

LAUGHTER OUTSIDE

A Play

by

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ACT ONE SCENE ONE

A tastefully furnished drawing room. On rise of curtain RONALD is standing at bookcase taking out some books. MRS SIMS, standing in the centre of the room, has several things gathered in her arms and exits at door (C.) She has a queer way of turning round just before she exits as if to make sure she hasn't left anything. Ronald follows her with an armful of books. Enter PHILIP, through door (R.) He is also carrying books which he takes over to bookcase and places in the vacant spaces made by Ronald. Mrs Sims returns with a large vase. She places it on a low table and, turning round, almost knocks against the table and the vase is almost upset but Philip catches it. She goes out without noticing what has almost happened.

The keynote of this situation is that one person is leaving and another is taking on the flat. Throughout the dialogue the strong pedal must be on the action of MOVING IN and MOVING OUT. Re-enter Mrs Sims with a dictaphone. Philip is standing at bookcase.

MRS SIMS Excuse me, sir, shall I put this here?

PHILIP (turning quickly) Oh, please be careful with that.

MRS SIMS Such a quaint little gramophone.

PHILIP It isn't a gramophone. It's a dictaphone.

MRS SIMS A dictaphone!

PHILIP Yes, it's the latest invention in dictaphones.

Mrs Sims puts it down

PHILIP I suppose I've taken you over with the flat?

MRS SIMS Yes sir ... I hope I will suit you.

PHILIP Oh yes, I should think so. I'm not hard to please.

MRS SIMS That's what I always say myself, although I will say I'm sorry to see Mr Alden go. Such a nice gentleman. He's been so put out lately. Went quite off his food for a week. I thought it was my cooking but he said no... he just hadn't been able to sleep.

PHILIP Is that so. Well you won't have that complaint with me. I sleep very well at night.

MRS SIMS I suppose you need all the sleep you can get if you are standing for Parliament. And the proper food also. I shall certainly see to that.

PHILIP (As he prepares to exit) That's very kind of you ... but just now I should like that chest of drawers emptied in the bedroom. I found it full of feminine apparel

MRS SIMS They belong to Mrs Alden. I'll find out what to do with them and attend to it. I'll just tidy here a bit first.

(Exit Philip)

Mrs Sims is very interested in the dictaphone. Pretending no dust about it she accidentally starts it working. Comedy business with Mrs Sims trying to stop it.

(Dictaphone reproducing Philip's voice)

I am often put in the gallery of ridicule for using the words honour and ~~decency~~ ideals, virtue, cleanliness and decency- contemptible words in this day of high polished sophistication- cynicism- self-expression- Anything to disguise lack of character - weak morals.

(Philip re-enters with more hooks. He dashes to the dictaphone to turn it off.)

MRS SIMS It seemed to start of its own accord. I was only dusting it... it needed it ever so badly.

PHILIP You must never touch it again no matter how dusty it gets. (Sternly)

MRS SIMS Very well sir.

PHILIP You see this is my public on which I practice. I make speeches and it remembers them.

MRS SIMS Yes sir... But I will say that it was a very nice speech - that is - what I heard of it, sir.

(Telephone bell rings)

MRS SIMS That telephone again. It has been doing nothing else but ring today. You would think it would be quite worn out.

(It rings again. Sound of footsteps hurrying)

MRS SIMS I daren't answer it. It means another white lie.

(Enter Ronald with towel, hastily wiping his face.)

RONALD Answer that, Mrs Sims. Ask who it is and repeat the name just as you did before. (Turning to Philip) Another of my wife's lovers wanting me to remember him kindly in the divorce.

MRS SIMS (At phone) Hello, who is it speaking please? (To Ronald) He says he's a friend of yours.

RONALD I've heard that several times today. Ask his name.

MRS SIMS I'm sorry but would you please give me your name. (Turns to Ronald) It's Mr McDougal. I didn't recognise your voice.

(She looks at Ronald at this stage. He shakes his head to convey that he doesn't wish to speak. Mrs Sims gets confused. During this telephone episode Philip shows by his attitude that he feels himself de trop)

MRS SIMS I'm sorry.... Mr Alden's not at home ...

RONALD Say I've moved.

MRS SIMS (All confused and speaking down phone) Wait a minute, I can't hear. (Turns to Ronald) What did you say sir?

RONALD

MOVED

Say I've moved

MRS SIMS

He says he's moved. I mean that's the message he left. No, I wasn't speaking to him. It was the grocery man. Oh well, I always call the grocery man sir. It makes them feel important. They serve you so much better I find. No he didn't leave ~~any~~ address. Yes it is strange isn't it? But so many things are strange these days I find. If you'll excuse me I'll ring off. I'm not very good on the telephone, goodbye.

RONALD

Thank you very much Mrs Sims

MRS SIMS

(Moving to door) Oh, there was something I wanted to ask you. Dear, dear, I don't know if I'm on my head or my heels today. Oh yes, I wanted to ask you what I should do with Mrs Alden's personal effects.

RONALD

Oh, get everything together and send them into storage. The blue tea set is hers. (As an after thought)

MRS SIMS

I'm afraid I had a slight mishap with that. . . Most unfortunate

RONALD

You mean it's broken, of course there is some of it left.

MRS SIMS

Well, one or two cups. Very stupid of me. I shall replace them, of course

RONALD

Oh, never mind that now. There's no one to tell the story

MRS SIMS

I'm sorry to see you leave Mr Alden. You've been so kind but one learns that the best of things pass away

RONALD

Yes, Mrs Sims, that's quite true. But you'll find Mr Warren ^{equally} nice I'm sure

MRS SIMS

I hope you're not going to be too unhappy. You know when one is old and looks back over the years you find that all the heartaches that were quite unbearable at the time make just a pattern, and a very pretty pattern too.

RONALD

Thanks Mrs Sims, I shall try to remember that. Now what about my luggage Is it ready?

MRS SIMS

Quite ready, sir, except a few things from the laundry. Oh, I very nearly forgot them. How stupid of me.

(Exit Mrs Sims)

(Ronald takes a sort of parting look round as Philip re-enters)

RONALD

(Standing in front of picture over mantelpiece) I don't suppose you'll want that picture of Beatrice left there? Will you?

PHILIP

(Looking at picture) So that's the lady I've heard so much about. I wouldn't know what she looked like from that

RONALD

(Disparagingly) No, it isn't much like her. It was made by one of those artist chaps who thought she had a soul. That's it

PHILIP

(Coming up for closer inspection) What's the inscription?

RONALD "Dryad, golden, naked. Wings of flame. Quick. Wild in the wood". Well maybe he's right.

PHILIP It's not a bad picture you know. There's understanding and feeling in it

RONALD He learned about life from Beatrice. I'll throw it in for good measure with the other fixtures.

PHILIP Thanks a lot. You know I've heard quite a bit about your wife. I don't want to be personal but is it possible that it could all be true?

RONALD It could. She has every vice and every virtue known to mankind. An impossible woman. That's the best I can say for her at the moment

PHILIP Really?

RONALD Well, anyway she's a dangerous woman and I'm going to stay out of her path

PHILIP Of course the trouble with the country ~~just now~~ today is that the women are much stronger than the men. A sure sign of decadence

RONALD I'm not the least interested in the country just now. I only want to get away from my wife. If she finds me she's clever enough to convince me I'm wrong about her

PHILIP Of course I don't know all the facts

RONALD Simply this. She has a mission. She feels it a duty to seduce every young man whom she considers repressed - that is, if he interests her sufficiently

PHILIP Oh, indeed

RONALD She calls it belonging to life, and she can convince you she is doing a noble thing. She says you must develop their personalities and bring out their latent possibilities - you feel an utter worm not to appreciate her ideas

PHILIP (Ironically) It does sound rather noble

RONALD With the most perfect artistry she explains how a young man should be seduced romantically and in rhythm with life

PHILIP In fact she seems to be a very modern wife

RONALD Of course, I don't say there may be some truth in her views, but as her husband I disapprove of them

PHILIP Yes a husband's point of view would naturally be different

RONALD One approves of her as long as one doesn't become emotionally involved with her

PHILIP Did you at first?

RONALD Yes, when I was only a possibility she was bringing me out

PHILIP Then you knew what to expect, didn't you?

RONALD I've tried to understand - but I find it increasingly difficult to

- RONALD I've tried to understand - but I find it increasingly difficult to appreciate her bringing out the latent possibilities of such an extensive circle of my friends
- PHILIP Some of your friends seem very charming
- RONALD I don't find fault with her taste. She has unerring instinct for recognising that "je ne sais quoi" in a man
- PHILIP Did you ever try giving her a sound spanking?
- RONALD No. I haven't the strength. Besides, she would only have enjoyed it. She thrives on scenes of violence. I only want peace
- PHILIP Thank God I don't take women seriously
- (Mrs Sims enters carrying a pair of red pyjamas)
- MRS SIMS Oh, excuse me, sir, but I found these among Mrs Alden's personal effects. I was sure they couldn't be hers. See, they are quite long.
- RONALD Well, red isn't exactly my colour
- MRS SIMS They are lovely colour aren't they?
- RONALD (To Philip) Would you like to take these over with the fixtures also?
- PHILIP Blue is more my colour
- RONALD Put them back, Mrs Sims. She is probably very sentimental about them. (To Philip) Well, on this note I turn over the old homestead to you
- (Door bell rings)
- RONALD Probably someone coming to pick me up
- PHILIP (Lightly) How about a cup of coffee before you go?
- RONALD Not a bad idea, but I have to swallow it and run. I suppose this is Jim Rawlings and his wife. I am taking refuge with them
- (Enter JIM and CELIA ushered in by Mrs Sims. Jim enters backwards carrying a face to face conversation with Mrs Sims)
- JIM (In doorway) Yes, Mrs Sims, you're getting younger and younger every day. (Turns right and only sees Ronald. To Ronald) Hello Ronald. Hope we haven't kept you waiting. We had a puncture
- CELIA Don't believe it. He had a drink. . . several drinks
- JIM You keep out of my excuses
- RONALD Meet Philip Warren. . . prospective member of Parliament - author - rising public character and now in possession of the flat
- JIM (Turning round and seeing Philip for the first time) Well I'm damned. Fancy your coming into this suite of iniquity

- PHILIP How are you? Mrs Rawlings, I presume
- JIM No. She's my wife but she insists on using her own name
- CELIA Jim's an idiot. (to Philip) Anyhow, you can call me Celia
- PHILIP We were about to have a cup of coffee. Make it coffee for four, Mrs Sims
- MRS SIMS (Who has been standing in doorway) Very good, sir. But it's only Camp Coffee you know
- JIM That's all right, Mrs Sims. There'll be no grounds for divorce in that any way
- CELIA Ha ha ^{ha}
- RONALD I didn't know you two knew each other
- JIM Oh Lord, yes. I knew his father. We both occupied the same editorial chair - the school magazine. He succeeded me when I was sacked for reasons that were endorsed on my school report. He was much more successful. Used to write nice stories with a moral in them
- PHILIP I suppose you thought them rather terrible
- JIM Frankly I did I wrote the filthy stories and they sell like hot cakes. We ought to collaborate
- PHILIP I'm afraid our styles wouldn't blend. You see I've followed my father's example. I'm keen on pointing out the moral
- JIM Great. With my dirt and your ideas. . . we'd write masterpieces. ^{masterpieces}
- CELIA Oh, I've remembered now. You're the author of that funny book that all the talk's about
- PHILIP Well, it wasn't intended to be funny. It was rather serious as a matter of fact
- (Jim wanders about the room discovering the dictaphone)
- CELIA Yes, I know, but it is funny nevertheless. Pulls everything and everybody to pieces gorgeously
- PHILIP My father spent his entire life getting the material and died leaving me to write the book
- (Jim starts dictaphone)
- JIM What a grand idea. Listen
- (DICTAPHONE. I am often put in the pillory of ridicule for using the words honour and ideals, virtue, cleanliness and decency - contemptible words in this day of high polished sophistication - cynicism - self-expression - Anything to disguise lack of character - weak morals

- (Philip, embarrassed, goes over to stop it)
- PHILIP If you don't mind I would rather not -
- CELIA Oh do let us hear it
- JIM Nothing wakes people up like giving them a good old kick in the pants. You ought to do well in Parliament, Philip. You've got the right technique
- PHILIP Sincerity requires a technique. It isn't accepted in its natural state
- CELIA Must be good to have ~~ideas~~ ^{IDEALS}
- JIM Ideas broke the camel's back. Mind it doesn't break yours. What do you say, Ronald?
- RONALD Nothing on that subject. Knowing Mrs Sims I'm just wondering when the coffee will arrive
- PHILIP ~~URGENTLY~~ Frightfully sorry, it shouldn't be a moment.
- CELIA Seems funny to see you a guest in your own house, Ronald
- JIM I see you've left the Inconstant Nymph hanging on the wall
- CELIA Any news of her, Ronald?
- RONALD Yes . . . a telegram saying having a wonderful time - stop- Missing you terribly - stop
- JIM So you stopped?
- RONALD Exactly
- CELIA It's very sad I suppose but I always did think she cramped your style. (To Philip) Are you taking Mrs Sims over with the flat?
- PHILIP Oh yes
- JIM And Ronald's domestic complications also? It's too bad Beatrice is away She might go in with the rest of the things
- PHILIP Oh no. I wouldn't appeal to her. I'm ^{MUCH} too ordinary. I'm not her type
- JIM That's quite true. You've got hair on your chest. That lets you out ^{likes her men a bit more}
- CELIA Beatrice doesn't know what she wants. I'm certain a good strong hairy chest is what she needs
- JIM In that case Philip you're IT
- PHILIP Are you trying to force me into the "Line up" of Beatrice's lovers? (Hesitating over the name)
- CELIA No, that will happen naturally. She believes in things happening naturally
- RONALD Yes . . . as I told you Philip. . . in rhythm with life

- JIM Now that's settled. She will be very good for you, Philip
- PHILIP I am very content as I am, thank you, and from what I hear about her she would be utterly objectionable to me and I should dislike her immediately. To be perfectly frank I dislike her now.
- JIM I'm sorry - we'll change the subject but it will be difficult
- PHILIP It's strange I should suddenly find myself the central receiving station of the domestic and romantic relations of some woman I've never seen nor wish to see
- CELIA Quite right, Philip. You be different. Don't fall for her. But you will and later you'll say, "God, what a fool I've been"
- RONALD Well, anyway, you're safe for the present
- (Mrs Sims enters with coffee)
- CELIA Shall I pour out?
- PHILIP ~~PLEASE~~ ^{PLEASE} Passé. (There's a hull in the conversation) I didn't mean to be rude, Jim. By all means continue the subject if there's no other
- JIM Right. I will. I must defend her. (Makes gesture of drinking toast to Beatrice's picture) To our hostess. She's really a very nice person Of course she needs understanding. She'll never bore you anyway
- CELIA Don't listen to Jim. He's in love with her too. Sits back and applauds her most ridiculous behaviour - actually encourages it
- JIM I'm a connoisseur. I appreciate rare objects
- CELIA At present I am very annoyed with her. She has disrupted the lives of too many of my friends
- JIM All the same a few more women like Beatrice would improve the backbone of the British Empire
- PHILIP What has become of her various young men when she has finished with them? (Quizzically)
- RONALD That's just it. She doesn't finish with them
- CELIA No. She tortures them within an inch of their lives and then they crawl into a hole as Ronald is doing, like an injured animal at bay. . . fangs bared, foaming at the mouth, growling . . mad -
- JIM All because an adorable woman insists that they live in rhythm with life. Perfectly absurd
- CELIA She calls it soul development
- PHILIP May I have another cup of coffee?
- CELIA Certainly. Yes, she will relentlessly develop your soul and make you eat raw carrots for vitamins. All that's supposed to put you in rhythm with life

- JIM Celia's really very fond of Beatrice in spite of how she talks
- CELIA I'm learning from her. I wish someone would start developing your soul
I'm sure you are out of rhythm with ~~the~~ LIFE
- JIM You have plenty to do nursing the mangled remains of all who escape from her. You enjoy it too
- CELIA Well, some of them were gentlemen and so completely at her mercy
- RONALD (Getting up) Well, the wise thing is to know when not to be a gentleman. Thank goodness I'm sensible
- CELIA ~~gentleman~~
Let me pour you out another coffee
- RONALD No, excuse me if I hurry you on your way
- CELIA Oh, I've just remembered. I've got a date and Jim's got to work. He does nothing but drink . . . work . . . then drink again
- JIM My poor little wife is so neglected she has to resort to the company of boring young men
- CELIA (Rising) Don't you be so sure that I'm bored. You joke about it but one of these days I shall follow Beatrice's example and express myself
- JIM Very well, then I shall follow Ronald's example and divorce you, afterwards I'll seduce you, to live with me in sin - saving your presence, Philip
- PHILIP Oh, don't mind me
- CELIA I wouldn't live with you in sin. You haven't any sex appeal
- JIM I don't need sex appeal
- CELIA But I do, darling
- JIM My little wife is very clever
- PHILIP You people are too much for me. I'm just plain old-fashioned man with ideals
- RONALD Well, I hope you'll find everything all right, Philp. I'm leaving everything in your hands. Here are the keys. Beatrice has the other set. You don't know where I've gone if anybody wants to know
- PHILIP Well, that's alright, because I don't know
- CELIA He's coming with us of course
- PHILIP But I don't know your address
- CELIA You'd better have it in case of emergencies. Have you got a card Jim?
- JIM Yes, pink edged for purity. (taking one from his case)

RONALD Don't forget, Philip. That's for your information only

PHILIP Alright. It's safe with me

CELIA Don't forget to look us up, Philip, as soon as you've [↓] settled down. You can tell me all about your ideals

JIM Yes, let's all go idealistic

RONALD Cheerio, Philip. Phone me ^{if} you want me at any time

PHILIP Right, I will. Goodbye

(Ushers them to the door, then returns to [↓] desk preparatory to working. Enter Mrs Sims)

MRS SIMS Did you ring sir?

PHILIP No. I don't think so.

MRS SIMS It must be these ice cream bicycle bell, or it might be my liver. I always seem to be hearing bells.

PHILIP Is everything cleared away uptair ? I mean Mrs Alden's apparel

MRS SIMS I've put them together in a box. It gave me a queer feeling packing away the little things she was so fond of

PHILIP You know Mrs Alden quite well, I suppose Mrs Sims?

MRS SIMS Oh, yes, I've been here a long time. She did terrorise Mr Alden so, poor man. I hope for his sake she won't come back

PHILIP Yes. . . quite

MRS SIMS But in a way she was quite domestic

PHILIP Oh, by the way, can you [↓] make waffles? I'm very fond of sausages and waffles

MRS SIMS I'll do my best, Mr Warren. Mrs Alden was strictly vegetarian

PHILIP Never mind about Mrs Alden

MRS SIMS I was [↓] only going to say that she ate raw carrots and wholemeal bread. She quite converted me to it. . . Mr Alden also. It really is better for you I find. It seems vitamins are so necessary these days

PHILIP All the same, Mrs Sims, I want sausages and waffles

MRS SIMS Mrs Alden used to say nuts were a perfect food. They gave you oil . . . and fat. . .and . . .

PHILIP Indigestion

MRS SIMS Oh, not if you chew them well. Twenty -four times I think [↓] is the correct number according to the New Health Society

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PHILIP Really. Wel, I'll stick to sausages and waffles

MRS SIMS You wouldn't like a glass of warm milk to sip while you are working?

PHILIP No thanks. I can't drink and make speeches at the same time like a ventriloquist

MRS SIMS (Smothering a giggle) No, of course not. Then there's nothing at all you want?

PHILIP NO THANK YOU

MRS SIMS Very well sir. (She turns around and knocks over the vase) Oh, I'm sorry sir

PHILIP Never mind

MRS SIMS I don't usually break things. Of course I can try to replace it

PHILIP Just save the pieces. And now Mrs Sims, I want to work

MRS SIMS (As she goes out) There is a little man down the street who is very good at mending things

PHILIP Anything you like, Mrs Sims. Only I am not to be disturbed until dinner I am a very busy man

MRS SIMS Of course sir, very well sir (Exits)

(Philip is very agitated. Walks about the room to clear his head. All is quiet. Philip goes to dictaphone. Starts it going. Clears his throat, wanders about the room and begins

PHILIP "Ladies and gentlemen - I'm sure you will agree with me that this is a frivolous age. An age when man's intellect is prostituted to the work of distorting the simple truths of life. Humanity has lost its morals. It is sick and has no desire to live. It has lost faith in its purpose and cannot face futility."

(At this stage he has wandered in front of the fireplace. He pauses in search of words, looks up at the picture, and unconsciously reads the inscriptions out loud . . .)

"Dryad, golden, naked - wings of flame. Quick, wild in the wood."

(He then goes on with the speech)

"We must return to the old ideals. To a unity of ideals that was found in the Knights of the Round Table. Earnestness and intensity immediately stamp you as a bore to be avoided and sniggered at. If you have anything to say it must be distorted and twisted to be amusing. If it was known that I dreamed of someday becoming Minister of Morals I should be tried for insanity and shrieked at in public places."

(After finishing speech he plays it over on the dictaphone, listening to it with obvious relish until he comes to the point "Dryad, golden etc." This brings him to his feet. He stops dictaphone, takes off record. Seemingly confused for a moment, looks up at picture, says "Well I'm damned!" then walks to waste paper basket and deliberately drops record in it

CURTAIN

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

*Beatrice should
just enter in a hurry*

SCENE: Philip's Bedroom. Twin beds with blue sheets, The room is furnished in exquisite taste. Philip is asleep in one bed, the other is unoccupied. French door (L) leading out on to balcony. The curtains are undrawn and the light of dawn is creeping through the window. There is a door (C) with glass panel. Noise of door being opened off and we can see through the glass door that a light has been switched on. then a girl's voice. . . .

BEATRICE (Off - stage) Please don't make any more noise than you have to . . .
(Noise of baggage being dumped)

. . . just leave them there for the present. How much do I owe you?

TAXI-DRIVER Five bob, miss

BEATRICE There you are. Keep the change

TAXI-DRIVER Excuse me, miss. This ain't no good to me

BEATRICE I'm sorry. I forgot to get English money. Just wait a moment please
(Her footsteps are heard, then the door is opened, and Beatrice comes in quietly and goes over to Philip. She sees only a form under the cover and bends over Philip shaking him gently)

BEATRICE Darling. . . . darling. . . . Ronald darling. (She bends and kisses him)
(Philip sits up suddenly exclaiming "Hello! - Who's there?" Turns on the light. Beatrice backs away in amazement. Philip blinks in the light, not able to say a word. They stare at each other motionless for a moment.)

PHILIP (Stammering) I beg your pardon. . . who are you?
(Beatrice tries to say something)

PHILIP (Quickly) Wait, - you don't have to tell me. You're Beatrice. Mrs A Alden. Ronald's gone. I. . . I live here. I don't know where he is. I'm sorry . . .

(Beatrice stands motionless)

. . . . I say, I'm sorry

BEATRICE You see I. . . (Starts to say something)

PHILIP (Interrupts her) No I don't want to hear any explanations. If you'll excuse me I'll go back to sleep. Good night. (He lies down. Beatrice doesn't move. Philip sits up in bed again) Why don't you say goodnight?

BEATRICE (Very pathetically and crushed) I need some money for the taxi. He's waiting outside

- PHILIP Why didn't you say that was what you wanted? Will you be good enough to hand me my dressing gown?
- BEATRICE (Gets the gown and takes it to him. [✓]She has begun to weep a little) You wouldn't give me a chance to say anything. (As she hands him the gown) Do you like my blue sheets. ~~They are~~ I used to sleep in this bed. Ronald slept there.
- PHILIP (Gets out of bed gingerly and slips on dressing gown) No, I don't like the blue sheets. They are too, well. . . anyway, I shall get white ones
- BEATRICE Oh, please don't. They belong to this room and they match your eyes. I noticed your eyes before you even spoke to me
- PHILIP (Goes to get money from clothes) Never mind about my eyes. Just the same I want white sheets. Here's some money . . .
- BEATRICE (Takes money) Thank you. I don't believe you are really unkind. Your eyes are much too nice. (She goes out) (Heard off) Sorry I was so long. You may keep the change
- TAXI~~?~~DRIVER Not at all, miss. Thank you
↓
(In the meantime Philip is wandering about the room evidently very puzzled and embarrassed. Beatrice re - enters)
- PHILIP NOW LISTEN TO ME. This is a very awkward situation for me. You understand that, don't you?
- BEATRICE But this is my home. I even painted the walls and woodwork myself. I didn't know my husband had moved
- PHILIP Just the same, this is very unusual for me
- BEATRICE Everyone exaggerates things so about me. You see, [✓]no- one seems to understand . . .
- PHILIP I don't want to hear any explanations. You must go, Suppose someone should know you were here at this time of morning! Should have seen you come in?
- BEATRICE No, I tried to be as quiet as possible, but anywa y this is my home. What is ~~my name~~ your name?
- PH ILIP I can't see that it matters. Won't you please go?
- BEAERICE No. Won't you tell me where to find my husband?
- PHILIP No. I promised not ~~To~~ [✓]
- BEATRICE Then I shall have to stay here. Surely you can see how terrible it is for me to come home and find a stranger instead of my husband. I was really very fond of Ronald. But you see. . .
↓
- PHILIP ~~PH~~ Please don't talk. I. . .I don't know what I shall do about you. Of ~~co~~
course you

- PHILIP Of course you are utterly unmanageable. I'll ask you once more to please go. . . I've had a very trying day.. .getting settled
- BEATRICE Yes ... moving into my home. I'm not asking you to go. You are the intruder, not I. If you only knew how unfair it all.. .
- PHILIP I told you I didn't want to hear any explanations. I know they will be good. . . I'll grant you that. Just the same I must not let you stay here a moment longer
- BEATRICE Have you ^{heard} heard all about everything?
- PHILIP I've heard an awful lot about you
- BEATRICE Then you know Ronald - and Jim and Celia . . . (She takes off her hat)
- PHILIP Yes, I know them
- BEATRICE Won't you tell me your name?
- PHILIP My name is Warren and I'm very annoyed that you insist on disturbing me
- BEATRICE Mr Warren. . . I don't believe you are as impolite as you ^{act} act. You look too nice
- PHILIP Frankly I usually am polite. ^{But} - can't you see, (In desperation) Oh Beatrice, won't you please be considerate?
- BEATRICE What is your first name?
- PHILIP That has nothing to do with your being considerate
- BEATRICE You know mine, it gives you an ^{an} ~~unfair~~ unfair advantage
- PHILIP Are we playing a game?
- BEATRICE It seems so. But I only want to tell me where Ronald is
- PHILIP He doesn't want to see you. I had forgotten. He did leave you a message ^{↓ ↓} To get in touch with him through Sawyer and Sawyer of Baker Street. They are his solicitors.
- (Beatrice stands dazed for a moment. She doesn't answer him)
- I couldn't help it. He told me to tell you
- (Beatrice sways as though she is going to faint. Philip ^{CATCHES} catches her)
- You aren't going to faint here, are you?
- BEATRICE I'm just tired. . . He is divorcing me then after vowing he understood. I ^{must} find him. We can't end things in this crude manner. We can at ~~least~~ ^{at least} kiss each other goodbye and say that we are sorry it couldn't ~~last~~ ^{LAST} last forever. You know how I feel. . . I'm certain you do

- PHILIP Yes I'm sincerely sorry for you. But you see I'm very baffled about the whole affair. I've been a sort of central receiving station for it.
- BEATRICE I knew you were really kind. I could see it in your eyes. There is something strangely appealing in them
- PHILIP I would rather you didn't get personal
- BEATRICE I'm sorry. I couldn't help it. I just felt that way. It was the natural thing to say
- PHILIP Are you going to be practical now, and go?
- BEATRICE Can't I make myself a cup of tea? I know where everything is. (She gazes round the room) It is hard to realize that this is no longer my home. ~~And this is the only~~ All my life I wanted a home. . . and this is the only one I ever had. I did it all myself. It was such fun picking up things for it, all over the country, looking in every window for just the right little bit of something
- PHILIP It seems that I hadn't heard all about you
- BEATRICE I was really very happy for a while just being domestic. Then something went wrong. It was Ronald's fault that time. There was another girl. . . he really wanted to forget me. Something like that always happens when I'm being very good. Maybe he thought it wouldn't last. Maybe it wouldn't last. Maybe it wouldn't. . . who knows? I really haven't had a chance to find out
- PHILIP Please don't say any more. You can't imagine what I've been through today
- BEATRICE I know you are very sympathetic with me. . . I feel it
- PHILIP You aren't what I expected. But maybe I'm a fool
- BEATRICE I haven't the least idea what I'm like. Only Ronald didn't seem to be able to manage me at all. Maybe there is a pair of wings inside me that's always trying to fly away and does very often. Then if no one interferes they come back safely to rest for a long time
- PHILIP You need a firm hand. I can see Ronald is not the sort of man for you
- BEATRICE How can he hide from me as though I were a criminal? Even if I have been difficult. (She starts crying) Oh what shall I do? I know everyone has all sorts of ideas about me. Maybe they are true. . . I don't know. (She falls on the bed and buries her face in the pillow)
- PHILIP (Looking helpless) Please don't cry. Get some tea. Pull yourself together like a good girl. . . I. . . I'll help you
- (He lifts her up on her feet. He is very touched. Holds her by the arms looking very intently into her face)
- BEATRICE Do you know why he married me? He said "I would like to marry you. . . you would be an interesting person to have about the house" I felt so flattered. I had never thought I was so interesting before. I haven't quite got used to it yet, really

PHILIP Somehow I know exactly how you feel. But then, I'm romantic and [↓]sentimental

BEATRICE No man has ever loved me. They just run and hide when I need them most

PHILIP You want a man to love you like a mother

BEATRICE Yes, I do .. You know, when Ronald and I married, I'm sure I was more in love than he. He even excused himself to his friends by saying that marrying me wasn't like marrying an ordinary woman and having roses around the door and [↓]twins all over the sofa. I remember how everyone laughed at the way he expressed it. I thought it sounded funny too, yet it hurt something in me

PHILIP Yes, that's twisting things to make them look ridiculous. Beatrice, look at me. (He gazes into her eyes) Are you being truthful to me?

BEATRICE Truth is so large, this is only my side of it.. Ronald always wanted to have freedom also. He has had his affairs. He was forever changing his ideas of our marriage to suit his own whims [↓] *break*

PHILIP Oh, get your tea. . This is all too much for me. I must think

BEATRICE (As she goes to make tea) I've never met anyone like you before

(Philip looks absolutely dumbfounded. Sits on the bed with his head in his hands for a moment. Then goes to his coat, takes out his wallet and finds Jim's card for his telephone number. Picks up phone, dials a number. . . fairly long wait)

PHILIP Hello - is that Regent 0726? Is Mr Alden there? But it's important. . . and urgent in fact. . (another [↓]wait) Hello Ronald. This is Philip So am I sleepy. . Beatrice has arrived. . . Yes, here in this house. . . No. . . she did not hear the number. . . she won't leave until I tell her where to find you. . . I gave her the solicitor's address. . . don't you think it would be best to see her and have a talk? I'm sure she wouldn't hurt you. Of course if you insist on treating her like a criminal. . . It isn't that, the point is this. If I don't tell her where you are and she insists on staying here, I ~~don't~~ have to move. . . that doesn't help me much. I can't be impolite to her. It's no use, besides I feel sorry for her. [↓] Why don't you give her a chance... If I let her stay here you might name me as co - respondent. . . Well, I don't know what I'll do. . . [↓] *She's* so terribly unhappy

[↓] *COMES*
(Hangs up. Beatrice ~~comes~~ in with two cups of tea)

BEATRICE I see Mrs Sims has broken most of my blue tea set

PHILIP She broke a Persian vase of mine today

BEATRICE But she is rather sweet, don't you think so? She once wanted to be an actress, only she said she would have lost caste in Bristol

PHILIP She said you were rather domestic and made everyone eat raw carrots

- BEATRICE But you don't. I know it
- PHILIP I think you are a terrible woman to wake me up in the middle of the night. Do you know I work very hard?
- BEATRICE ~~BEATRICE~~ No. . . Do you?
- PHILIP Yes. I'm very [↓]ambitious. Some day I expect to be a member of Parliament, but I don't know why I should be telling you all this
- BEATRICE It's because you feel I'm interested in you, I think people know these things instinctively don't you?
- PHILIP I don't know. ..Now, let's ~~have a cup of tea~~ get practical
- BEATRICE Will you have a cup of tea?
- PHILIP Well, I don't usually drink tea at this time of the morning
- BEATRICE Never mind. Do something unusual for a change. It's good for you occasionally
- PHILIP (Takes tea) Anyhow you're [↓]cheering up a bit
- BEATRICE It's because I like you. You make me feel that I'm just a little girl and not the least bit interesting
- PHILIP That's all very well but you are getting off the subject. I said. . "Let's be practical"
- BEATRICE But I can't until I know your first name. It wouldn't be proper. Please tell me
- PHILIP You are being funny. Listen to me right now. I have no intention [↓]of having my soul developed or of eating raw carrots . . and my first name is Philip
- BEATRICE Philip..I never knew anyone called Philip before. Philip Warren. .. It sounds sweet
- PHILIP Maybe.. .But I won't have you developing my soul
- BEATRICE Strange our meeting like this. Do you feel something strange about it too? Like a story, isn't it. .. Philip?
- PHILIP I don't know what to think about you. My whole world has been [↓]completely turned upside down today
- BEATRICE Mine too, Somehow I wish I could have met you before you had seen Ronald. It isn't that I mind you knowing all about me. It's just a feeling of . . .I don't know. It's gone now
- PHILIP I shall see Ronald as soon as possible
- BEATRICE It would surprise them very much if I should prove to be so entirely different from their ideas of me

PHILIP Do you think you could?

BEATRICE If someone believed in me strongly enough. (Suddenly looking towards window) Look, the sun is coming up. See the pink clouds. A new day! It's going to be fine

PHILIP Yes. There are lovely dawns this time of the year

BEATRICE And yesterday. . .all yesterdays. . . seem so far away. At this moment I'm just happy

PHILIP If I wasn't a fool I should know that you were just being triumphant over another victim

BEATRICE I wasn't even thinking about you. I was lost in the dawn

PHILIP My mistake

BEATRICE (Gazing out of the window) Look how the sun is coming up amongst the pink clouds. I know a little song. . . it goes like this. . . (Sings softly "I passed by your window when the morning was red; The dew on the rosebuds, the ~~leaves~~ overhead" Do you mind, I feel so like singing to the dawn

PHILIP Yes, I do mind. It's a terrible song. But if you insist

BEATRICE "And oh, I sang softly, so no one could hear" (turning to him) "To wish you good morning, good morning my dear"

PHILIP You know Beatrice. With all I've heard about you, my own instinct of self-preservation should make me laugh at you now and tell you I know that you don't mean all you've been saying. You're just being theatrical but I can't. I don't know why. . . (Gathers up clothes from his bed) You are welcome to your own bed (Philip exits)

(Beatrice ~~walks~~ ^{WALKS} slowly downstage. She opens drawers and finds all her things gone. She looks around the room and sees the box in which Mrs Sims has placed some of her things. She goes to it, takes out one or two treasures and sets them down. Discovers music box. Starts it playing. The sound of the quaint music accentuates her loneliness and makes her feel like a lost child. For the first time she realizes what is actually happening, that her foundations have been swept from under her and she stands there lost in the midst of her personal treasures which are all she has left. Turns to door and opens it

LEFT

BEATRICE (Calls) Philip

PHILIP (Gzuffly) Hullo - what is it?

BEATRICE Oh nothing. . .Just good night

(She closes the door and stands looking lost and alone. The music box is still playing)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

SCENE: The Drawing Room at Jim's house. Jim, Ronald, and Philip are present and have apparently been in conversation for some time. Cecilia is just answering the telephone

CELIA Hallo. Oh, it's you, Beatrice. (She looks round at them all) This is quite unexpected. Where are you? Oh no, I haven't heard anything. Well I've got away from the old intrigues. It's quite a relief. Are you going to stay there? Oh, Ronald. . . I haven't seen him. . . .

PHILIP (To Ronald) It would be much simpler if you would speak to her. She can't do you much harm over the telephone

RONALD I would just rather not. If you don't want her to stay ~~there~~ . . . put her out

JIM (To Philip) Take her over with the flat

CELIA Be quiet. She can hear you. (At phone) No, you didn't hear Ronald's voice. That was Jim calling me. He is in the bath tub. He wants me to wash his back. I'm terribly busy just now. I really can't ask you over. I'm sorry about everything but there seems to be nothing I can do about it. I suppose it had to happen sooner or later. Give me a ring sometimes and let me know where you are. Oh no, I'm not annoyed with you. I must go now. No, I told you Ronald was not here. Should I see him I'll ask him to call and see you. (Putting down phone) Well, I feel awfully mean. She sounded so pathetic. Won't you change your mind and see her Ronald?

RONALD I don't want to see her. I'm through

CELIA She said she only wanted to end things in a friendly way

RONALD That, of course, I don't believe. It's no use pretending Beatrice is anything but Beatrice. Anyhow, I appreciate your not telling her I'm here

CELIA I didn't do it for you. I did it because I'm fond of my furniture. I don't wish my things thrown about in any burst of passion she may feel on seeing you. I don't approve of your attitude at all

RONALD It's against the law to end things in a friendly way. I must have bitterness towards her, it's the law

PHILIP Of course in a way it's nothing to do with me, but I have seen her and talked to her and I have a feeling, Ronald, that you may be wrong. Your mode of escape is certainly wrong

JIM We are all escaping life in different directions

RONALD And failing completely it seems. . . a monastery is the only thing. Peace is all I ask of life

PHILIP A coward will never know peace

JIM Peace only exists in comparison. After war is peace. It is only a short interval between conflicts. What you seem to want is unconsciousness

- RONALD Yes, that's all I want of life. More and more unconsciousness. And if you want to have an affair with my wife Philip, rest assured I shall not interfere
- PHILIP You put such a sofdid interpretation of *my* interest. I only know she has not been given a fair chance. I have talked to her. I know she is sincere
- RONALD Yes. The wanton sincerity of a child. You never know what she is going to be sincere about next
- PHILIP My idea of her is that she is an emotional and imaginative child, trying to live up to how other people see her
- RONALD *WARRN*
You have been carried away by her personality but I want you as a prospective fellow sufferer.
- PHILIP I'm not a prospective fellow sufferer. Get that idea out of your head. It's only that Beatrice would feel happier if you could see her point of view
- RONALD I'm quite certain she would. That's the only thing that ever does make her happy and no one else is allowed a point of view. Never having been her lover you don't know how impossible she is
- JIM Look at me, as her platonis friend I am never allowed to say a word in her defence
- CELIA You'd give your eye teeth to have an affair with her
- JIM Certainly. I'd present them to her on a silken cushion any day
- PHILIP (Ironically) I know I am a dull light among you brilliant intellectuals and have no sense of humour, but if it's contagious I'll catch it. I'm certainly being exposed to it. Personally, I think it's hardly the time to be funny
- RONALD What do you want me to do? Break down and forgive her? Give her another chance?
- PHILIP I think if you were wise you would *mymphs*
- RONALD Although some of my best friends may be sexual maniacs I wouldn't care for them as either wives or mistresses
- PHILIP How can you be so ruthlessly. . . Well it is ruthless of you to strip a woman who has been something to you, of every vestige of woman hood. Have you ever looked for the woman in her without all this mad spirit of life nonsense?
- RONALD Are you trying to get an argument with me Philip?
- PHILIP *I AM*
I suppose I am trying to waken some spark of chivalry in you
- ~~RONALD~~
CELIA Well you are wasting your time

- CELIA Well you're wasting your time
- RONALD Yes.. .I have neither the energy nor the inclination
- JIM We are all old-fashioned cads around here. The hero has had his day. This is the day of the cad
- PHILIP A sickly sounding word. Once it was a challenge for a duel. Now apparently, you can say it to your best friend
- JIM If you smile *(you are a cad yourself?)*
- RONALD What is a cad Jim?
- JIM A man who displeases a woman
- RONALD Women have used the word cad to lash us into subjection long enough. I think it's time we said "Lay on McDuff" to them
- JIM Don't let the witches fool you. We are all born of woman and doomed to defeat
- RONALD A very interesting thought
- CELIA It's wise to put yourselves entirely in our hands. It arouses our protective instincts
- RONALD Yes, to protect us from everything but yourselves. A monastery is the only thing. I'm going to give up sex and take up rude postal cards instead
- (Outside a barrel organ starts playing)
- Throw that barrel organ a sixpence and tell him to go away. He's breaking my heart
- (Celia goes to the window and throws the money)
- JIM It seems to me that as a race of men Anglo-Saxons are in a state of constant hibernation. We want another invasion from the South
- RONALD Is that what's wrong with the country?
- JIM Yes. . . but didn't you know? The darkest hours in the history of our nation have always given birth to a hero. And now that our country is being over-run by a horde of cads, comes Philip
- CELIA (As she comes ~~Philip~~ from the window, making fun of Ronald's weakness)
"Rule Britannia marmalade and jam,
Roast beef never, never, never shall be lamb"
- RONALD (pathetically) Is he going away?
- ✓ MUSIC*
Music starts again after a slight pause)
- CELIA No, he is ~~going~~ *here* and wants to give us our money's worth
- (The bell rings. Jim starts for the door)

JIM I always answer my own door bell

CELIA No. . . I'll go. I need the exercise (Exit Celia)

RONALD Well. . . there doesn't seem anything further to discuss

JIM Nothing. Except perhaps the arrangements for the divorce. I suppose it will be one of the social functions of the year? As a Man about Town I shall certainly be there. I suppose one dresses as for Ascot?

RONALD You've no need to bother. I shan't call you

JIM You must, Ronald. I was looking forward to saying nothing when I took the stand. Is it contempt of court, Philip, to say nothing?

PHILIP I'm sure I don't know
(Celia comes into the room)

CELIA It's Beatrice. . . I was completely rattled. . . I just said "wait" so she is waiting

RONALD Of course I'm trapped

CELIA She said she saw me throw something to the barrel organ and decided to pay me a call if I were in a receptive mood

JIM You'll have to ask her in

RONALD Of course Jim, this is your home. I can't say "don't let her in". But I would appreciate it if you could manage to get her away

PHILIP I'll go and take her away, I'm sure she doesn't know Ronald is here

CELIA She will read your mind

JIM Won't you let her come in, Ronald? Otherwise Celia will have to be rude to her

RONALD She can tell her we are having an important conference. OH! that barrel organ
(They all sit still for a moment. The bell rings again. The barrel organ keeps up)

PHILIP I'd better go and talk to her

CELIA She came to call on me. She will insist on coming in. I find it very difficult to be rude to her

JIM Someone must decide what to do

RONALD I can't think any more. . . I'm defeated. If only that barrel organ would go away
(The bell rings again)

- RONALD Please go and give that barrel organ half-a-crown and tell him to go and jumpain the lake
- JIM Suppose she insists on coming up. She ^{may} want to see Celia on an important matter
- CELIA You might as well go down and face the music, Ronald. Mrs Sims has told her you ~~are with us~~ ^{Left with us.}
- JIM Do go Ronald. It would be such a good gesture
- RONALD You don't seem to realise that any show of gallantry is illegal. I'm divorcing her. . I can't start making gestures at this point. Can't I make you understand. .. it's illegal. The King's Proctoryou know
- PHILIP I think as a woman she should be considered first
- JIM You can't think of Beatrice as just a woman. She is an influence
- RONALD God. ..isn't there some way to stop that barrel organ?
- (The barrel organ stops abruptly and there is a sound of b akes being jammed on)
- RONALD Thank God for that anyway
- JIM Did you hear the jamming on our ^{brakes} ~~bikes~~? Maybe a car hit him
- RONALD My nerves. I can't possibly bear any more. [↓] Can't somebody do something?
- JIM Let's have a drink
- (Business of getting drinks. . . the bell rings)
- RONALD (As jim is applying soda to his drink) I'll take mine neat
- JIM Philip?
- PHILIP Nothing, thank you
- JIM Try a milk and [↓] soda cocktail
- CELIA (Jim goes to pour her out a drink) No. . nothing for me. I don't need a drink to steady my nerves
- (Bell rings again and they sit quietly. Then there is a very violent ringing)
- RONALD She always did inflict her mood on me ~~when~~ I was unreceptive
- PHILIP The rest of you can [↓] do as you please but I am going down. There's no reason why you should all be huddled here like a lot of frightened sheep Will you come with me Celia?
- RONALD (To Celia) You . . please [↓] go and take her away

CELIA [↓] Alright. And you come too, Jim

JIM Oh, certainly I'll go. It's the very thing. I'm sure a few well chosen words will be needed

CELIA (To Ronald) (As she exits) Now. .. just take it easy. You look so tired

RONALD Well, life has been just a shade too much for me lately, I will admit

CELIA You should wear a "fragile, handle with care, this side up" label around your neck

(The three go out. Ronald is left standing looking helpless. He wilts into a chair. In a few moments the barrel organ starts again. He goes to the window and pulls it down, then comes back to the chair. The music still comes in, only more faintly. Footsteps are heard, Ronald stands listening and then the door is opened and Philip comes in carrying the unconscious form of Beatrice in his arms)

RONALD What's happened?

PHILIP Call a doctor. Get some brandy, Celia [↓]

(No-one calls a doctor)

RONALD Jim will you call a doctor?

JIM I'd better get the brandy

CELIA [↓] Who shall I call, Ronald?

RONALD Well, look in the directory for one
(~~They~~ ^{THEY} all get the directory and look through it)

RONALD We'll never find a doctor here

PHILIP Haven't you a buff book?

CELIA (Still turning the leaves of directory) No

RONALD Do you think she is hurt badly?

PHILIP It's difficult to know. Her hands are icy cold
(Jim brings the brandy)

CELIA I can't find a doctor

PHILIP Well, go down the list of names. There must be a doctor ^{SOME BODY} ~~somebody~~ in the book

RONALD How did it happen?

PHILIP If you are really interested, she was struck by a car when she was in the street looking up at the window. The barrel organ grinder was near enough to grab her from almost under the wheel or she would have been killed

- RONALD Do you think she is really [↓] badly hurt?
- PHILIP I said I didn't know. (Bending over Beatrice) I think she is coming round. Let's try the brandy in a tea spoon
- JIM Don't try to make her swallow too much. She will choke
- CELIA Well, I give up. I can't find a doctor
- RONALD I seem to be utterly useless here also
- PHILIP She is coming to. [↓] Beatrice, are you all right? . . . No. . . don't try to speak... swallow this first
- RONALD I am so hopeless in an emergency. I feel we should be doing [↓] something. Or perhaps I should go. Seeing me might upset her
- BEATRICE No. You won't go away, will you, Ronald?
- PHILIP You mustn't try to talk yet. No. .. no nonsense.
- BEATRICE But he will go away
- PHILIP Hush. You must ~~swallow~~ swallow some more brandy. Ronald won't go away
- CELIA I think [↓] it would be better if we left her alone with Ronald
- RONALD No. . . look how well Philip is managing her. If I tried to make her stop talking I'd probably end in hospital
- CELIA After such a dramatic entrance I'm sure we shouldn't interfere with her performance
- BEATRICE Hullo Ronald [↓]
- RONALD Hullo. I'm glad you're not hurt badly
- PHILIP Now just keep still and be patient. You mustn't get excited. Look, you bad girl, you have torn your stocking
- JIM You are just showing off your strange power over females. Philip
- BEATRICE Ronald, come here, I want to forgive you. I always have to forgive you no matter what you do. Hallo, Jim. I'm sorry Celia. . . You don't lie very well. You should give it up
- PHILIP Didn't I say you mustn't talk?
- BEATRICE Yes. . .but may I anyway? I'm feeling alright
- JIM It's cruel [↓] not to let Beatrice talk
- PHILIP Am I being cruel?
- BEATRICE No. .If you don't want me to talk, I won't
- PHILIP You are a terrible woman to give me such a fright. Shall I go away and leave you to talk?

BEATRICE Oh no. .please d'n't. I haven't much to say, anyway.

RONALD I'm glad to hear that

BEATRICE Only you know I can't bear to leave feelings with rough edges and loose jangling ends after something is finished ✓

RONALD Well, good old nature tends to do that in time

BEATRICE But surely we can smooth things put just a little and be friends. You don't have to be afraid I shall want to come back to you but I can't be happy if you are going to believe I was ~~so~~ all wrong ↓

(Jim, Gelia and Philip exit)

RONALD You just can't let a man get away from you. You must keep your claws on him

BEATRICE But isn't it true that you have changed your ideas since we married? When I first saw you, you were something wonderful from another world to me. Your idea that it was unintelligent to believe in God or morals of any kind. . . awed and awakened my own thoughts. I was afraid that some day you might discover that I wasn't the interesting person you told me I was. I've lived up to that. I haven't failed you. That's why you married me and I've carried it out. You can't say that I haven't

RONALD But you should have known me better. You had more experience than me

BEATRICE That doesn't matter. My experience had been no more than a passing scenery in a railway carriage. I know what I've "Given You" I know what's gone out of my heart for you. I couldn't make you receive it but it was there. The air was charged with it. Besides what about all those books you made me read - Huxley, Bertrand Russell's "Marriage and Morals" I couldn't be an old-fashioned real wife after that

RONALD I wanted ^{you} to be a real a real wife to me. We weren't married then

BEATRICE ~~I wanted~~ But you couldn't learn how to be a real husband

RONALD You didn't take the trouble to try to understand me

BEATRICE Well, it's because I was never sure of your love ↓

RONALD Well, I was never sure of yours. There's no need for this argument. We only go round in circles. We get nowhere. I'm right and you're right, if you like. It's just a case that I can't stand any more and besides nothing you've said has given you any excuse for your consistent unfaithfulness

BEATRICE I wasn't unfaithful until you sent me away from you. I didn't want to go. So you ~~could~~ have more experience ↓

RONALD That's been two years ago. That's no reason why you should have kept it up

BEATRICE You don't understand that you did something so terrible to me then that it has taken me all this time to get over it

RONALD Well, tell me, when did you intend to [↓]start being faithful to me?

BEATRICE I thought it all over while I was away this time and . . . the irony of it. . . I was just coming back now to be the kind of wife you wanted me to be. [↓]This is what I find. Justify yourself to me. Blame anything . . . ~~on me~~ ^{on the} system . . . anything but you. (Starts crying) I can't bear to believe I have made such a mistake

RONALD But you have consistently lied to me

BEATRICE I thought you understood, if I had really wanted to deceive you, I could have done it perfectly

RONALD Well, I didn't. So that's that. I can't stand these bickerings. You wear me down. . . Just as you have always done. And may I leave, please?

BEATRICE I don't care what you do, but remember when you leave this time it's for good. No more pathetic letters. . . telegrams. . . asking me to come back as you did before, I should never have gone back to you the last time we separated; when you sent me that telegram saying "I can't live without you"

RONALD Well, you can rest assured that won't happen again. You will certainly see that it is different this time

BEATRICE You always said that

RONALD Well, may I say goodbye. I never like you in these moods

BEATRICE Well, go [↓]on then. Please go. . . before I hate you. I don't want to hate you. I couldn't bear that

(Ronald stands there)

Please go

RONALD I admire you as a heroic figure. You [↓]against the world-trying to set a new standard for women and you've almost succeeded- but not quite

(Beatrice sinks on the couch crying. Philip enters)

PHILIP I'm terribly sorry. I ^{Sw}suppose I can't do anything for you but I wish I could. . . Here, wipe your eyes

BEATRICE I haven't got a handkerchief

(She holds up her face and Philip wipes it with his handkerchief)

PHILIP (With difficulty) Would it make it any better to know that I believe in you?

CURTAIN

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

(TIME: About a week later; SCENE: Beatrice's bed-sitting room:
Before the rise of the curtain you hear the faint notes of a music box.
As the curtain goes up Beatrice is standing on a large pouffe in front of
the fireplace hanging a picture. Mrs Sims is taking things out of a box
nearby)

- MRS SIMS Here are your green elephants. I knew I had seen them somewhere
(The music box begins to run down)
- BEATRICE Put them down, and wind the music box, quick! No, not there! They
might get broken. There! On the bed. It's so blatantly a bed
- MRS SIMS I saw some quite respectable beds in a shop window. . . Oh, dear! Where
was it? They turned into gramophones. . or was it tables? I can't
remember, I'm sure they would be the thing for a sitting room
(Mrs Sims is intent on the bed)
- BEATRICE Please! The music box. . . Don't you like music?
- MRS SIMS Oh, yes. I used to hear this tune in the pantomime. I could mimic the
principal girl. I wanted to be an actress
- BEATRICE But you would have lost caste in Bristol. . . Now come and tell me if this
picture is straight
- MRS SIMS Well it is, and it isn't. I find one can never tell with these modern
pictures... Some of them make one quite dizzy. Don't you think?
- BEATRICE Don't look at the picture. Look at the frame. . . Is it straight?
- MRS SIMS I could never tell when a thing was exactly straight. I must have a
funny way of seeing things. My dear husband used to say. . .
- BEATRICE Nevermind
(She gets off pouffe and regards picture. Mrs Sims picks up elephants
and starts to the mantelpiece with them)
- MRS SIMS "Everything is just the way you look at it". . . He was a good man.
Could never see any evil in anything he was that pure minded. . . and
modest. Do you know my husband never in his life ever saw me without
my clothes. (In her eagerness of gestures lets elephants fall) Oh
dear! What have I done. . Oh dear! Oh dear! How stupid of me
- BEATRICE Throw the pieces away
- MRS SIMS Perhaps they could be mended
- BEATRICE I don't want them mended. . What's left? (Takes three elephants from
Mrs Sims' hand) Only three left out of seven. . I'm sure it's an omen
SURE

MRS SIMS Perhaps if [↓] you threw some salt over [↓] your left shoulder

BEATRICE No, it may be a good omen. Will you lay the tea table with what is left of the blue tea set? (Unwraps a pot of flowers)

MRS SIMS I don't usually [↓] break things. Of course sometimes, something just slips out of my fingers. I've been so nervous and [↓] upset telling so many white lies and Mr Alden quite off his food. . . that nothing would stay on my hand. (She is getting [↓] some coloured cakes out of a paper bag)

BEATRICE It must have been terrible for you. . . Are [↓] there any cigarettes anywhere? (Sees cakes) Where did you get those?

MRS SIMS (Ignoring question. Gets a box of cigarettes) These are your [↓] rose petal ones I found at the flat

BEATRICE I can [↓] hardly afford fourpence a [↓] smoke these days. (Takes a cigarette) Now explain the pastry. Weren't you told that I should have raw carrots and lettuce and tomatoes only?

MRS SIMS Mr Warren is so fond of sweet things. These are his favourite cakes. He won't eat vegetables and raw carrots, he has told me so. He says sugar gives energy, and since he is standing for Parliament and working so hard making speeches . . . He is such a good man you know. I'm sure he is pure minded and innocent like my poor dead husband

BEATRICE Leave them anyway- they decorate the table. Did you get carrots?

MRS SIMS Yes'm. (Wanting to talk) I heard Mr Warren on the phone to Mr Alden again. He told him you were very unhappy, yet you seem happy enough

BEATRICE I'm very happy

MRS SIMS Well I never. I hardly thought it was the proper time to be [↓] happy

BEATRICE Human nature is very strange sometimes. I believe you're sorry I'm happy

MRS SIMS No. No. It's just queer. . . I just can't understand it

BEATRICE Don't you know [↓] that everything you can't understand must be wrong?

MRS SIMS Yes, I suppose so, except religion

(Goes out into kitchen)

BEATRICE Of course you are allowed to not understand religion. . . Put on the kettle then you can go. (Lighting candles as Mrs Sims exits)

(Beatrice lights the candles and winds the music box; adds [↓] lib around the room. Throws drapery over bed. Mrs Sims comes in with the carrots)

MRS SIMS (Surveys the dimly lighted room. After a pause as though she has been thinking what she dare not put into words) Mr Warren. . . hasn't touched the dictaphone since you returned. . .

- BEATRICE Mrs Sims, I'm sure you think I have designs on Mr Warren. .. and you are quite right
- MRS SIMS (Starting to protest) Oh, no. I didn't mean. .
(The bell rings)
- BEATRICE There he is now. (She starts the music box)
(Mrs Sims ^{goes} over to the ^{bed} and struggles with the ^{drapery} which will barely cover a blue pillow)
- Mrs Sims, there's no use trying to make that bed into a grand piano. It won't work
- MRS SIMS (Very disturbed) Well it doesn't seem quite respectable to have a ^{bed} in the sitting room
- BEATRICE You're right it isn't. We'll put it in the ^{communal} bathroom tomorrow if that's all that's worrying you. . .
- MRS SIMS Oh dear, that would never do (Giggles)
- BEATRICE Now hurry
(Mrs Sims exits right)
- Be careful of those dark steps and don't come too early tomorrow morning
(Beatrice lights another cigarette. Tries the candlelight in another place. Places the pouffe by the big armchair. A slight tap on the door. Philip stands hesitating on the threshold)
- Come in
- PHILIP I could scarcely see you in this light. It's quite Eastern. - Except for the music
- BEATRICE Don't you think they go well together
- PHILIP I didn't think you would get it to look like this the first time I saw it. You are clever, still I wish you hadn't lost the other place
- BEATRICE I don't think about the other place ^{now} . . . Have a cigarette. .
- PHILIP No, thanks, I don't smoke
- BEATRICE Rose petals tips - try one
- PHILIP Just this once then
- BEATRICE I'm like a wasp. I don't think of my nest that's torn down. I start again with one cell
- PHILIP (Looks around self -consciously) It really isn't too bad

BEATRICE There is a view ~~from~~ the window, look. (She draws the curtains and they look) Look at those chimney pots. Aren't they wonderful? And there is actually a tree in the next garden. ~~And~~ you get a better effect if you squint your eyes. And that line of washing! Did you ever see such colours. Look at those red pyjamas dancing in the breeze

PHILIP Do you want me to laugh or cry?

BEATRICE I don't know. I haven't decided yet. Anyway the chimney pots are gorgeous, and the line of washing makes me feel there are still firesides and families, and such a thing as ~~live~~ with a magic circle around it so it can't escape. Why? I don't know. . . They just do

PHILIP You're an amazing woman. I don't know what to think about you. There were certain definite things I was going to talk to you about and they have left my head completely. I don't usually forget what I have to say. . . You have never heard me make a speech. . .

BEATRICE Mrs Sims has

PHILIP I mean with an audience, when I can feel my power. . . but why should I be telling you all this?

BEATRICE I don't know anything about politics. I know you are standing for Parliament

PHILIP That's only a beginning

(The kettle whistles)

But I'm a fool to talk like this. I came to talk about you. I haven't been able to think about anything else

(The kettle whistles)

BEATRICE The kettle is boiling. I love a singing kettle, don't you?

PHILIP I don't know. Why are you so like ~~rich~~ silver?

BEATRICE No - Like a butterfly, hurrying to kiss every flower before the rain comes. . . Now I'll make you some tea

PHILIP Please don't trouble for me

BEATRICE It's no trouble. I have to eat, don't you?

PHILIP (Laughing) Yes. . . of course

BEATRICE Very well then. Make ~~yourself~~ ^{yourself} comfortable, read a book ~~to~~ something. I won't be a moment. (Starts out) Turn on more lights if you like. The switch is over by the mantle

PHILIP No, candlelight is all right for me. Next time I come I'll bring some incense along. I can't make up my mind whether I'm in a church or. . . er.
(Beatrice is in the kitchen now. Philip is looking at picture on the mantle)

BEATRICE (From kitchen) A brothel. . . that's what you mean. . . I can read your unconscious mind. (Comes in laughing with tea)

PHILIP You are a terrible woman. Why - why do you impute to me thoughts which have never occurred to me?

BEATRICE Because it would have occurred to you later when I wouldn't be there to defend myself, so I dragged out the unborn thought. . . You are trying hard not to think I am a bad ^{woman} woman. . . Don't you think she is sweet?

(The picture is in Philip's hand)

PHILIP (Glad to change the subject) She is rather. Who is it?

BEATRICE Does she look like me?

PHILIP She does a bit

(They sit at the tea table. Beatrice on the pouffe. She starts arranging the tea things)

BEATRICE It's me. . . when I was a little girl

PHILIP (With increased interest) Really!

BEATRICE Yes. . . I remember when it was taken. The man told me to be still and look at him and a little bird would jump out of the black box

(Getting closer to Philip. Philip is very impressed and looks intently into her eyes

BEATRICE Do you see how wide my eyes are. . . looking for something? I was a good little girl then. . . But I cried afterwards because I didn't see the bird. (Turns slowly away and begins to pour the tea, then in a different mood, flippantly) Since then. . . all my life - I've been looking for that bird. . . I hope you like carrots and things? That's all I have

PHILIP What a shame

BEATRICE (Quickly) What? The carrots?

PHILIP No. About the bird

(Beatrice looks relieved and helps ^{see the bird} his plate to carrots and brown bread sandwiches. Philip dreaming his words)

PHILIP It's a wonderful time that, when one's happiness depends on something like seeing a blue bird jump out of a black box. Children don't realize what a good time they are having

(Philip has taken a carrot and starts eating it without noticing it. Beatrice is intent on this. He absent-mindedly puts the plate down and reaches for a pastry. Beatrice quickly addresses him in answer to his ^{last} remark in a very dramatic way that arrests his reach for the pastry)

BEATRICE Why does every grown up say that? Children have a miserable time

PHILIP (Having missed the pastry and taken a carrot instead. With a declamatory voice) That shows you haven't grown up. (Feeling superior in wisdom) It's the most wonderful time of life

BEATRICE (Relaxing now that he has eaten the carrots..lifting the tea pot) That may be true. I wouldn't like to go back again.

(She pours out tea for Philip and herself. Puts in one lump of sugar in his cup; tries to cover it up by continuing the discussion)

- BEATRICE Take the case of a sensitive imaginative child seeking love and affection and not finding it anywhere. (Hands Philip his ~~cup~~ ^{cup})
- PHILIP ^{always} I always take four lumps of sugar, please
- BEATRICE That's too much. (Back to the discussion) You see I remember. . .
- PHILIP (Takes cup and reaches for sugar and puts in three lumps) May I?
- BEATRICE Oh, certainly
- PHILIP Thank you. (Re discussion) I often wish I could
- BEATRICE Could what? Eat less sugar?
- PHILIP You are very provocative. I often wish I could go back again to my childhood. There is so much I would have done differently
- BEATRICE I hope you would learn not to eat too much sugar. It's very bad for you, you know. (She gets up and removes the pastries) Lovely colours, aren't they? Too pretty to eat. I'll put them here for ornaments - kindly supplied by Mrs Sims
- PHILIP Here, take the carrots too. You can't beat them for colour
- BEATRICE You've eaten most of them while you were talking
- PHILIP And I don't want any more
- BEATRICE They gave you great inspiration. You must take some along to nibble when you make speeches
- PHILIP Nonsense! I didn't come here to talk of sugar and carrots and coloured cakes. . . I'm concerned about you. Won't you ~~let me~~ ^{let me} talk seriously to you?
- BEATRICE That's dangerous
- PHILIP I'm not afraid
- BEATRICE Is that a challenge? But then we could never agree on blue sheets
- PHILIP I don't like being laughed at (Looks very hurt)
- BEATRICE I'm sorry . . . Why are you so interested in me?
- PHILIP I don't know what it is, but it's something in me that is drawn to you. I want to see you happy. I want to help you, but I can't if you are going to laugh at me
- BEATRICE I'm not laughing. . . It's only that. . . well. . . it's something else. . . self-consciousness
- (She looks helpless and lost. They are both silent.- looking at each other. Beatrice finally can't bear her emotion and turns away and says as though to cover her feelings)

BEATRICE You haven't noticed my flowers. . . They are alive and growing see!

PHILIP Yes, they are lovely, like you

BEATRICE Don't talk to me like that. . . I can't bear it. (Looks around the room for something to say. Eyes fasten on bed) That's not really a bed, that's a grand piano. No, what I mean is that it isn't a grand piano at all. . . whatever you think, it's a bed, see! There are even blue sheets. . . Philip, if we aren't careful we'll have an affair out of sheer self-consciousness. Don't look at me like that.. Stop!

PHILIP I can't help looking at you, Some day some man is really going to love you as you should be loved

BEATRICE Like a mother. That's [↓]what you said I wanted, wasn't it? Do you remember?

PHILIP I might be the man, who knows? Could you love me?

BEATRICE I do not know. I think love must be the heaven one seeks and never finds. We tear out hearts for love and wreck our lives in sin. . all for love

PHILIP Why couldn't you love me?

BEATRICE Philip - Philip. (Tenderly as though she would melt in his arms. . then) No, we must get on a safer subject. (Picks up the elephants) I'll tell you the story of my green elephants

PHILIP Listen to me, Beatrice

BEATRICE No. You won't be able to explain what you mean at all. You listen to me, it will be simpler. . . This is the story of seven green elephants, a wedding present. Every time Ronald and I separated we divided the elephant. We would have to come back so they could stand in their proper order from the big one to the tiny one. Mrs Sims broke them today. Destiny depends on such trifles. These are the three tiny ones. They do look a bit lost. (Places them tenderly on the mantel) But they will get used to it. It's a touching story, isn't it?

(Beatrice stands very still. All her spiritual quality is manifest. There is no touch of earth about her)

PHILIP (Looking at her awed) Beatrice. There ^{is} something holy about you, something eternal. I worship you [↓]

BEATRICE There is something holy about both of us when we are together.. maybe it's love

PHILIP I don't know what it is. I don't [↓]care. It's something of your mind, your spirit, I want to take ^{you} into myself [↓]

(They go into each other's arms, and sink down on the pouffe. They kiss)

You're the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me

BEATRICE (Jumping up and pulling Philip up. She is gay and laughing) I'm happy. My darling! My Philip! It's mad to be so happy, it's dangerous, but I don't care.

PHILIP: Kiss me. Oh, please kiss me

(They kiss softly and tenderly without embrace)

BEATRICE Let's celebrate. (Turns about the room mad with joy) I know. We will eat all the pastry. (Rushes and picks two up) A pink one for you, and a mauve one for me

PHILIP (Looking at her enraptured) Do you now how I see you now?

(Beatrice pauses and looks at him radiant and wild like an elf)

Like the picture I took over with the other fixtures. "Dryad - golden - naked"

BEATRICE "Wings of flame". But I'm not naked, would you like to see me? (With childlike innocence she starts to take off her clothes) (With *clothes*)

(Philip is embarrassed and fascinated)

I'll turn out the light and we can be children *children* best in the woods. (Turns out the light - In the dark) The night will fold around us and draw us close together and. . . *pause*
(The door bell rings. . . *pause*)
. . . and then came the dawn... who can that be? Could Mrs Sims have given anyone my address? They are coming up the stairs

PHILIP Shall I turn on the light?

BEATRICE No, go into the kitchen. .this way. .take my hand.

PHILIP Where are you?

(Sound of Philip stumbling over things. A knock at the door. Beatrice turns on the light and is hurriedly fastening a white robe around her. Goes to open door)

CELIA May we come in?

BEATRICE (Hesitatingly) yes. . . do

JIM Here are some bananas and pickled herring, boiled egg and a half bottle of gin

BEATRICE I've just eaten

JIM You must see these pickled herrings. There is something about them, something. . . (Gestures with his hands). . . infinite. . . Sea grey with silvery light. (Holds up herring) Who cares for the onion enmeshed in flesh. (Eats the herring) Now, this is a banana. . .

Celia
CELIA Hush! . . . Jim's drunk as usual

JIM I hush ! . . . Hush! . . . Oh, banana, happy thing. . .

CELIA Let me talk. . Please!! . . .

- JIM What rhyme with "thing"? ↘
- CELIA May I bring in the rest of the party?
(Jim is mumbling to himself -- ~~ding~~ ↘, ding, sing, ping, ling, ring")
- BEATRICE Who are they?
- CELIA Only Ronald and the sweet little ↘ co-respondents
- JIM I'm the King's Procter. I forbid it. . .
- BEATRICE Ronald is outside?
- CELIA Yes, in our car, with the innocent lambs whose lives are about to be led to the slaughter
- JIM The entire post-war generation... no idea of the facts ↘ of life. Parents and school masters never told them anything and left them to feel about in the dark for something of their own
- CELIA It's thwarted mother instinct reaching out toward young men
- JIM In that case she should have knitted them little bonnets instead of seducing them
- BEATRICE Do stop your nonsense long enough to tell me what has happened. . I'm rather curious. . . Are you playing a joke on me?
- JIM The joke's on them, for Beatrice is the facts ↘ of life
- BEATRICE Has Ronald decided this?
- CELIA No. He has been bullied into it. I've promised him Jim for a co-respondent. (Sees the carrots) May I have one? Jim, go down and get the others, I'm going to eat carrots and develop my soul
- BEATRICE But I don't want Ronald back ↘
- CELIA But you must have him back. . . It's all decided
- JIM May I have a drink first? Where's a glass. (Starts for the kitchen)
- BEATRICE (Startled) I'll get you one ↘
- CELIA Jim has no tact. Can't you see there's a man in the kitchen?
(Philip comes out of the kitchen)
- JIM Hello, Philip
- PHILIP I was hiding as a matter ↘ of fact
- CELIA Were you? From what? You mustn't be shy. We understand
- JIM (Takes glass from Philip) I hear a lot about you these days. . . the most promising young M.P. in the country

- PHILIP Is it as bad as that?
- JIM I hear you have started a new party. The Neo - Conservatives. .
- CELIA Nonsense, he's making it all up
(Steps are heard, and a knock)
Here they are
- BEATRICE I don't want to see them. Can't you take them away?
- CELIA Just let them come in. They are feeling so badly poor things
(Beatrice looks at Philip to reassure herself, opens the door. Enter Ronald, Bob, and Alex and Paul. Bob is tall, dark and fiery- a scholar. Paul an aesthetic type, golden hair, very young and tall. Alex, tall, thin-shouldered and with glasses a hypochondriac)
- BEATRICE So charming of you to call on me
RONALD (Wistfully) Not at all
- BOB (Kisses Beatrice with self-conscious gaiety) Hello darling. Who is the new young man?
- BEATRICE This is Mr Warren
- RONALD Hello, Philip. I've decided to take your advice
- BEATRICE Hello, Alex and Paul. How did you two get into the fray? Bob should be the only one
- RONALD Their conscience made them confess
- PAUL I told Bob about us. He was my best friend. I tried to make him understand how an affair with me was not being unfaithful to him as it didn't change your feeling for him. . . It is the only intelligent thing to do
- BOB (To Beatrice) So, you see, if I failed in my love for you, yours was a farce from the beginning
- RONALD When lovers fall out, that's when the husband comes in
- BEATRICE Why did you tell Ronald about Paul?
- BOB It isn't wise to ask sleeping dogs questions. A correspondent has certain obligations in this country which I was not prepared to fulfil. . I admire you for your courage and your gaiety and your goodness of heart, but I don't want to be your co-respondent
- BEATRICE So I must go back to Ronald to save you?
- BOB I do not wish to marry you. Our tempo is not the same
- BEATRICE That's enough. Did you confess Alex?
- ALEX I object to being questioned. I won't be treated like a pubescent school-girl. Long ago you turned my admiration of you to violent hostility by

- trying to beat my footling personality to a frazzle. . You see, I too like to imagine myself a hundred per cent egoist. I won't be dragged back to nature by the hair of my head

BEATRICE I only wanted to help you untangle your unhappiness

ALEX Interfering in another's life is a mug's game and contemptible as well

BEATRICE What is a mug? Am I a mug?

ALEX Decidedly, and if I wish to be miserable and ill-tempered and nurse a bad liver. . . even an illusory one caused by sex repression. . . it's my affair I'll fight savagely for my illusory freedom of will

BEATRICE And yet you are the only one that loves me. Why did you confess?

ALEX I didn't confess. I merely answered a question. Ronald in a spirit of good clean fun asked how I liked you in bed and I retorted "Wonderful, grand, old boy, marvellous" as one does with one's oldest school friend

PAUL I think it is so intelligent that no one is annoyed with anyone

CELIA Why do all our well brought up Englishmen only know fair play towards ~~each other~~ each other? You have no code of honour for a woman. I think you should give the girl friend a break even if you do play cricket

PHILIP She has known the wrong kind of Englishman

RONALD She wouldn't care for the right kind

PHILIP I'm not so sure about that

RONALD You've got a lot to learn about her yet, charming but impossible

BEATRICE There are certain things we all do that are very secret. They exist in our minds. . . Such things as no one else but oneself could understand. That's how I felt about my affairs with Paul and Alex. . . something that had to be and only I could understand why

RONALD How you delight in glorifying sin

BEATRICE And how delight in glorifying the poor injured husband

RONALD I am being offered to you by courtesy of your ex-lovers. (He stands up and faces Beatrice in a formal way)

BEATRICE But may I refuse with thanks?

CHORUS OF EX-LOVERS After all, I mean to say-

JIM Keep the old school ties waving boys

RONALD (To Philip) Take a good look, Philip, before you leap. We are four bitterly disillusioned men, but dirty dogs or clean, we fellow-sufferers must stand together

- PHILIP I don't mean to be rude but I see only four men without the back bone to live or the courage to die
- RONALD We have all given our all and ~~been~~ ^{been} exhausted along the way
- PAUL What an unpleasant thing to have one's romance turned into a legal document . . . Name commiss adultery with name, at place. . I think the aesthetic and intellectual aspect of an affair should be considered
- BOB You mean for instance, if Bach's Adagio accompanied the misconduct, then Bach's Adagio should be played at the divorce
- PAUL Do you see what I mean? Only I prefer Bach's Concerto for two violins in three movements. The second movement gives that perfect overdone; that feeling of completeness.
- CELIA Teach the judge the facts of life
- JIM Learn sex by gramophone. .
- CELIA Bob would make the most convincing co-respondent, Ronald . He has that stud horse look
- JIM Fillies are so mignon, that's my tragedy
- ALEX (Getting up to go) I prefer goats. My tragedy is that there sre so few goats in London
(They are all going out of the door during this speech)
- JIM Haven't I left something?
- BEATRICE Yes. Here...your herrings and bananas. . . Goodnight, Celia
- CELIA Goodbye
(Philp and Beatrice are left in the midst of a torn up room. They look silently at each other)
- BEATRICE Well!
- PHILIP Well!
- BEATRICE What are you thinking?
- PHILIP What were you thinking?
- BEATRICE I don't know. I feel I've dropped out of whirling confusion into some strange place. You are strange too. You've changed. . You see me differently now. .

(NOTE: The scene with husband and co-respondents, Celia and Jim, must be built up in production to give a feeling of Beatrice surrounded and torn apart by diabolical mockery. This is on one hand, and on the other Philip, who could give her a sane everyday point of view, a fresh vital love, and she feels the influence of her mad sophisticated past driving him away from her. This will have to be put over by subtle acting and grouping of characters, Philip begins to believe that Beatrice is the way

he has heard of her. He is shocked by the matter of fact way she accepts sex, yet feels he must see her through; although at the end of the scene he ^{makes} up his mind to be on his guard)

PHILIP Why do you think so?

BEATRICE It's natural that you should feel differently about me now. I've shocked you

PHILIP I didn't really believe all I heard about you before. . and the men were all such rotters too. . The entire thing is unwholesome. What demon is it that made you give yourself to those lumps of fungi? Are you a nymphomaniac? . Stop giving yourself away... cheapening yourself! What's the matter?

(Beatrice is crying on the pouffe. He removes her hand. She is limp with grief)

PHILIP Don't cry. Pull yourself together

BEATRICE You don't understand

PHILIP Listen to me, Beatrice. You don't understand yourself. You have the making of a fine woman, and I know it. .

BEATRICE We are at cross purposes

PHILIP I shan't desert you. I'm different from the others, Beatrice. I want to be something to you. Will you let me be your friend? Call on me for anything. . Someone to talk to or at . . anything. . Will you?

BEATRICE (Not liking the idea) No, how dare you pity me now. . I won't have it. You've changed since they came in

PHILIP That ^{puts} me in my place very nicely

BEATRICE Why did you give me something and then take it back? You offered me love and now you offer me friendship and expect me to be happy about it. . You dare try to make me feel I've done wrong. . I've been right, as right as a river finding its way to the sea. . I've lost faith, faith in everything except myself, and you would take that from me. . My only faith, is that I would grow naturally in the right direction. . No, I have no regrets. I don't believe in your standard of morality and never shall. . You have given me love - there is no substitute. It must be complete - complete - there is no other way. You think you are the same with me as the others. They were like a muddy road I had to go over. You can't believe I've been wrong and sordid - yet you think that - you think it now - and it is not true. Everything had to happen. I don't know why?

PHILIP I don't understand you and anyhow I don't agree with you. (Shakes her arms) Now you've had your say, let me talk. You need someone to take you in hand strongly. These ideas of yours may sound all right, but they are all wrong. You can't have them

BEATRICE I can't help but have them. .

PHILIP Stop taking (Shakes her) Listen to me. You can help them

BEATRICE I can't. I don't want to. I won't suppress my instincts

PHILIP Suppose your instinct told you to kill someone?

BEATRICE It's not my instinct to kill- even anything

PHILIP You can't plunge headlong into things the way you do without trouble. .
You must see a ^u ~~other~~ [↓] point of view

BEATRICE You are a fool like all the others. Nothing is so dangerous as a fool.
You are cowards all of you. You with your ideals and the others with
their cynical humour. . Between you you'd crush the life out of anything

PHILIP I won't ^{let} ~~let~~ you speak. You are in danger of ruining your whole life,
throwing it away. (Philip is frantic and cuts in on Beatrice's speech)
You are not meant to be the woman you are. . You are going to be different
than you've ever been before. . . You are out of that hot bed of filthy
decayed sex. . . You are not going to ~~make~~ ^{make} yourself into a twopenny half-
penny little slut in the name of anything. I'm going to see to it

BEATRICE I believe you are ^{upset} ~~upset~~. (Assumes a frozen dignity)

PHILIP I'm not upset. I'm trying to make you ^{see} ~~see~~ reason

BEATRICE It's a poor reason if you have to drive it home like this. However, I
enjoy it. Did you know you were hurting my arm?

PHILIP I'm sorry. (Let's go her arms) I don't know what is the matter with me.
You've gone to my head. You are not meant to be like this. I believe
you deliberately try to make yourself out worse than you are because
you see it upsets me

BEATRICE You at ^{least} ~~least~~ have convictions. . So have I. . (Picks up cigarettes) I
wonder who will win. Have a cigarette

PHILIP No, and you shouldn't either. You smoke too much

BEATRICE If you have too much ^{sugar} ~~sugar~~ in ^{your} ~~your~~ tea, why can't I have too many
cigarettes?

PHILIP You have me there. But I'll make a bargain with you. If I give up one
lump of sugar in my tea will you cut down smoking?

BEATRICE I believe you intend reforming me in the good old - fashioned way. But
I'll make the bargain with you

PHILIP You are charming. Oh, Beatrice, please try my way

BEATRICE You mean be respectable?

PHILIP Yes

BEATRICE Couldn't I even pretend to be respectable? You know the good old
English custom

PHILIP You are laughing at me - and ~~at~~ ^{at} everything solid and fine that life is
based on

BEATRICE No, I'm not. I'm just thinking how cold and lonely I will be. .if I'm ~~not~~
~~not~~ reformed.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

SCENE: Philip's bedroom, as Act I scene 2

Philip is in a dressing gown, sitting in a large chair looking very miserable. Mrs Sims is trying to get him to put his feet into a basin of hot water. Beatrice is stirring up a mixture for a plaster, measuring the strips of gauze and cutting some into little squares)

MRS SIMS (Offering Philip the foot-bath) Do try it, sir. . it'll do you good

PHILIP (Crossly) I don't want to be done good. .I want to work

BEATRICE You are working too hard

PHILIP Working hard, I haven't had time for my work

BEATRICE For re-forming me. . I'm sorry, you see how he has reformed me, Mrs Sims. I never smoke a cigarette any more and Philip never has a lump of sugar. . I might as well be in a nunnery - I wonder what I would do in a nunnery, *Start* start mewling like a cat and biting my fellow nuns, something queer like that. Anun started mewling like a cat because she had nothing else to do once. Finally all the nuns did it, and they began biting each other, and ~~xx~~ soon the idea spread to all the nunneries in the world. It's psychology, I read about it. .it's sexual repression, . .never mind Mrs Sims, she is used to me

PHILIP (Embarrassed) I'm really feeling quite well, Mrs Sims. You take such good care of me

MRS SIMS Just try this, sir, it's nice and hot, and will draw out theppison

BEATRICE You said the plaster would draw the poison out from his neck

PHILIP With hot gum plaster at one end and hot mustard at the other I should thin the poison would just *stay* where it is. No, Mrs Sims, I refuse to sit with my feet in a tub of hot water like ~~an~~ Oxo advertisement. The plaster will be enough

MRS SIMS Very well, sir. (She starts out looking disappointed carrying the tub looking as if she would drop it at any minute) But perhaps you would like a glass of cream. It lubricates the joints you know, and if you are to make many speeches y u will need good joints

BEATRICE Don't give Mr Warren the cream, it's very bad for him

PHILIP I like cream

MRS SIMS I know womething about men when they go off their food. Do you know that my poor dead husband lay for five years and ate nothing but tomatoes, strained through a hair sieve five times. . . I have a little gentleman cat that won't eat anything but the choicest

PHILIP Haven't you a kettle or something boiling, Mrs Sims? I thought I smelt something burning

MRS SIMS Oh, dear me. It must be. . I wonder now. .(As she goes off)

(Beatrice is left with Philip. She is applying the plaster to his neck)

BEATRICE Where were we when Mrs Sims came in with the mustard bath?

PHILIP Let's not go over that

BEATRICE You had just said "I don't seem to be helping you, you not only hold ^s steadfastly to your own ideas. . "

PHILIP Distorted ideas

B ATRICE . ."but you are determined to force them on me" I hadn't answered you. .
(Applying the finishing touches to the plaster) Does that feel
comfortable?

PHILIP I suppose so, I don't know

BEATRICE You know, you are lucky, Philip, the boild come out on your neck.
Sausage and waffles are apt to bring them out in the most unheard of
places. I do wish you would eat raw carrot

PHILIP It's those yeast tablets you persuaded me to take. I wish you wouldn't
try to run my life. You seem to think I'm perfectly helpless

BEATRICE You are a bit. . . That's why I adore you but I do hate to see you boiling
up like this. Won't you try eating just one raw carrot a day?

PHILIP I tried nibbling one the other day just to please you. I felt like a ~~M~~
rabbit. I don't like them. Why don't you let me eat things I like in
peace?

BEATRICE Because I don't want you to die of diabetes or some other awful sugary
disease. You are terribly cross today. You are getting ruder and ruder
to me every day. I suppose it's a good sign

PHILIP I'm irritable, over-worked, without being able to accomplish anything. .
What do you mean by it's a good sign?

BEATRICE Oh, nothing. .but you don't think you are being very drastic about us?
You can't care for me without expressing some kind of affection. . At
least kiss me gently and stroke my hair. Do something natural, you
never relax an instant

PHILIP You have no idea of discipline. (Looks at watch) Mrs Sims will be going
soon. You must go before she leaves

BEATRICE You always see that we are guarded by Mrs Sims. You never give yourself
a chance to find out how strong you are or how weak. I'm sure she feels
she is huarding the honour of the nation

MRS SIMS (Entering) Oh, excuse me. I thought you would be alone by now. I was
just going to turn down your bed

PHILIP Quite all right. I didn't realise it was so late

MRS SIMS I'll wait a bit - I don't mind at all

- BEATRICE Don't mind me, Mrs Sims. I'm not really ready to go. Do turn down the bed and you don't have to wait for me to leave to go home, does she, Mr Warren?
- PHILIP Er. . . no, of course, Mrs Sims, you may go if you like. I didn't realize I was keeping you so late
- MRS SIMS I don't mind in the least, and there's your Ovaltine to be prepared. If you don't mind I'll just wait awhile
- BEATRICE I CAN do the Ovaltine Mrs Sims. We have been entirely too inconsiderate of you recently letting you stay all hours. Mr Warren should be thoroughly ashamed of himself; after all, I feel a responsibility towards you. Now just go home and get a good night's sleep. . and she needn't come early tomorrow, need she, Mr Warren? You will undoubtedly be sleeping late. . .
- MRS SIMS (Obstinately) I'll just turn down the bed, if you don't mind
- PHILIP Certainly Mrs Sims
(Mrs Sims comes and goes to bed and turns it down, beats up pillows, etc)
- PHILIP (To Beatrice, while Mrs Sims is doing bed) I hope I'm able to wear a collar tomorrow
- BEATRICE (To Mrs Sims) Mrs Sims, can't you make Mr Warren eat proper food. .he needs more vegetables
- MRS SIMS I'm afraid he has a very sweet tooth
- BEATRICE We must do something about that. . I found a recipe for a steamed pudding made of grated carrot and apples. .I'll let you have it tomorrow. Now I mustn't let you do any more, you've done quite enough for one day, what with attending to both of us. You must be quite worn out .
- MRS SIMS (Objecting) I never like to leave things undone. .I . .
- BEATRICE Not another word, Mrs Sims. . you'll have a nervous breakdown and then what shall we all do?
- MRS SIMS Are you sure it's all right for me to go. . Mr Warren has wanted me to stay when . . I mean. .
- BEATRICE I know, but never mind what you mean. .Good night
- MRS SIMS You won't let Mr Warren be up too late, he's really not at all well
- PHILIP ^{head} It's nice of you to look after me so well, Mrs Sims . I'll be early to bed and feel all right in the morning
- BEATRICE Sleeping the sleep of the innocent. Goodnight, and you won't forget the Ovaltine, will you?
- BEATRICE No, I shan't
(Mrs Sims exits)

- BEATRICE (Beatrice sinking on a pouffe at Philip's feet) Is it possible that we are actually to be alone? Now we can relax and talk. There always seem to be things crowding and pushing over each other to say themselves to you
- PHILIP Some more of your confused ideas?
- (A knock at the door)
- MRS SIMS I almost forgot your hot water bottle
- (Beatrice and Philip are silent. Philip tries to make a casual remark to Beatrice)
- PHILIP You needn't have bothered
- MRS SIMS I can't neglect my duties, sir, even if beds are sitting rooms these days I hope it remains warm, the nights are becoming quite cool
- PHILIP Thank you
- (Mrs Sims goes out)
- BEATRICE Mrs Sims is terrified I'm going to upset the House of Parliament. (Sinking down comfortably almost puts her arms on Philip's knees and remembers) Excuse me, I forgot. . . Before I say another word I'm going to make sure she's gone. . . (Goes to bedroom door and listens) (The outer door bangs) She has actually gone. (Settles on pouffe again)
- PHILIP I can't make you out Beatrice. You are much more complicated than I imagined
- BEATRICE It's you who are complicated. I'm very simple. . . But don't let's talk about ~~us~~ me, let's talk about you for a change
- PHILIP I simply do not know the meaning of you
- BEATRICE You don't come near enough to me to find out anything. . . Are you sure you feel all right? I mustn't tire you. Would you like to go bed and I will just sit beside you and talk you to sleep and then slip out quietly
- PHILIP No, we can talk here. But you mustn't stay too long. I have a busy day tomorrow; you know I work very hard
- BEATRICE Yes. . . Are you glad I made Mrs Sims go?
- PHILIP I don't know. Perhaps
- BEATRICE She tries very hard to express her life in some way. She does want to be counted in whatever happens. Still grasping after life at her age and all she can do is bring you a hot-water bottle to your bed. . . It's awful. Philip. . . I wonder what kind of a little boy you were? Did you love your mother very much? You must have been a wonderful baby, with large wide blue eyes. Just like they are now. . . I'm sure you look like your mother. You can always tell the men who resemble their mothers. There's something appealing about them. . . you loved her, didn't you?
- PHILIP

PHILIP

Yes. She was a wonderful woman. . charming, sweet and good. She used to sit and tell me stories at night in the dark until I was asleep

BEATRICE

I suppose she was different from mine. I never remember her telling me a story. She liked to tease me an laugh, but I loved to hear her ~~laugh~~ ^{laugh}. You know my earliest recollection of my mother was seeing her run down a long flight of stairs into the arms of her lover. . They didn't notice me. watching. I shall never forget how happy and beautiful she looked. That became love to me. Love was floating draperies melting into a man's arms, and laughter. . happy laughter, I think there were tears in it

PHILIP

Your life has been very different from mine. I was brought up in a hard, strict school. There was certainly no romance and floating draperies about it

BEATRICE

And I was brought up on nothing but romance, Everyone I knew lived only for love

PHILIP

I've heard all about it

BEATRICE

My affairs were no more a part of me than the atmosphere I breathed. . until Ronald. . before him I was never unfaithful. I just passed on. . but with him. . I couldn't pass on. . . At first I thought it was a sin and would argue with God about it. . . I ~~know~~ said "It's just like this, God, sure -ly you can understand how I feel." Then I would go to bed feeling I was forgiven. When I couldn't feel right about it, I took Ronald's word that there couldn't be a God

PHILIP

I think you still care for him

BEATRICE

No. . I don't think so. . . he has just inflicted me with an incurable restlessness

PHILIP

I wish I could do something to make you the way you might have been

BEATRICE

Each of us seems to pity the other. I know I wish I could make you see what I see in your eyes. They never change. . No matter how stubborn you are. I remember when I first met you and you were trying to be rude and I kept looking into your eyes and knew you were kind

PHILIP

Can't you realize that life is real and must be faced in a practical everyday way. It seems a joke me trying to be the strong man to you. You make me feel weaker than Ronald. But at least I haven't taken my pleasure of you and given nothing in return a the others have

BEATRICE

It makes me feel very sorry for myself when you put it like that, but I don't think ordinary standards hold good with me. Sometimes it has seemed that I was not meant to be a person like everybody else but just an experiment that something was making with life

PHILIP

Get that nonsense out of your head immediately. It's fantastical and lead you astray, stop thinking and analysing yourself

BEATRICE

But my mind is just a jumble of events. I try to sit quietly sometimes and straighten them out but they fall upon me like an avalanche of rocks. That quiet happiness deep in oneself, I find now and then in mountains, clouds, sunset, and the last silvery hour of day. But I want a happiness that is a living thing. . part of the life of someone. For instance I'd like to be happy with you

- PHILIP I've tried to make you feel happy. But you are not content with how I feel about you
- BEATRICE No..because it's not natural. You do care for me, I know it, Philip. Why don't you take me in your arms ~~just~~ nicely. Maybe we could find the answer to things
- PHILIP ~~Three~~ ^{The} others have loved you like that
- BEATRICE But surely this is different. Just hold me in your arms. .nothing more. . . .please
(By this time she has crept into his arms)
- PHILIP (Hovering) Are you deliberately trying to torture me?
- BEATRICE No. . don't think and don't talk. Just hold me close . .close. . it still the restlessness
- PHILIP (Giving way) I've wanted to hold you like this. I wanted to that mornin when you were singing. But I don't know what it is I feel for you. I wanted it to be something different . . not this
- BEATRICE Let's be happy, darling, a moment. All we have is a moment. Moments are like dewdrops or teardrops. All we know is a moment at a time
- PHILIP (Bitterly) It doesn't matter about your pretty words now, You've won. But you have only done what any pretty woman could do if she tried hard enough. I wanted it to be something different. . your pretty words don't mean anything now. .you're just a pretty women in my arms
- BEATRICE I don't believe you. . but kiss me anyway, as you would any pretty woman
- PHILIP Can you be so c mpletely wanton?
- BEATRICE Yes.. I can't be a firefly in a bottle. Try my way. Take my hand. . don't be afraid. .
(She draws closer to him and holds his arms around her. Philip is lost in wonderment for a moment)
. . .Close your eyes and we will be alone in the ^{world}
- PHILIP I think I could believe that way or a moment -only because you are more beautiful now than I've ever seen you and voice stirs me until I want to absorb you entirely into my own self
- BEATRICE And you don't know what that means. Philip, it's Creation speaking to you
- PHILIP It's unbridled lust and I know it
- BEATRICE It doesn't matter what you call it. Your words have no power to change its true nature. My lips are burning for your kisses. . and my body tingling, aching, demanding, -it's love

- PHILIP (Struggling) Beatrice. . . did you ever have illusions?
- BEATRICE I don't think of them
- PHILIP Think of them now. . .you might say something for me
- BEATRICE I don't want illusions. . . I want truth, reality , your kisses.. your love
- PHILIP No. . you won't win a triumph by breaking me down physically.. you can only destroy something I see in you, something I want you to be
- BEATRICE You haven't seen anything in me that you understand, except a reflection of your ideals. I've been miserable and I've felt wicked fighting my feeling for you. Do you think you are above God that you can set up rules against nature created by him?
- PHILIP You only believe in God when you need him to excuse your nature ideas
- BEATRICE That's not true. I believe in God all the time. A God of truth and understanding. . Creation. . even something with a long white beard if you like. You can call it what you like. . I don't mind, but I won't resist love. . it hurts and I feel something in me tighten into a hard ugly knot
- PHILIP Animal passion
- BEATRICE All right. But I'd rather be a petty woman who could stir the blood in your veins than all your pretty lifeless illusions of me
- PHILIP You are out of your mind. You've lost your last hold on any stability. No character. .no stability
- BEATRICE Neither has the sea or the trees. The sea is moved by the moon. The trees by the whims of the wind. I'm just a woman. . a normal woman. with a man I'm in love with
- PHILIP Two animals in a field. . .
- BEATRICE Yes, if you like. (She draws away from him- assured that she has him in her power) But you want me just as I am because I belong to you
- PHILIP How many times have you said that?
- BEATRICE Only one infinite time, echoing and re-echoing through the years. . ages perhaps and you have not answered yet
- PHILIP I answer now. . (Comes near defiantly) I don't want you. .You've given so much. . squandered so much..that you have lost that which was worth having. . you don't affect me.. I'm cold to you.. Understand. I don't want you
- BEATRICE (Suddenly slaps his face) That's because you lie
- PHILIP (Aghast) OH. You damn little fiend

(They crash into each other's arms. Beatrice laughs. He crushes her to him furiously)

PHILIP

Two animals in a field. . that's what it is. .you understand that, don't you?

BEATRICE

(Defiantly) Yes.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

TIME: About dawn. Beatrice barefooted, is fastening up dress. Philip, in dressing gown, is standing at the window, looking out. Beatrice is looking for something

BEATRICE What did you do with my stockings?

(Philip doesn't answer her)

Won't you speak to me?

PHILIP I don't remember

BEATRICE (Looking under bed) Here are the shoes. (Throws them to him) Don't let them get away while I find the stockings. Why is a man so interested in undressing you and so unconcerned about putting things on again?

(Philip makes no reply)

The scene of the crime. (Looking at the bed) Everything looks so cold and tortured. I wish I could make everything disappear as if by magic afterwards. I don't feel this embarrassment among poppies in a wheat-field or bracken or buttercups in the early Spring. I suppose it's the assurance earth gives us. (Straightens up bed and pulled out stockings from under the covers) Look where I found them. How did they get there?

PHILIP (Bitterly) Can't imagine. It's a mystery

BEATRICE Will you come and put them on me?

PHILIP You assume honours which you don't deserve

BEATRICE You took them off

PHILIP (Turning fiercely on her) You aren't as good as an animal where the female of the species goes quietly her own way afterwards. She doesn't ask him to kneel at her feet and replace her stockings

BEATRICE Oh please forgive me for not remembering the animals in the field. Philip, you know we couldn't go on as we were. I couldn't continue being a platonic mistress to you

PHILIP None of your arguments. I can't stand any more of your insidiousness. I'll tell you this much. I intended going on investigating you, hoping you would prove the kind of woman I could respect and admire, but whatever we were or might have been to each other, died a sudden death a few hours ago. (Coming from window with affected coolness) Now put on shows and stockings. It's time little girls were at home and asleep.

BEATRICE Why didn't you say that you cared for me whole heartedly in the proper way.. the only way. No, you were too much of a coward. You've blundered I was looking for something strong in you to help me be strong, but all I could get was the strength of a cold stone wall, built around your principles and guarded by plaster angels with bayonets (Crying)

PHILIP Your tears have no effect on me now. You have met your match this time
(Beatrice stands up. . now dressed)

You're very attractive. I'll grant you that. I think I prefer you dressed

BEATRICE I've never known anyone so horrible

PHILIP Aren't you going to throw something? There's a good chair

BEATRICE I believe I hate you

PHILIP My emotion isn't that strong. There's something noble about hate. I only dislike you intensely

BEATRICE Do you want to torture me?

PHILIP No, not exactly. Why?

BEATRICE Well, I do feel hurt. -Terribly. I was never more hurt in my life. Oh, Philip, can't something be done? Please don't send me away like this. Someday you'll understand. (She tries to hold on to him)

PHILIP No, please, Beatrice - don't lose your dignity

BEATRICE Isn't there something to give ~~you~~ us a chance of happiness? I see something in your eyes. . something lost and sad. I want to tell them happy stories and make them laugh. Why don't your eyes ever laugh and why are you ashamed of your true feelings?

PHILIP I don't know what you mean. I only know I am very sleepy

BEATRICE You can't bury your soul

PHILIP All right. I'll take it out and exercise it in the park every morning. Anything to please you, but I'd like ~~bringing~~ this conversation to an end if I may. Of course, I don't want to be rude.

BEATRICE Your politeness is more insulting ^{but} than your abuse. I'll go if you want me to. But you will see me again sometimes won't you?

PHILIP I am going to be very busy and there's no use Beatrice. We have nothing now for each other

BEATRICE You know better than that, if you are honest with yourself. (Looking out of the window) OH, look how the sun is coming up and there are the clouds. Do you remember how they were when we met? How quickly they melt away. The earth can't bear their beauty and quickly sweeps them away. Yes, even just as it does a promise of happiness such as ours. A new day. Can't it be a new day, Philip? Doesn't it mean ~~enough~~ enough to try? You can't wipe out that first moment when we met. There was something immortal about it

PHILIP

The more beautiful your words are, the more I loathe you for not being like them. Those are my last words to you. . except . . Goodbye. Better luck with the next victim

BEATRICE Philip. .. will you kiss me goodbye?

PHILIP Certainly

BEATRICE I suppose one sometimes kisses a harlot. Well that's what you think of me isn't it?

PHILIP Listen to me. I have heard Ronald's -Bob's - Alex's story. I don't want to hear my own

BEATRICE Galãant. . aren't you? (As Philip turns away)

(Beatrice goes out, and then as Philip is standing there we hear her sing)

"And oh I sang softly, though no one could hear"

(Her voice breaks almost to a sob)

"To wish you good morning--good morning, my dear"

(Then we hear the outer door close, as the curtain descends)

CURTAIN

74

ACT THREE

Scene 1

SCENE: Beatrice's bed-sitting room.

A party is in full swing. A gramophone is playing a jazz tune - "That night when you told me those little white lies". CELIA is dancing round. JIM comes in from the kitchen twirling an egg beater. (His deportment throughout the party is similar to that of a court jester. He uses the egg beater accordingly.) RONALD is sitting on a large pouffe. Two young men, all aesthetic types, are talking together and another is lounging on the bed. All understudies can be used in the scene to create the atmosphere of a party.

PAUL Of course it's a purely aesthetic pleasure - English poetry, for example.

BOB The music of Brahms and Bach ...

RONALD Brahms and Bach! Sounds like a non-stop variety turn.

PAUL Bach is pure beauty. There's no connection with life in his music.

JIM (enters, twirling the egg beater) In the midst of life (dancing about) I find a merry thing.

ALEX Celia, can't you hear music without showing your knickers?

CELIA Three rude noises to you. If you saw a few more knickers you wouldn't be trying to smother out life sleeping in a feather bed. What do you think of when the softness folds around you?

ALEX Sophie Tucker.

 BEATRICE enters. She is carrying a bottle and a glass.

56
75

BEATRICE (looking at the group) What a good family group. All my men ... They all come back to me sooner or later.

JIM The ninety and nine are safe in the fold but where is the one who has strayed?

A GIRL Yes, do tell us about your latest romance.

BEATRICE Oh, it was very dull.

A GIRL Has he reformed you?

BEATRICE Completely.

PAUL Well the group doesn't seem to be complete without him. Why isn't he here?

BEATRICE He is having an attack of disillusionment ... that childish disease you've all gone through. What about you, Bob, have you got over your attack?

BOB I think the coffin is properly nailed down. Anyway a camel may go on for a while after his back is broken.

BEATRICE Would you love me again?

BOB No ... I've escaped into that vacuum known only to scholars.

RONALD (to BOB) I hear you are writing on book-bindings of the 18th century ... By the way, I'm sorry I had to name you in the divorce, but I never approved of you as my wife's lover for no other reason than I thought you dull.

BOB That's too bad. I'm very sorry.

CELIA But he was ravishing in red pyjamas. I had that on first hand information.

BEATRICE The only difficulty with you, Bob, was that in an emotional emergency you never could find the appropriate Latin epigram or Greek paraphrase ... but I forgive you. Anyway, I could always hold your arm and not have to watch where I was going. That's more than I could say for Ronald. You see I'm a very simple person and I'm always running into other people's ideas.

PAUL (talking to ALEX) I enjoy life immensely now that I've intellectualised my emotions.

CELIA I hear you are going to marry a very intelligent girl.

PAUL Yes ... she's intolligent enough to see my point of view on perfect freedom in marriage. You see there should be something so unique in the relations between two people that they could not be duplicated. One places too much importance on sex by demanding fidelity. Jealousy is such a primitive thing.

RONALD Utterly ridiculous.

ALEX Why not? It's perfectly ridiculous that we are born at all.

JIM At least I've found a merry thing. No connection with life. Oh, the utter futility of it all. Let's all sprinkle salt on each other and dissolve away like snails.

CELIA Jim acts like an idiot. He's afraid someone will discover he's intelligent.

JIM Don't give away our bedroom secrets.

CELIA Bedroom secrets! Give me that egg beater. You've no more sex appeal than ...

JIM Socrates. I gave up the effort long ago because I wasn't ravishing in or out of ^{my} pyjamas.

CELIA I'm going to have a lover. Alex, will you be my lover?

ALEX No ... you're not good for me. Besides I'm faithful to my feather bed.

BEATRICE Alex, you should be very happy. You have what you wanted. You've buried your soul and can haunt other people's lives with a ghoulish body, eaten up with drink. I tried to bring you back to life.

RONALD You can't rouse Alex. He's my oldest school friend. We drafted for three years together in punts at Cambridge.

CELIA

Jim was brilliant at Cambridge. I fell in love with him for his mind, which was a mistake. I wish something would happen to knock me out of this rut of artificiality. Beatrice, you make me feel dull and uninteresting. It's because you have courage that I have sometimes hated you.

BEATRICE

You shouldn't ever hate me. I shall probably pay dearly for being interesting, and courageous. I shall go on like a butterfly among many coloured flowers ... dying too among them like a butterfly.

RONALD

How very dramatic.

CELIA

If I followed your example I'd end by selling matches in the street or like a butterfly stuck on a pin.

BEATRICE

I don't know ... I've seen you when you were wonderful. Do you remember that night we slept under the haystack and when we woke up next morning, there were poppies blooming around us?

CELIA

Yes ... and I found I'd been sleeping in a cow pat.

BEATRICE

There's something about poppies. They always give me a strange feeling when I see them. Perhaps they are the souls of wanton women like me ... Oh Celia, will you be a poppy in a wheatfield with me in the next life?

JIM

Her legs are too long. She'll be a sun-flower.

PAUL

Sun-flower. What a marvellous idea. Reminds me of a poem by Blake:

"Ah, Sunflower, weary
of time,
That counteth the steps
of the sun".

BEATRICE

--- "and the youth pined away with desire
and the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
arise from their graves and aspire
where my sunflower wishes to go".

JIM

I prefer Blake's: "Little lamb
Here I am
Come and lick my white neck
Let me pull your woft wool
Let me kiss your soft face
Merrily, merrily, merrily,
We welcome in the year".

(twirling the
egg beater)

- PAUL Poetry should have an allegorical appeal to the intellect.
- BOB That was explained very well by (gives a long Latin verse) *get one from David!*
- BEATRICE I could never resist your Latin recitations, altho' I never understood a word. - I wonder why I was so fond of all of you ... Alex, I like d him because I liked myself when I was with him, he made me say amusing things, I felt clever - Ronald, you could spell and I couldn't and you - (to PAUL) because you were wistful one night, but you never lived up to your wistfulness.
- PAUL Anyhow I am one of your men and have always felt the same about you. What about your new young man? Why did you like him?
- BEATRICE I don't know.
- BOB Didn't he come up to scratch?
- BEATRICE No. (turns to RONALD) Do you know it's hard to realise you were once my husband. Kiss me just to say there's no hard feelings.
- RONALD May a man kiss his ^Xwife? This is my first offence. I don't know the rules yet.
- BEATRICE What will you do with your freedom? Lose it again? Anyway, don't give your next wife Bertrand Russell to read.
- JIM I ^{like} prefer rattling my chains so I'm a happy married man.
- JIM Watch out! The King's Proctor's probably hiding under the couch.
- BEATRICE (looking round) Something is wrong. Women don't have husbands and lovers all over the place like this.
- RONALD I came at your special invitation. I missed you.
- SEVERAL We all did.
- BEATRICE Of course you did. But I resent you being able to meet me so agreeably. It isn't natural. It seems that you all league together against me as a common enemy. Men should fight each other for a woman. Fight to possess her and keep her.

PAUL This is rank heresy.

BEATRICE You are all so unnatural. It's only recently I have understood why I have done the things I've wondered about myself at times. It's because I've been caught between two untruths. People of conventional ideas which I couldn't believe in because I felt they were not right and natural and those people who oppose convention because they want to be different ... still not knowing how to be natural. I have been squeezed in between the two until my only defence has been to cut capers that could shock the one and amuse the other.

A VOICE I suppose you mean all the world's out of step but you?

BEATRICE I don't know. I know that I want something different from what I've been able to find.

A VOICE Somebody's been making you think and it doesn't become you.

ANOTHER Attractive women should never think ... it's dangerous. Now cheer up, Beatrice, don't lose your sense of humour.

BEATRICE Don't say sense of humour to me. I'm sick of it. I want to be morbidly sentimental for a change. I wish I'd married a farmer and had thousands of children. All I want now is to plant a garden and watch it grow.

A GIRL'S VOICE Beatrice is not herself.

CELIA I know what's wrong with her - Beatrice, are you going to have a baby?

BEATRICE Quintuplets.

RONALD Your glamour would be gone then,

BEATRICE Yes, I know, but there is something romantic about love outside the pale, but if there's a child even the most glamorous woman becomes pathetic and ridiculous like a flower dropping its petals and growing ugly brown seeds.

Celia
~~JEFF~~ Are you really going to seed, Beatrice?

ALEX I shall look forward to you dropping your petals and presenting us with pods of peas.

PAUL I think it would be better to go all fluffy and scatter
thistle-down about.

A GIRL'S
VOICE

I suppose even thistle-downs have ~~feathers~~ ^(feathers).

CELIA

It's true, I'm sure it is.

BEATRICE

You never know, because I'm going away tomorrow.

A VOICE

Not really. We must see this out

Knocks at door. BEATRICE goes and opens it to
find PHILIP there.

PHILIP

(taken aback) Oh ... I imagined you were alone.

BEATRICE

That must have been a triumph of imagination for you.

PHILIP

Of course I don't want to intrude on your party.

BEATRICE

We're delighted to have you. Of course we're all
drunk ... and disorderly ... if you don't mind that.

BEATRICE and PHILIP come into the room.

CELIA

Do you think it's immoral to drink, Philip? If not,
I'll get you one.

PHILIP

I just don't like it. Anyway, I haven't long to stay.

BEATRICE

I didn't invite you because I didn't think you wanted
to see me again.

PHILIP

As a matter of fact I only came ... well ... because
Mrs. Sims asked me to come and see you. She's a bit
shocked at the condition she finds your bed-sitting
room in, in the mornings.

BEATRICE

Oh yes, I see. You've had visions of me wallowing in
sin here. Well, you're wrong. No one has been here
until tonight. They only came because I am going
away. This is a farewell party.

PHILIP

My mistake. I'm sorry. If you'll excuse me, I'll
give you my farewell.

- BEATRICE ~~Oh,~~ don't go, Philip.
- PHILIP (very confused) Yes ... I'll go. I really shouldn't have come at all. Very foolish of me.
- BEATRICE I didn't know you were quite such a coward. Why don't you say why you came. You can see everyone demands an explanation.
- JIM You are among friends, Philip. Don't be on the defence. We are just one big family.
- RONALD The last time I saw you, Philip, you were defending my wife.
- BEATRICE Ex-wife.
- RONALD Ex-wife, excuse me. Anyway you were rescuing her from a den of cads. Do you still feel the same way or have you come to join the brotherhood?
- PHILIP I'm not going to answer that.
- RONALD Anyhow, are you sure you've given Beatrice a chance.
- PHILIP I don't understand you.
- BEATRICE There's no use, Philip. They demand your emotions. They must have something to live on ... Do you want to speak to me alone?
- PHILIP No ... certainly not. Why should I.
- BEATRICE Oh ... I don't know. I thought you might.
- . A slight lull
- PAUL I never know what one is supposed to do on these occasions.
- BOB (to PHILIP) I hear you are standing for Parliament. I think it's time they got new blood in the Government ... I believe we have some mutual friends.
- PHILIP (unenthusiastically) Really.

DOB Would you care to dine with me at my Club on, say, Wednesday. There's a chap I'd like you to meet.

PHILIP I'd be delighted but I'm afraid I'm very busy.

BEATRICE Can't you see, Bob, he's different from the rest of you. He doesn't want to be lashed to the mast along with you others. He doesn't seem to have that same fraternal urge that you all have for each other.

PHILIP If you think you have lashed me to a mast you are mistaken.

BEATRICE Then why did you come. You came without being asked.

PHILIP Yes and if you'll excuse me I'll leave without being asked.

BEATRICE I thought perhaps you came to say you were sorry.

RONALD It's all so dramatic. You're breaking my heart, Philip.

PHILIP From what I know of you, it would be much more becoming if I broke your jaw instead.

RONALD That might wall for an explanation.

PHILIP Explanations would do you no good. You wouldn't understand it. What you need is a demonstration.

RONALD Well, don't take your spite out on me, Philip, because you've quarrelled with Beatrice ... which it is quite obvious you have. I'm no good at fighting. I would be injured and you'd be arrested.

JIM My children, you mustn't quarrel. You'll waken little brother on the couch over there ... men are such brutes. Cads are more gentle.

PHILIP I don't care what you call me. I'm not impressed by you ... neither am I amused. I don't know what you think about me and I don't know what I think about myself. Maybe I'm a brute and a cad ... both ... but I don't feel like laughing about it.

JIM Aren't you rather hard on yourself, Philip?

- CELIA Why didn't you say, "God, what a fool I've been" and call it a day?
- BEATRICE I'm sorry, Philip. I really am sorry, but you can't fight them on their own footing and they won't fight on yours. It's strange that I can feel sympathy for you, but I do ... I do ... I realise how humiliated you are. I'm not glorying in it.
- PHILIP I don't want your sympathy. I want nothing from you at all. I was foolish to think I could help you ...
- BEATRICE Well, you couldn't. You couldn't smother me with your putrid respectability, smelling to high heaven. I know why you came tonight. A dog returns to a piece of meat he's buried. One sometimes kisses a harlot. Well ... one sometimes returns to her.
- PHILIP So you think that do you. You've played your little farce very well. Everybody is amused.
- BEATRICE That's it. You left me because you couldn't bear to be laughed at. It was for none of your ideals. That little twist at the end of our affair would keep them in laughs for a year but don't fear, I shan't tell them about it. If I didn't pity you so much I would hate you.
- PHILIP Because I didn't fall in love with you? You know I didn't fall in love with you, don't you? I was the only man who ever put you in your place.
- JIM (philosophically) You obviously ARE in love with her.
- BEATRICE Is that why. I'll clear the mystery. He prefers me dressed.
- BOB He should have had a statue up somewhere. Back to back with Edith Cavell.
- JIM Front to front.
- Everyone laughs
- BEATRICE Now Philip, Sir Calahad, you have lost your opportunity to leave without being asked to go.
- PHILIP stands too angry to move.

BEATRICE I know how to make him run away. I'll take off my clothes ... you've never seen me dance without my clothes ... that's something you've missed. (She begins to disrobe ... takes off skirt and throws it in Philip's face) I'll dance you the rhythm of life.

PHILIP You're drunk, mad, or both.

BEATRICE throws each garment at PHILIP separately and he shows no reaction. She is infuriated by his control and dances wilder, tormenting him every way she can. The others form a ring around the two, and encourage Beatrice with their laughter and imitations of primitive music. Finally PHILIP tries to stop her dancing. *Mila*

PHILIP Stop! Do you hear!

She struggles out of his grasp and he slaps her. Everyone stops still. PHILIP and BEATRICE look at each other with hatred for a moment and PHILIP turns abruptly and leaves the room.

JIM He's obviously in love with you.

BEATRICE is almost undressed.

BEATRICE Give me my clothes ... anything ... quick. (Grabs clothes and makes for door)

BOB (gets in front of her) You can't go out like that.

BEATRICE I will go.

BOB Put on your clothes and calm yourself first.

BEATRICE No ... don't try to stop me.

JIM Let's be calm and work it out in algebra.

BEATRICE Let me go. You've had your talons in my emotions long enough.

BEATRICE exits. Slams the door.

(The gramophone is switched off and there is a fall in the conversation)

RONALD I think we had better follow her. She's going to him . . .

ALEX Nonsense - They have made their bed, let them stew in it . . .

RONALD Pick up some things and let's go

Celia ~~you~~ want to be ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{on} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~depth~~ ^{depth} ?

BLACK OUT

ACT THREEScene 2

SCENE: Philip's bedroom.

Before the rise of curtain there is a sound of pounding on a door and BEATRICE's voice can be heard calling ... "Philip" ... "Philip!"

CURTAIN RISES showing PHILIP obviously alarmed, standing against the door, locking it.

BEATRICE Won't you please let me in?

PHILIP No ... you are drunk and disgusting. Please go away.

BEATRICE But I must see you.

PHILIP I don't want to see you ... ever again.

BEATRICE But it will soon be dawn. Let's see it together from your window.

PHILIP There'll be no dawn ... only fogs at this time of the year.

BEATRICE There might be a miracle. Anything might happen and the sun come up as it did before. Don't you remember?

PHILIP No! Never again ... do you understand?

BEATRICE You can't shut me out by locking a door.

PHILIP I appeal to you to be reasonable and leave me in peace. I want my life free. Please understand that. Anyway I saw you in your true colours tonight, showing off the way you did ... humiliating me before everybody. Now I am very sleepy. Will you please go. You can't explain yourself out of anything. I won't listen.

There is a crash of broken glass and BEATRICE breaks through the glass panel of the door. Her left hand and arm are covered with blood, some of it has fallen on her white dress. Following the crash there is a tense moment as they stand facing each other in silence. PHILIP is obviously afraid ... BEATRICE is uncannily calm but consumed with a purpose.

BEATRICE (quietly) Do you remember ... once before we stood still and looked at each other like this. And it seemed that everything in the universe stood still ... the moon ~~and the stars~~, even Time hold its breath and waited for us to speak. Just now I feel the same thing. Is the beginning and end of things so much the same?

PHILIP is too alarmed to reply.

Don't be afraid ... there's nothing to be afraid of.

PHILIP Look, you're bleeding. You've cut your hand.

BEATRICE It's nothing - nothing at all. Look at me, can't you see I love you. I'm sorry about the party. You came back to me that's all that matters. I'm sorry they were all there. I don't know what makes me act the way I do when I'm with them. I'll never see them again. Please, please, Philip, look at me.

PHILIP No. You were disgusting. Now let me tell you something. I could not get you out of my mind. I wanted you, I wanted you desperately.

He hears the party coming up the steps, laughing and talking.

You've brought them here. You brought them here. Yes, YOU brought them here.

BEATRICE NO, no.

PHILIP That's all it ever was. Just a physical attraction. I know it now.

The laughter and voices come nearer.

(his voice rising in desperate anger) (He grasps her and shakes her and his hands close on her throat) I know it now. No matter how you disguise it. You are just rotten with sex. All those men. What is the matter? Am I insane? I never wanted to hurt anyone before. Rotten, rotten - you are just rotten with sex. Messing up my life, and now everyone is laughing at me.

(Philip has strangled her. She is limp in his arms. Sound of voices and laughter)

RONALD (*outside*) Philip, as one fellow sufferer to another, do you need any help?

(Much laughter)

(Philip stands holding the lifeless form of Beatrice in his arms)

The Curtain comes down . With Philip still holding Be trice limp in his arms.

Laughter of Philip; Talk

CURTAIN