

ACT THREE

## ACT THREE

### SCENE I

SCENE: *The same, the following afternoon.*

TIME: *Three o'clock.*

*Immediately after the rise of the curtain, LEONORA comes in. She wears walking-dress and carries a letter. She moves listlessly, and depressedly sits down on the chesterfield, looking ahead of her for a moment, then attempts to throw off her mood, turns over her letter, and begins to read it.*

FLORENCE *comes in.*

FLORENCE

Oh! There you are, miss.

LEONORA

Yes, Florence. Here I am.

FLORENCE

You never said you weren't going to be in for lunch, miss. Cook was keeping it hot till half-past two—close on.

LEONORA

Oh, I'm sorry.

FLORENCE (*intimately*)

You might say a word to her, miss. I think she's a bit hurt, like.

LEONORA

Oh.

FLORENCE

You know what she is, miss, if she's crossed.

LEONORA

No, Florence. I've taken good care not to know. But I gather from mother she gets a bit bizarre.

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. And this coming just now . . .

LEONORA

Why just now

FLORENCE

Well, miss, she's just had a bit of an upset in her private life, and it's left her a little sensitive, so to speak.

LEONORA

Oh. And you think a word from me . . .

FLORENCE

Well, miss, I think she'd appreciate it.

LEONORA

Very well, Florence.

FLORENCE

You have *had* your lunch, I suppose, miss?

LEONORA (*after a moment's pause*)

No. As a matter of fact, I haven't. But it doesn't matter. I don't want any.

FLORENCE

Oh, but you must have lunch, miss. I'll get you something.

LEONORA

No, Florence, really I'd rather not.

FLORENCE

Just a bite, miss. Isn't there anything you fancy? A bit of caviare, perhaps? You like that.

LEONORA (*listlessly*)

No. Oh, you can get me a whiskey and soda if you like.

FLORENCE (*shrugging her shoulders*)

Very good, miss.

[*She goes to the door.*]

LEONORA

Oh! No one telephoned, I suppose?

FLORENCE

Mrs. Sinclair wanted to know, miss, whether you could tell her where she could get in touch with Mr. Houston.

LEONORA (*a shade savagely*)

Oh, did she? Well, next time she asks that, tell her that Mr. Houston has gone to America and that I don't know his address. (*Pause.*) I don't, Florence.

FLORENCE

Don't you, miss?

LEONORA

No.

[FLORENCE goes out. LEONORA takes off her hat and gloves and wanders listlessly around the room. FLORENCE returns with a tray of whiskey and some caviare.

FLORENCE

Shall I pour it out for you, miss?

LEONORA

Please, Florence. (FLORENCE pours out a very minute whiskey. LEONORA looks up.) Oh! Florence! I want to taste it. (FLORENCE minutely increases the quantity.) Go on. (FLORENCE adds a drop more.) Go on. I'll say when. (FLORENCE dubiously goes on pouring whiskey until she has made a reasonable drink.) All right. Like that. And about the same amount of soda. (FLORENCE silently complies, and gives her the drink with rather more soda than requested.) I said the same amount.

[She sits down and starts reading her letter.

FLORENCE

Well, miss, on an empty stomach, I don't know if it's wise. I brought you some caviare, miss. Do try it.

LEONORA

All right, Florence. I'll try.

FLORENCE (*spreading the caviare on a wafer*)

However did you come to miss your lunch, miss?

LEONORA

I just didn't want any. At least, I didn't want to

come home, and there was nowhere I liked the look of eating at alone. I think I got a bit martyred about it in the end.

FLORENCE

If you don't have breakfast, miss, you can't get along without your lunch.

LEONORA

No. (*Looking up from her letter.*) Oh, by the way, Florence, Miss Tozer's engaged.

FLORENCE

Is she, miss?

LEONORA

Yes. Isn't it nice?

FLORENCE

Do you know the gentleman, miss?

LEONORA

No. (*Reading.*) But she says he's *terribly* good-looking, and she's *terribly* happy! (*Sullenly.*) Quite a romance!

FLORENCE

You'll have to look sharp, miss.

LEONORA

Yes. I'll be alone to dinner to-night, Florence. Tell cook just an egg or something.

FLORENCE

Oh, miss, you can't. (*Pause.*) Excuse me, miss, but you're not fretting about anything, are you?

LEONORA

Why do you ask that?

FLORENCE

Oh, I just wondered, miss. No lunch—wanting an egg for dinner—that's always a sign, I think.

[LEONORA *smiles feebly*.

LEONORA

I'm all right, Florence.

FLORENCE

I know it's none of my business, miss, but, after all, I have known you since you was a baby—*before* you was a baby, really, in a manner of speaking. And you did used to talk to me when you was in the schoolroom.

LEONORA

I know, Florence.

FLORENCE

I felt last night, miss, that there was something wrong, and I thought perhaps it might do you good to talk to someone. They do say troubles shared is troubles halved.

LEONORA

That's in marriage! (*Changing her mood.*) Oh, you're a dear, Florence. I'm sorry I was beastly to you yesterday.

FLORENCE

Oh, that's all right, miss. You were only being funny.

LEONORA (*bitterly*)

Damned funny.

FLORENCE

You know you've always been like that, miss. Showing off, like, to somebody new. It was the same when you was at school and used to bring someone back to tea that you were proud of. You always used to try and be funny with me.

LEONORA

Did I?

FLORENCE

Yes, miss. I always knew it didn't mean anything, really. Go on, miss. Have another of these, miss.

LEONORA

No, thanks.

FLORENCE

Just one more. (*Coaxingly.*) One for Florence, like we used to say in the nursery. (LEONORA *smiles and takes another sandwich.*) There you are! And when you've drunk up your whiskey, what about a nice little lay down?

LEONORA

I'll try. And if the telephone goes, I'm out.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

LEONORA

And I won't lunch or dine with anybody. Anybody,



you understand. And if they ask you where I am, tell them I've gone to . . . Madam Tussand's!

FLORENCE (*troubled*)

I do wish your mother and father was back.

LEONORA

I'm thankful they're not.

FLORENCE

Well, miss, you can't go on like this. Starving yourself. Not seeing anybody. I shall have to have the doctor to you.

LEONORA (*impatiently*)

I'm all right, Florence. I'm all right.

FLORENCE

Oh! Very well, miss.

[*She goes to the door, hurt.*]

LEONORA

Oh, Florence, I'm sorry. Only I can't stand being fussed.

FLORENCE

I've never seen you like this before, miss.

LEONORA

No. It's a surprise to me, too.

FLORENCE

You've never been one for moping.

LEONORA

No.

FLORENCE (*very hesitantly, after a pause*)

It's . . . it's Mr. Houston, isn't it, miss?

[LEONORA *nods.*

FLORENCE

I thought it was. I couldn't help noticing.

LEONORA

Did you like him, Florence?

FLORENCE

Well, miss . . . I didn't really see much of him.  
He's a nice-*looking* gentleman.

LEONORA

Yes.

FLORENCE

And he's gone back to America, you say? I expect  
he'll be coming back. Won't he?

LEONORA

Not until next year, Florence.

FLORENCE

Um. That seems a long time, I expect. But it'll soon  
pass, miss. It's wonderful how time flies when you  
come to think back over it. Of course, you haven't  
known him very long, have you, miss?

LEONORA

Not very.

FLORENCE

Not that that's got anything to do with it, really,

I don't suppose. Excuse me, but are you engaged to him, miss?

LEONORA

No, Florence.

FLORENCE

Oh, I'm sorry, miss.

LEONORA (*smiling*)

Oh, he did ask me!

FLORENCE

Oh! (*Then, brightly.*) Oh, well, I daresay he'll ask you again, miss. Write it to you, perhaps.

LEONORA (*wretchedly*)

No!

FLORENCE

There . . . there isn't anything *against* him, miss?

LEONORA

Not in the way you mean, no.

FLORENCE

I'd like to see you married.

LEONORA

Well, it doesn't look as if you'd got much chance.

FLORENCE

Oh, don't say that, miss. There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

LEONORA

That, Florence, in my present state of mind, I believe to be profoundly untrue.

FLORENCE

Why don't you go out to-night somewhere, miss? Go to a play or the pictures. Ring up somebody and ask them to go with you . . . or *take* you.

LEONORA

I don't think so.

FLORENCE

Well, why not go round to Mrs. Wavertree's, then?

LEONORA

Oh! My God!

FLORENCE

I'm sure she'd be glad to have you.

LEONORA

No, Florence!

FLORENCE

Well, Mrs. Enfielden, p'raps?

LEONORA

No, Florence!

FLORENCE

You ought to make an effort, miss.

LEONORA

No, Florence. I'll dine alone, thank you.

FLORENCE

Would you like some champagne with your dinner, miss? Buck you up a bit.

LEONORA

Florence, if you go on sympathising with me, I shall howl.

FLORENCE

Oh, Miss Leonora!

LEONORA

I'm in a very unpleasant state, and I'm far better left alone.

FLORENCE

Very good, miss.

LEONORA

Thank you for your ministrations, Florence. I'll have the champagne for dinner. Perhaps I can get drunk.

FLORENCE

That's more like your old self, miss!

LEONORA

Florence! You've never seen me drunk!

FLORENCE

I didn't mean that, miss. I mean, it's like you to make a joke of things.

LEONORA

Yes, Florence. It isn't always easy.

FLORENCE

No, miss. (*She goes out. As she gets to the door, she turns back.*) Oh, excuse me.

LEONORA

Yes. What is it?

FLORENCE

Excuse me, but you won't mind Rose waiting on you at dinner to-night?

LEONORA (*puzzled*)

No. Why? Is it your evening out?

FLORENCE

No, miss. I expect you won't remember, but I spoke to you about it the other day. I'm going to the dentist.

LEONORA

Oh. Is that to-day?

FLORENCE

Yes, miss.

LEONORA

What time is the execution?

FLORENCE

Half-past five, miss. He couldn't take me before. So I thought, if you wouldn't mind, p'raps I might go straight to bed when I got home.

LEONORA

Yes, of course. You'd better have some of the champagne.

FLORENCE

Oh, no, miss, thank you. I never take things like that.

LEONORA

Buck you up a bit.

FLORENCE

It's very good of you, miss, but I'd rather not. Cook might make me some Mellen's, perhaps.

LEONORA

How revolting.

FLORENCE (*smiling*)

You didn't ought to say that about Mellen's, miss. It was that what saved your life when you was a baby.

LEONORA

Was it? (*Miserably.*) I can't think what for.

FLORENCE

Thought we was going to lose you, we did. You couldn't keep a thing down.

LEONORA

Florence! Spare me!

FLORENCE (*smiling*)

Well, it will be all right about to-night, then?

LEONORA

Of course.

FLORENCE

Thank you, miss.

LEONORA

Would you like me to come with you?

FLORENCE

Oh, no, miss.

LEONORA

Yes. Would you?

FLORENCE

I wouldn't dream of such a thing, miss.

LEONORA

No. But wouldn't you like me to, really?

FLORENCE

Well, it's awfully good of you, miss . . .

LEONORA

Not at all, Florence. I'm going to devote the rest of my life to good works. Besides, it will take my mind off myself.

FLORENCE

Why *don't* you ring up someone and have a jolly evening, miss?

[LEONORA *smiles feebly at her, and FLORENCE goes.*  
LEONORA *trails round for a moment, then goes over to the window and looks out.*

LEONORA (*after a pause*)

There's snow as far as you can see, Emily . . . the robins have eaten all the crumbs we . . . (*Her voice breaks, and she comes away from the window with her handkerchief against her lips. She goes over to*



*the bookshelf, takes down "Romeo and Juliet," settles herself down on the chesterfield with it, opens it, reads for a minute, and then pitches it across the room. She looks a couple of times at the telephone and then goes over to it, stands a moment hesitant, and then dials a number.)* Hello? Is Mr. Walmsley there? . . . Could I speak to him? . . . Oh, I think he'll speak to *me*. . . . Miss Perrycoste. (*She holds on.*) Hello? Peter? . . . This is Leonora. . . . Yes. How are you? I say, Peter, does that invitation for to-night still hold good? . . . Yes, I'm free. . . . My what? Oh! My Americans, They've gone. . . . Yes, they got a cable. They sailed to-day on the *Majestic*. So I thought if you had nothing to do we might still go out together. . . . Oh. . . . Oh, I see. No. Don't bother. It doesn't matter. . . . It's all right, Peter. You needn't bother. . . . Oh, all right then. . . . Oh, I don't know. . . . No, let's go to a theatre. I'd rather. . . . Oh, something jolly. A revue, if there is one. I'd like a good laugh. . . . Yes, all right. Half-past seven. . . . Don't be so silly, Peter. Well, I don't *feel* like an angel. Good-bye. (*She rings off, and rises with distaste in her face, prowls round the room in growing impatience, goes over to the mantelpiece, and starts fidgeting with an ornament. Almost unconsciously she begins to sing: "Why am I always a bridesmaid, never the blushing bride?" and after a few bars becomes aware of what she is doing.*) Oh, hell! (*She smashes the ornament in the grate.*) And that's a damned silly thing to do, too! (*Imitating a governess.*) Leonora, I'm surprised at you. I don't know what's come over you. (*In a different, self-disgusted voice.*) Nor do I.

*(In her first voice.)* It's not like you to behave like this. *(In her second voice.)* I know! *(She gives an exclamation of rage with herself.)* Wah! *(She looks out of the window at the sunshine outside.)* Oh!!! I wish it was raining!

*[She turns and goes angrily into her bedroom.]*

CURTAIN

## ACT THREE

### SCENE II

SCENE: *The same. About eight hours later.*

*The opening of this scene should be directed exactly similarly, as regards moves, etc., as the opening of Act 1, Scene II, with PETER replacing DWIGHT. The mood, however, especially that of LEONORA, is entirely different.*

*When the curtain rises, the stage is in darkness. Then a light in the passage outside is switched on. PETER WALMSLEY and LEONORA appear. They are both in evening dress. PETER is a good-looking, rather over-forcible Englishman, slightly of the Guards type, of about thirty. They come into the room. LEONORA switches on the light, looks round. On the table is a bottle of lemon squash, etc., as before.*

LEONORA (*as they come in*)

Come in. Have a drink?

PETER

Thanks.

LEONORA

Whiskey?

PETER

Yes, thanks.

LEONORA

I'll get it.

PETER

They don't leave it out for you, what? (*She goes into the dining-room. PETER hangs round, lighting a cigarette, then follows to the door.*) I say, can't I help?

LEONORA (*off*)

It's all right.

[*She returns with tumbler and decanter as before.*]

PETER

Lemon squash for you?

LEONORA

No. I think whiskey. (*He pours it out.*) I'm afraid there isn't any ice.

PETER (*horrified*)

Ice? Good God, do you put ice in a whiskey and soda?

LEONORA (*murmuring*)

A trick I learned e'en now, of one I danced withal.

PETER

Filthy American habit! (*He gives her her glass. Lifts his own.*) Well, here she goes.

LEONORA

Skoal.

[*Drinks.*]

PETER (*drinks*)

I wanted that! For this relief much thanks.

LEONORA

What's the time?

PETER

Quarter past.

LEONORA

One?

PETER

Yes. Do you want to go to bed?

LEONORA

Not just yet.

[*They settle down on the chesterfield.*]

PETER

Damned good show, didn't you think?

LEONORA (*absently*)

Um.

PETER

Jolly good tune, that.

LEONORA

Which?

PETER

Well, there was only one, wasn't there? That's what I like about musical shows these days. One decent tune, and you get a chance to remember it. You

know. (*He begins to sing a fragment of a very sentimental number, quite seriously.*) Good, what?

LEONORA

Lovely. So sentimental.

PETER

Oh, come off it.

LEONORA

What?

PETER

Pulling my leg like that. (*He puts an arm around her.*) You're looking awfully nice to-night. Leonora.

LEONORA (*uninterested*)

Oh?

PETER

Awfully nice!

[*He starts to caress her.*]

LEONORA (*instinctively drawing away*)

No . . . no.

PETER

What's the matter?

LEONORA

Nothing. Only . . . don't.

PETER (*disappointed*)

Oh, I say!

LEONORA (*to herself*)

Oh, go on. Pay for your dinner.

PETER

What's that?

LEONORA

Oh, nothing. (*She presents her cheek.*) Go on, Peter. (*He kisses it, then she leans back, then she leans forward again, presents her cheek again.*) Now your theatre tickets!

PETER

What?

LEONORA

Go on, Peter. (*A little more bewildered, PETER kisses her again. Then she leans back again, then she leans forward again, presents her cheek a third time.*) Now your supper!

PETER

What's the matter, Leonora? You've been so nice to me all the evening. Letting me hold your hand . . .

LEONORA

I'm afraid I'm a bit absent-minded to-night.

PETER

I cut a most impressive dinner to come to-night . . .  
I offended no end of dowagers . . .

LEONORA

I'm sorry.

PETER

Oh, I was only too glad to, when *you* asked me. But I did hope it meant you felt a bit more hearty about me.

LEONORA

I'm sorry, Peter. But I've told you before . . .

PETER

Oh, I know. But you don't have to want to marry me not to mind my kissing you. You've let me kiss you before.

LEONORA

Have I? Well, it was always rather like getting a cricket-ball in the face. I suppose really it shows what a respect you have for me. What have I done to sacrifice it now?

PETER

What do you mean?

LEONORA

Well, you're much more like a tennis-ball this evening.

PETER

I suppose you mean more serious?

LEONORA

I suppose so.

PETER

Well, I'm fond of you. You know that, Leonora.

*[He begins to grab her again.]*

LEONORA

Oh, Peter, please. . . . Not to-night.

PETER

But why? Have you fallen for someone else? (*She*



*does not answer.*) Is that it? (*Still no answer.*) Who? (*No answer.*) You're not engaged, by any chance? (*She holds up her left hand, showing its innocence of rings.*) Oh. Just walking out? (*Still no answer.*) I see. Well, I don't seem to be much use here then, do I?

[*He makes a move.*]

LEONORA

Oh, no, Peter. Don't go.

PETER

Well, what's the use of my staying?

LEONORA

Just because I don't want you to make love to me? (*Then, in a burlesque voice.*) Oh, you men are all the same! You only want one thing from a woman!

PETER (*taking her seriously*)

Oh, I say! That's not fair.

LEONORA (*giggling a little*)

No?

PETER

No. But, damn it all, you know how I feel about you. It's not much fun for me to sit here while you go on thinking about somebody else.

LEONORA

I won't. I promise I won't. I'll forget all about it. Only I've got the pip. So be nice to me. Peter.

PETER

It's you that won't be nice to me.

LEONORA

I didn't mean that by "be nice."

PETER

What?

LEONORA

What you meant.

PETER

I don't know what you mean. You said . . .

LEONORA (*with an echo in her ears*)

Look here, don't you think we'd better go back and begin all over again?

PETER (*obligingly*)

All right. You said "be nice to me," and I said . . .

LEONORA (*interrupting*)

Oh, Peter, don't!

PETER

Well, what *do* you want?

LEONORA

Just stay and talk pretty to me.

PETER

What about?

LEONORA

How should I know? Oh, tell me, Peter, do you know anything about telephoning to ships at sea?

PETER

No. Why?

LEONORA

I just wondered.

PETER

Well, I believe you can.

LEONORA

How?

PETER

I don't know. Dial "O" and I expect they'll tell you. I believe there are only one or two you can do it with. Atlantic liners. The *Bremen*, I should think. Perhaps the *Europa*.

LEONORA

Yes.

PETER

Why? Do you want to?

LEONORA

No, not really. I just wondered.

PETER

Pretty marvellous, isn't it?

LEONORA

These modern inventions. Wireless . . .

PETER

Television.

LEONORA

Talkies . . .

PETER

Flying the Atlantic . . . it makes you realise how small the world is.

LEONORA

No, it isn't. It's damned large.

PETER

Well, you can get around it pretty quickly nowadays, if you want to. The Transatlantic telephone is not so bad, either.

LEONORA (*suddenly*)

Oh! I'd forgotten about that.

PETER

Do you know they'll track you all over England?

LEONORA (*fiercely*)

Bloodhounds! That's what they are. Human bloodhounds!

PETER

Are you thinking of telephoning anyone?

LEONORA

No. No. Who should I telephone?

PETER

I don't know. I thought perhaps . . . those Americans of yours.

LEONORA

What Americans?

PETER

The ones you've been carting round.

LEONORA

Oh! Those!

PETER

Who were they?

LEONORA

Oh, I don't know. Just Americans.

PETER

Where from?

LEONORA

New York. Philadelphia. Chicago, and . . . Minneapolis.

PETER

What were their names?

LEONORA

Dear me! You do want to know a lot? One of them was called . . . let me see . . . Houston.

PETER

I know an American called Houston. I suppose it couldn't be the same.

LEONORA (*absently*)

I shouldn't think so.

PETER

What is his other name?

LEONORA

Dwight.

PETER

Dwight Houston? It must be the same.

LEONORA (*sitting up, astonished*)

You mean you know him?

PETER

Lord, yes! Known him for years.

LEONORA

Peter, you haven't!

PETER

Yes. Why not?

LEONORA

I don't know. It's so extraordinary. Where did you meet him?

PETER

I met him first of all, about twelve years ago in Burma. He got into some scrape or other trying to photograph the Green Eye of the Little Yellow God, or something. I was staying with the Lancings. They got him out. Then I met him again in America, about six years ago, when I was with the polo team. I didn't know he'd been over here this year.

LEONORA

He was only here a day or two. Do you like him, Peter?

PETER (*enthusiastically*)

Yes, he's a good chap. Not *like* an American. But, then, if you know America, quite a lot of them aren't.

LEONORA

What *was* he like? An Englishman?

PETER

Well, very nearly.

LEONORA

Do you know any of his people?

PETER

Yes.

LEONORA

Are they nice, too?

PETER

They're very exclusive. But they were jolly nice to us.

LEONORA

The Four Hundred, and that kind of thing?

PETER

Oh, lots better than that.

LEONORA

Do you know anything about his wife?

PETER

Yes. I was there about the time of the smash-up. Shocking little b . . . (*He checks himself.*) Shocking little beast. Pretty, of course, but no end of a tart.

LEONORA

Really?

PETER

He was a damned sight too good for her . . . and *to* her, for that matter.

LEONORA

How do you mean?

PETER

Well, she ran off with his best friend. He was in the Diplomatic—the friend, I mean. Bust *his* career and then walked out on him. Ran herself into no end of trouble. Debts and God knows what all. Houston helped her out a couple of times. She lives in Paris now. You can see her for yourself any day in the Ritz bar.

LEONORA

Was he very much in love with her?

PETER

Lord, *I* don't know! I should think he must have been.

LEONORA

Yes. (*Thoughtfully.*) How long is it since you've seen him?

PETER

Oh, a couple of years. What's he like now?

LEONORA

Oh, quite nice, I think.

PETER

Hasn't got married again, has he?



LEONORA

No. Why?

PETER

Oh, I don't know. I just wondered if he had. He was a very popular chap.

LEONORA

With the ladies?

PETER

Yes, terribly. Strong, silent stuff, you know. (*She giggles.*) What's the matter?

LEONORA

I don't know. He didn't strike me as very silent. I'd have called him chatty, myself. Tell me some more about him.

PETER

I can't. I don't know him *well*. You've seen him since I have.

LEONORA

Yes, but he was only here a day or two. I didn't see much of him, comparatively.

PETER (*getting something from her tone*)

What do you mean, comparatively?

LEONORA

Well . . . much of him, then.

PETER

Who were the others?

LEONORA (*not replying*)

He's an architect, isn't he? Is he good at his job?

PETER

How should I know?

LEONORA

Have you seen anything he . . . architected?

PETER

I don't know. I never look at buildings. You're a bit intrigued about him, aren't you? (*Silence. Her mind is a long way away.*) Aren't you?

LEONORA (*coming back*)

What?

PETER

I said you're a bit intrigued about him, aren't you?

LEONORA

Who? Oh! No!

PETER

You're asking a lot of questions.

LEONORA

Oh, I'm just . . . interested! (*Brightly.*) I always think people are so interesting, don't you?

PETER (*in the tone that means "come off it"*)

Ertcher!

LEONORA

Curiosity, you know. Just feminine curiosity

PETER (*after a moment*)

Rot!

LEONORA (*indignantly*)

What do you mean, rot?

PETER

I mean rot! Feminine curiosity! I've never been asked so many questions in all my life. (*Pause.*) So it's him, is it?

LEONORA

What?

PETER

I said it's him, is it?

LEONORA

What? Who? Why? Which? What do you mean?

PETER

This chap you've fallen for. It's him.

LEONORA

Don't be a fool, Peter.

PETER

Well, what do you want to know all his family history for, then? Who are his people . . . when did he get his first tooth . . .

LEONORA

When did he?

PETER

Oh, shut up! It *is* him, isn't it?

LEONORA

Peter, don't nag. What's it matter *who* it is . . . even *if* it is . . . which I'm not admitting.

PETER

You seem to forget I'm keen on you myself.

LEONORA

Yes, but you can't be dog in the manger about it.

PETER

Dog in the manger?

LEONORA

Yes.

PETER

Well, I don't see that. Damn it all, the dog in the manger didn't want whatever it was he wouldn't let the other chap have.

LEONORA

Oh, no, that's right. No more he did. I must have been mixing my metaphors. I mean the ostrich in the sand, or the fly in the ointment, or something.

PETER

It is Dwight Houston? (*She growls with exasperation at his persistence.*) Where did you meet him?

LEONORA

At a party at Betty Enfielden's.

PETER

What about the others?

LEONORA

What others?

PETER

The other Americans. From . . . I don't believe there *were* any others. Were there?

LEONORA

Not a great many.

PETER

Just him, eh? That's why you weren't going to have a free minute for the next three weeks? And now he's gone. And you're still keen on him . . . eh? Did he make love to you?

LEONORA

He was quite polite to me.

PETER

The swine!

LEONORA

Now, Peter, really! Why swine?

PETER

To make love to you.

LEONORA

Are *you* a swine, Peter?

PETER

That's different.

LEONORA

Why?

PETER

Because I'm in love yith you.

LEONORA

Aow!

PETER

And he's just a philanderer.

LEONORA

How do you know?

PETER

Well, it stands to reason. You say he's only here a couple of days. He picks you up at a party, makes love to you, makes you fond of him. He ought to be horse-whipped.

LEONORA

And you were saying just now how nice he was.

PETER

Oh, like that, yes! But for you . . . to get fresh with you . . . a man that's been divorced . . . do you know he's got a kid?

LEONORA

Yes.

PETER

Well, then . . .

LEONORA

What difference does that make?

PETER

Well, if you can't see for yourself . . .

LEONORA

I can't.

PETER

He didn't ask you to marry him?

LEONORA (*quickly*)

Yes, he did!

PETER

And you wouldn't, because you saw what he was.  
There you are!

LEONORA (*getting worked up*)

It wasn't that at all.

PETER

What was it, then?

LEONORA (*nearly crying with exasperation*)

Oh, go to hell! What's it got to do with you, anyway?

PETER

Look here, Leonora, you know I'm fond of you, and  
I hate the idea of your being made unhappy.

LEONORA (*nearly crying*)

I'm not unhappy.

PETER

You must be.

LEONORA

You might allow me to know for myself.

PETER

You said you'd got the pip. You said you were keen  
on him, and that you weren't engaged to him. You  
can't be keen on a man and not engaged to him, and  
not be unhappy. Can you? Can you?

LEONORA (*bursting into tears*)

I wish you'd go away.

PETER

There you are, you see. You're crying.

LEONORA (*angrily*)

Well, then, I hope you're satisfied.

[*She goes to telephone.*]

PETER

What are you doing?

LEONORA (*taking up receiver*)

Calling you a taxi. Hello, taxi?

[*As she says this, her eye falls on the block by the telephone. Her eyes nearly drop out of her head at what she sees written there. With her two hands behaving like a seesaw, she picks it up with one and puts the receiver down with the other, not on its hook, but with complete absent-mindedness on the table.*]

PETER

Look here, Leonora. (*He sees that she is engrossed.*)  
What is it? What's up? (*LEONORA takes not the slightest notice of him. With her hand to her head she stares at the block.*) What you got there?

[*He comes over to her. She clasps it to her breast so that he cannot read it.*]

LEONORA (*abstractedly*)

I must ring up.

PETER

Who? (*She does not answer, but looks at the re-*



*ceiver, replaces it, gets the telephone book, and hunts through it.)* What's all this about? What's happened? What are you looking for? Leonora, what's the matter?

LEONORA

Oh, shut up, Peter. I'm busy.

PETER (*as she goes on looking for the number and then dials it*)

There's nothing wrong with your people, is there?

LEONORA (*impatiently*)

No!

PETER

Not bad news?

LEONORA (*as before*)

No!

PETER

Well, what is it then?

LEONORA

Oh! Eat your damned bun!

[*She begins to dial a number.*]

PETER

Well . . . well . . . I'll just help myself to a deoch and doris, if I may.

[*He goes over and pours himself out a drink, looking at her as he does so.*]

LEONORA

Hello? Is that the Ritz? I want . . . (*Looking down at the block.*) Apartment 501, please. Yes.

[*Holds on.*]

PETER

You can't wake up people at this time of night.

LEONORA

I'm not. (*Doubtfully.*) At least, I don't think I am. (*As she answers the telephone this time her voice is nervous and frightened.*) Hello? Is that Steve? Yes. What are you doing here? . . . So I gathered. Do you want to? . . . I don't know. . . . No. I've only just found your message. . . . Are you dressed? . . . Yes, well, I suppose so, if you really want to. . . . All right, then. (*She is just about to put down the receiver when she thinks of something else.*) Oh! Wait a minute, Steve! I don't think . . . Are you there? Are you still there? (*He has cut off. She puts down the receiver very slowly and turns back to PETER with a rather bewildered face, almost as though she had forgotten he was in the room. Then, as though just realising he is there.*) Oh, yes. (*She pulls herself together. Then, speaking for PETER, says.*) Who was that, Leonora? Very peculiar at two in the morning! (*She stretches out her hand for his glass.*) Give me some of that!

PETER

Something is wrong.

LEONORA

I don't know.

PETER

Are you cold?

LEONORA

No. Why?

PETER

You are. You're shaking.

LEONORA

No! (*She finishes his whiskey for him.*) I feel lovely now.

PETER

What's the matter? I wish I understood you.

LEONORA

What don't you understand?

PETER

You're so full of moods.

LEONORA

Ain't it the truth! Well, Peter dear, I was calling you a taxi, wasn't I, when that little *contretemps* occurred?

PETER

Do you want me to go?

LEONORA

Well, that was the idea.

PETER

Can't I stay a bit longer?

LEONORA

I don't think so.

*[She sees her cloak and picks it up.]*

PETER

You're not going out again, are you?

LEONORA *(quite absently, her eyes roaming round the room)*

No.

*[She sees the chesterfield looking untidy, and goes and straightens it.]*

PETER

What you doing that for?

LEONORA

Just being a tidy girl.

*[A long pause, while she finishes it and wanders.]*

PETER

You're not expecting anyone, are you?

LEONORA *(quite vaguely, looking at him)*

What?

PETER

Are you? Who? *(She "woogs" at him.)* Tell me.

LEONORA *(brightening up)*

Do you really want to know?

PETER

Yes.

LEONORA

All right, then. I'll tell you. Dwight Houston.

PETER

Oh! Shut up!

LEONORA

Don't you believe me?

PETER

Of course not. Who is it?

LEONORA

I told you.

PETER

Very well . . . if you don't want to . . .

LEONORA

All right. I'm a liar. Now, Peter darling, give me a cricket-ball and go.

PETER

You *can* be aggravating, when you want to.

LEONORA

I know. Thank you for a lovely evening, Peter. I've had a beautiful time.

*[She puts up her face. He kisses her.]*

PETER

I'm worried about you, Leonora.

LEONORA

Not half as worried as I am. Well, Peter darling, you can see yourself out, can't you? You might leave the front door open.

*[She goes with her cloak into her bedroom. PETER looks after her, goes out into the hall, comes back carrying his opera-hat, light overcoat, and scarf, and puts them on, gloomily, with one eye on her bedroom door. When he is quite ready he stands there for a minute and then says:*

PETER

Well, so long, old girl.

LEONORA (*faintly, from the bedroom*)

Good-bye, Peter. Don't forget about the door.

*[He shakes his head and goes. LEONORA comes back. Her mood is anxious and unquiet. She looks around the room, sees PETER'S glass, picks it up as though she were going to remove it, then thinks better of it and replaces it. She paces the room, goes over to the window, paces the room again, and goes back to the window, standing there watching. Then she sits in the armchair in an attitude of calm expectancy. The front door slams outside. She leaps up in a panic, retreating to the windows. DWIGHT appears in the doorway, stands there. They look at each other. There is a serious silence for a second. Then LEONORA breaks it lightly.*

LEONORA

Hello!

DWIGHT

Hello.

*[He comes in.]*

LEONORA (*as lightly as possible*)

What you come back for?

DWIGHT (*equally so*)

Business?

LEONORA

Business?

DWIGHT

Yes. When I got on board I found a cable from Addison telling me to stay over and see a man who's just arrived in England.

LEONORA

Oh! I see!

DWIGHT

I got back around seven.

LEONORA

Did you see your man?

DWIGHT (*nods*)

We dined together. I wired him from Southampton.

LEONORA

Oh. Did you have a nice dinner?

DWIGHT (*nods*)

We went to Simpson's.

LEONORA

Good meat.

DWIGHT

We had roast beef.

LEONORA

You should have had mutton. It's the speciality.

DWIGHT

Oh . . . I didn't know. What have you been doing?

LEONORA

I've been to the theatre.

DWIGHT

See anything good?

LEONORA

Yes, I think so.

DWIGHT

Well . . .

*[They both move on the same instant, carefully avoiding contact with each other.]*

LEONORA

Have a drink?

DWIGHT

Thanks. Can I help myself?

*[Picks up PETER's glass.]*

LEONORA

That's a dirty glass.



DWIGHT (*puts it down, picks up the other*)

Oh!

LEONORA

So's that. I'll get you one.

DWIGHT

Don't bother. It's not important. I've been drinking, waiting for you.

LEONORA

What time did you ring up?

DWIGHT

Around ten. You only just got in?

LEONORA

No. I've been in ages. I only just found your message.

DWIGHT

And I begged Florence to give it you the moment you arrived.

LEONORA

Florence is in bed with a tooth out. How long are you staying this time?

DWIGHT

Till Saturday. The *Aquitania*. (*She laughs.*) What is it?

LEONORA

Another three days. It's . . . teasing.

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA (*suddenly serious—almost hostile*)

What did you have to come back for?

DWIGHT

Do you mind?

LEONORA

I think I mind.

DWIGHT

Why?

LEONORA

Why? Because I hate anti-climax!

DWIGHT (*gently, after a pause, away from her*)

Steve, do you remember something you said to me the very first time I came here . . . before you'd made up your mind to dine with me, even?

LEONORA

What?

DWIGHT

You were explaining your friendship with Tom and Catherine. You said you played with them in the hope of finding some excitement that you knew you'd be too scared to take hold of if it offered.

LEONORA

Well?

DWIGHT

I gathered you didn't altogether like that side of yourself.

LEONORA

Well?

DWIGHT

Well . . .

LEONORA

You mean . . . you're the excitement?

DWIGHT

Yes.

LEONORA

I see.

DWIGHT

It doesn't do to be too sensible. It's a reaction against Victorianism. Reaction in the English sense, not the American. If you'd been a Victorian we'd have been off to . . . what's the name of the place . . . Gretna Green . . . the minute you let me kiss you. Victorian girls were always marrying men they didn't know a thing about. They called it romance. I'm all for romance myself.

LEONORA (*reflectively*)

Yes. Yes. Only I know a lot more about you than I did.

DWIGHT

What?

LEONORA

There was a lot you didn't tell me about your marriage, wasn't there? Bless you.

DWIGHT

What are you getting at?

LEONORA

Do you know a man called Peter Walmsley?

DWIGHT

No.

LEONORA

Don't you?

DWIGHT

I don't think so.

LEONORA

India.

DWIGHT

India? Oh, I think I know. Blond . . . with a very nice wife?

LEONORA (*with a smile to herself*)

No. She wouldn't have him. Then he went over to America with the polo team . . . six years ago.

DWIGHT

Polo team? Walmsley? Oh . . . not *Porky* Walmsley?

LEONORA

Porky! Oh! How nice. . . .

DWIGHT

Oh, of course. Porky Walmsley. What about him?

LEONORA

Well, I've been spending the evening with him. He told me quite a lot about you.

DWIGHT

I hope he gave me a good character.

LEONORA

Terribly . . . until he found I was interested. It was too late then. You seem to be rather a grand person, Steve.

DWIGHT

I guess, maybe, you're prejudiced.

LEONORA

Peter wasn't.

DWIGHT

Well, I'm certainly grateful to him.

LEONORA

It wasn't only him.

DWIGHT

What else?

LEONORA

I've had a frightful day!

DWIGHT

Mine wasn't so good, either. (*Pause.*) You look like a million dollars in that dress.

LEONORA

Do I? I put it on because I wanted to look pale and

interesting. I hoped that everyone at the Berkeley to-night was wondering who was the girl with the secret sorrow. (DWIGHT *smiles.*) I told you I can't help dramatising myself, even if it's serious. And it was, you know. I lay awake all last night wondering whether I hadn't been the world's biggest fool. I read Bertrand Russell to console me.

DWIGHT

And did he?

LEONORA

I found something that went right home to my midriff.

DWIGHT

Your . . . ?

LEONORA

Midriff. He said: "Of all forms of caution, caution in love is perhaps the most fatal to true happiness." I howled when I read that.

DWIGHT

I wrote you the same thing last night.

LEONORA

You did?

DWIGHT

I was going to mail it from Cherbourg. (*With a smile.*) You thought you knew so much; that so long as you were in love with me, you couldn't know whether you liked me or not. I knew then that you'd never really been in love before. But I believed you'd

come and find out if you liked me . . . later. Not so much later, either. When this cable came, I debated whether to see you or not.

LEONORA

You didn't!

DWIGHT

I thought it might be better for you to find out by yourself. Only . . . when life deliberately offers you a second chance, it seems ungrateful not to take it. It doesn't do it very often.

LEONORA

No.

DWIGHT

I hadn't reckoned on Porky! I think we're being rather spoiled.

LEONORA

So do I. (*She goes to him.*) I adore being spoiled. (*They start an embrace, and the telephone rings. They jump apart.*) At this time of night! (*She goes over to it.*) Hello? Hello? . . . Regent 3684. . . . Who wants me? . . . Vichy? (*Holds on.*) Good Lord! Mother and father. I hope there's nothing wrong. I'm afraid I'd forgotten all about them. (*Into phone.*) Hello! . . . Yes . . . Yes. . . . All right. (*Holds on again.*) Hello! Hello, mother. . . . Yes. . . . (*DWIGHT seats himself just behind her.*) No, darling. It's all right. I hadn't gone to bed. . . . No. . . . I'm all right, mother. . . . Why? Who told you? . . . Aunt Emily? . . . Oh, did she write to you? . . . Oh! I'm sorry you've been worried, darling.

But it wasn't anything—really it wasn't. I was just putting her off. . . . Yes, I know. It was naughty of me. And making you ring up like this in the middle of the night. . . . You only just got her letter? . . . I *am* sorry! Oh, I've been to the theatre, darling. . . . Peter. . . . No, he's gone. . . . Yes, darling. . . . Yes, darling. (*She listens as though to a long speech, and sits on DWIGHT'S knee.*) Oh, darling, I *am* sorry. . . . But you needn't do that. I'm quite all right . . . really I am. . . . Oh, well, in that case . . . When will you be back? Friday? The 15th? That's *this* Friday!

DWIGHT (*sharply*)

You've got to sail Saturday!

LEONORA

Shut up. (*Into telephone.*) Well, darling, I've rather a surprise for you. I think I'm going to be married . . . no, darling . . . married . . . *married*. . . . No, of course it's not Peter. . . . It's an American . . . it's rather nice, really. . . . (*DWIGHT kisses the back of her neck.*) Don't do that! (*Back to telephone.*) Nothing, mother . . . only, it's here now, I . . . I . . . (*She begins to giggle.*) I think you'd better speak to it! Wait a minute. (*She hands the telephone to DWIGHT.*) Here!

DWIGHT

No!

LEONORA

Go on.



DWIGHT

Oh, well. . . . (*Taking telephone: tentatively speaking.*) Hello. . . . Mother? . . . .

[LEONORA *lets out a peal of laughter.*

CURTAIN

## PROPERTY PLOT

### ACT I

cigarettes and holder (LEONORA)  
salver with card (FLORENCE)  
tray (FLORENCE)  
2 vermouths }  
cointreau } (on tray)  
bottle of port }  
cocktail shaker }  
2 glasses }  
bowl of ice (FLORENCE)  
cigarettes in box (table)  
matches (table)  
notebook (DWIGHT)  
bag (LEONORA)  
lemon squash }  
syphon } (table)  
glass }  
sandwiches }  
whiskey decanter, tumbler (LEONORA)  
Temple Edition Shakespeare (bookshelf)

### ACT II

letters (FLORENCE)  
glasses (table)  
cable (DWIGHT)  
photo-case (DWIGHT)  
soda-water (table)  
crackers on plate (FLORENCE)

## PROPERTY PLOT

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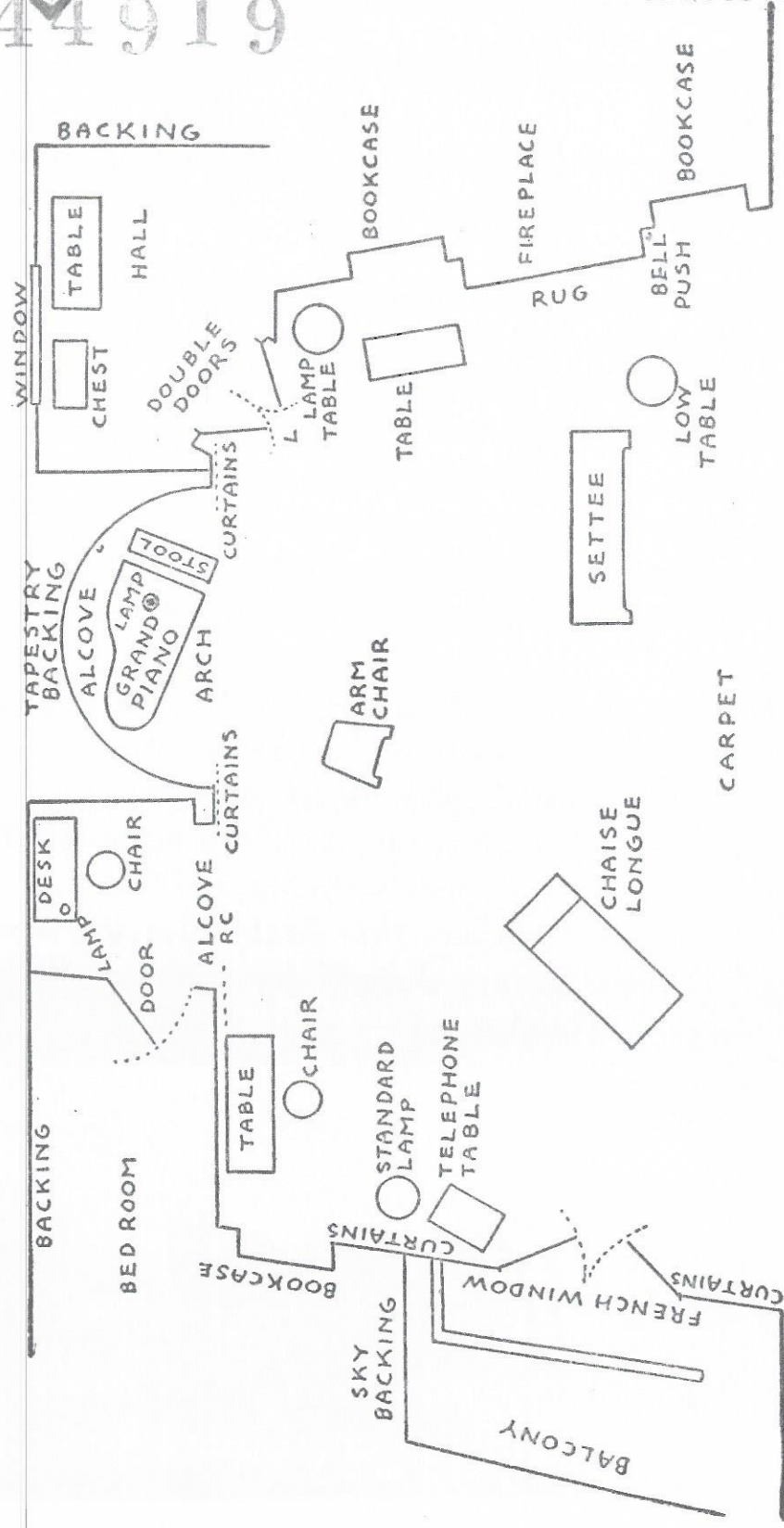
### ACT III

letter (LEONORA)  
whiskey, caviare, tray (FLORENCE)  
wafers (table)  
sandwiches (table)  
liquor (as in previous acts)  
tumbler, decanter (LEONORA)  
block of paper (telephone table)  
telephone book

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