted a trouble spot he would stop the action and discuss what he had observed with the actors involved. The game would then continue until another trouble spot was observed by the director. The other game which was used by the director was called "gibberish". In this game the actors were

instructed to speak their lines in nonsensical syllables, while at the same time trying to convey the original meaning of the line. By using gibberish the actors were forced to find new and more effective ways of communicating rather than merely relying on the spoken dialogue. The actors suddenly became more animated and began using more gestures and movement in order to convey ideas. The gibberish game not only proved to be great fun, but it served a useful purpose. It helped the actors to find new and fresh business and movement and not to rely on the obvious. The director was able to see an improvement in movement and gestures from all of the cast after these exercises were completed. The director wanted to use other games, but time limitations forced him to discontinue them. The director did feel, however, that the use of these games was a valuable tool in making Hay Fever an ensemble production.

The only weakness that the director felt he had while working with his cast was giving them the confidence in this period and style that they seemed to need. The three actresses who were playing Judith, Jackie, and Myra all suffered from a lack of confidence within their roles. They all three openly expressed concern over this problem to the director and he made a concerted effort to help each actress. The director feels that he was able to solve most of this problem by a lot of extra rehearsal time and discussion with each of the three actresses.

The actress who played Myra lacked confidence in her role because she felt she was not physically suited to the part. The director attempted to solve this problem by helping the actress find things about her own physical nature which would work in the director's conception of Myra. The director was also assisted by the costume designer who developed special costumes for the actress. Another problem that this actress developed during the rehearsal period was a tendency not to vary her vocal patterns or movement. The actress was aware of this problem and asked the director for his help. During a series of three rehearsals the actress was asked to vary her performance as much as she possibly could. She was instructed not to repeat any vocal pattern or movement if she could possibly help it. By forcing the actress to use this much variety she was able to overcome at least some of the problem. The actress never achieved the variety during performance that the director had hoped for.

The director feels that he was able to make the most progress in the area of building confidence with the actress who played Jackie. This actress, although perfectly suited to the role physically, could not get in touch with the character mentally. The director was able to help this actress by devoting a lot of personal attention to her through outside work between rehearsals. The director was very pleased with the progress that the actress made during rehearsals and was pleased by her final interpretation of the role.

The director also devoted significant outside time to the actress who played Judith. This actress lacked confidence in her role because of inexperience. The role of Judith is by far the most demanding in the show. This actress worked harder than anyone else in this production to overcome her weaknesses. She spent long hours in private discussion and rehearsals with the director in an effort to achieve exactly the interpretation that the director desired. This constant struggle to achieve is what enabled the actress to overcome most of her lack of confidence in the part. She grew artistically more than any cast member and the director felt she gave the strongest performance turned in during the run of Hay Fever.

The director feels that he did some of his best work with the male members of the cast. He was pleased with all of their performances and had virtually no problems with any of the men during the rehearsal period except for the actor who played Richard. This actor had never been on stage before, a fact that the director did not learn until after Hay Fever had opened. The problems that the director had had with this actor were mainly ones of communication. The director now realizes that he assumed that the actor knew much more than he did.

The other male actors in the cast all turned in fine performances. The director was most pleased with the performance turned in by the actor who played Sandy. It was a role

which offered him a challenge, and the director feels that he met that challenge. It was this actor who best achieved the acting style of exaggerated realism that the director had wanted. No matter what situation he found himself in, or what he did, his character remained totally believable.

The original goal of creating an ensemble production was only partially achieved. On four of the five performances the cast was able to function together as a unit as the director had planned. However, on closing night, before an audience comprised of about seventy percent theatre students most of that unity was destroyed by nerves and tension in the cast. The performances given that night did not equal the heights the cast had achieved previously.

Despite the problems in the final performance, the director feels that his production was highly successful. The cast worked long and hard on the director's production and he is grateful for their dedication and loyalty.

Audience Response

After four weeks of rehearsal, Hay Fever opened to a capacity audience in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Studio Theatre. During its five-night run from March 22 to March 27, 1976, there were no empty seats in the house. In fact there was such a demand for tickets that the director was obligated to add extra seating for each performance.

The director feels that his production was highly successful in terms of audience response. His goal was to

entertain his audience, and judging from the reviews received and the comments made to the director, he was able to accomplish his goal.

The director received numerous praises on the design elements of the production from both reviewers and student design majors. The director also received praise from his thesis committee for the integration of all the design elements, and also for his choice of music for the production. The actors also received praise for their work. A copy of the review written by Joe Knox of the Daily News is included in Appendix I.

Much of the best and most constructive criticism however, came from members of the director's thesis committee. Members of this committee felt that the actors had not achieved a true ensemble, and that the director had put too much unjustified business and movement into the production. The director expressed to his committee, that in his judgment the cast had achieved an ensemble atmosphere during rehearsals and performance. The director went on to explain that he felt justified in adding additional business and movement into the script. The director believed then and still believes that these additions were essential for entertaining an American audience watching a play of this nature. Additional comments were made by the committee concerning the consistency of acting and style within the production itself. The director, as previously stated in this chapter, was aware of these problems and made every effort to eliminate them.

Personal Comments

The director wishes to thank his cast and crew for making Hay Fever such a wonderful experience to direct. He hopes that he enriched their experience as much as they did his. In retrospect this director feels that there is very little he would change about his production. By striving to improve ourselves through criticism we often overlook our achievements to concentrate on our failures. Hay Fever as created by this director is dead, and it will never live in exactly the same form again. Its magic and excitement are now only memories.

During the course of his research and production this director developed a deep respect for the genius of Noel Coward. Coward himself thought that Hay Fever was one of his most difficult works to direct, but he also knew it to be one of the most satisfying when done well. This director will never forget the challenge of directing Hay Fever, and if he were able to bring just one genuine smile or laugh to just one audience member then all of the work was worthwhile.

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APPENDIX 1

B6 Greensboro Daily News, Thurs., March 25, 1976

'Hay Fever' Acted Brilliantly At UNC-G

BY JOE KNOX

Daily News Staff Writer

On going to see the first night performance (Tuesday) of "Hay Fever," Noel Coward's 1925 comedy of manners being presented by UNC-G Theatre, I failed to read the program note in advance of watching the show, and just had a marvelous time bubbling with laughter.

I thought, my goodness, here is without question the wittiest, funniest, most thoroughly amusing and intelligent puff-ball of a play I had ever seen.

I fairly glowed with pleasure at what could only be described as a brilliant performance of a brilliant concoction of comedy. Then on going home and reading through the playbill, I was informed that what I had seen was really satire, a takeoff on how the British upper crust lived and lived it up in the mad mad roaring twenties.

Reflecting on the matter, my feeling is that here, in this outstanding production, one of the finest among many fine plays Greensboro audiences have been privileged to see at UNC-G, you get the best of two stage worlds.

Quite aside from being lovely entertainment, "Hay Fever" is also a devastatingly wicked little commentary on the

A Review

manners and morals of prominent English families as that fabulous decade following World War I drew to a close.

In the family under examination, the mother, Judith Bliss (Wendy Wilson), a famed actress, has retired and talks quite a lot about a comeback. The father, David Bliss (Tony Clay), is an equally famed author, still producing.

Their children, Sorel Bliss (Gale Stahl) and Simon Bliss (Dwight E. Watson), are full-grown brats, carefully trained by absentee parents to be spoiled, selfish, demanding and unbelievably petty.

This "beastly family" is completed by a terribly British maid, Clara, who races menacingly around, snapping starchily at everybody in sight.

Into the home, a country estate at Cookham somewhere south of London, come four weekend visitors. It develops that parents and children have, without advising one another in advance, invited the guests, each a stranger to the other. They all arrive at the same time and the ensuing madhouse is productive of high comedy.

The guests are Myra Arundel (Emili Green); Jackie Coryton (Martha Cassandra Carlson); Richard Greatham (Richard K. Hamby); and Sandy Tyrell (Ludford R. Etheridge). It doesn't matter who was infatuated with whom on original invitation. Each arrangement is totally ignored.

All of the performances were fine, practically without blemish.

There was a touch of Hepburn in Wendy Wilson's interpretation of the mother. Gale Stahl was a jewel as the daughter. Her wild and explosive moods were an unceasing delight. And Dwight Watson delivered a highly polished performance, often self-mocking, frequently reminding of an old time movie star. It could have been a takeoff on Valentino.

Of the guests, Emili Green was superb as the cool ambitious matron who contrived to meet the author. Martha Carlson was a casting director's dream answer to the role of a timid birdbrain. Her encounter with Ludford Etheridge, who also has his hangups, as they are seated on a couch, desperately trying to make conversation, was a panic.

There's lots of game-playing, and it all winds up to a surprise ending that is surprisingly effective and acceptable.

The set is a comfortable living room eclectically furnished with pieces of the period, including some that were amusing. There was a soft-toned piano, and it, by the way, was beautifully played by Richard Hamby as he accompanied Wendy Wilson in "Mad About The Boy." Miss Wilson had a nice voice and low-down mean style right out of the Twenties.

The period costumes of this flat-chested flapper age were a delight, really very pleasing. Gary Weatherly accounted for these, and the set was the work of David Ramsey.

David Grapes directed this gem as his master's thesis.

The play is being staged in the Studio Theatre in the basement of Taylor Building. Very limited seating. It will be presented tonight and again on Friday and Saturday nights at 8:15 p.m.