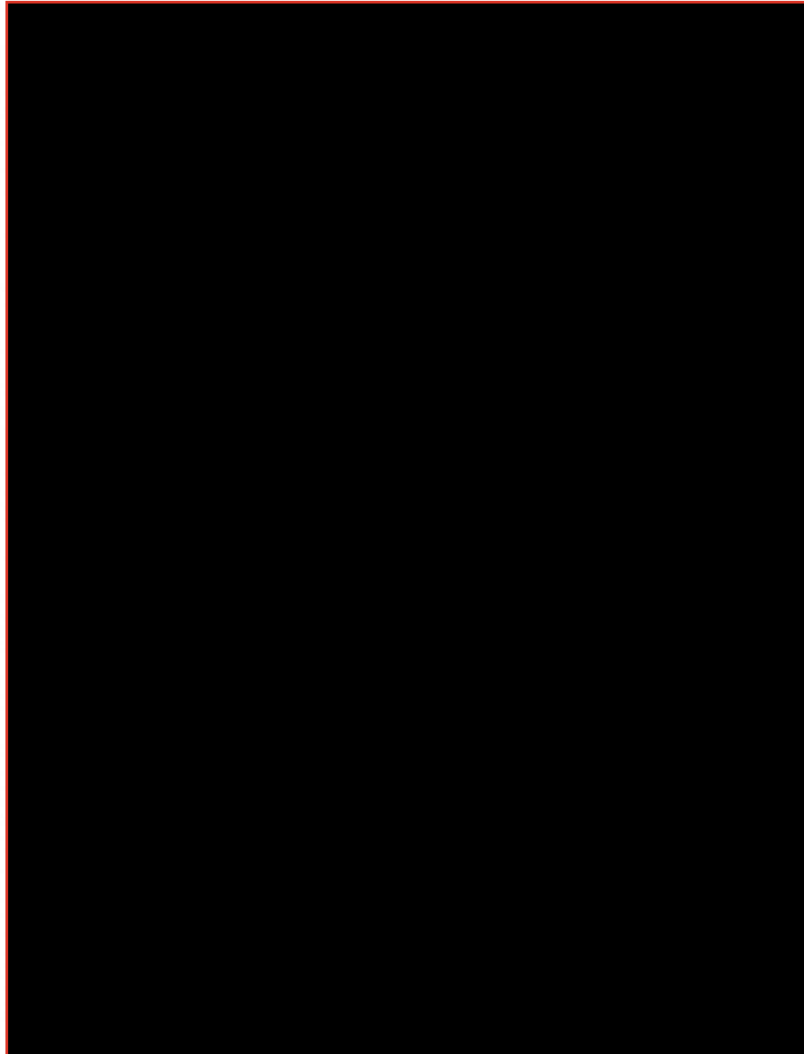




GARRY. (*Crossing down center.*) Where would they have been without me? Where would Monica be now if I hadn't snatched her away from that sinister old aunt of hers and given her a job?

LIZ. *With the sinister old aunt.*

GARRY. And you! Dear! *You!* One of the most depressing, melancholy actresses on the English stage. Where would you be if I hadn't forced you to give up acting and start writing?

LIZ. Acting.

GARRY. Good God! I even had to marry you to do it.

LIZ. Yes, and a fine gesture that turned out to be.

GARRY. (*Crossing to center.*) You adored me, you know you did.

LIZ. I still do, dear. You're so chivalrous, rubbing it in how dependent we all are on you for every breath we take.

GARRY. I didn't say that. (*Stands on pouffe.*)

LIZ. You're just as dependent on us anyway, now. We stop you being extravagant and buying houses every five minutes. We stopped you in the nick of time, from playing Peer Gynt.

GARRY. I still maintain I should have been magnificent as Peer Gynt.

LIZ. Above all, we stop you from overacting.

GARRY. You have now gone too far, Liz, I think you had better go away somewhere.

LIZ. I've only just come back.

GARRY. (*Shouting.*) Monica! – Monica! Come here at once.

MONICA. (*Entering.*) What on earth's the matter?

GARRY. (*Crossing to center.*) Have you or have you not seen me overact?

MONICA. Frequently.

GARRY. (*Crosses and sits chair center.*) It's a conspiracy! – I knew it!

MONICA. As a matter of fact you're overacting now. (*She goes off left.*)

GARRY. Very well – I give in – everybody's against me – it doesn't matter about me – oh no – I'm only the breadwinner. It doesn't matter how much I'm wounded and insulted! It doesn't matter that my timorous belief in myself should be subtly undermined.

LIZ. Your belief in yourself is about as timorous as Napoleon's.

GARRY. And look what happened to him, poor chap. He died forsaken and alone on a lousy little island all surrounded by water.

LIZ. Islands have that in common.

GARRY. You're trying to be funny now because you're ashamed. I doubt if any of you would care a fig if I were exiled forever tomorrow. You'd probably be delighted. I expect that's why I'm being *forced* to go to Africa.

LIZ. You're longing to go and you know it. But oh, darling, do be careful when you're there, and don't go having affairs with everybody and showing off. Now then, about Morris I want you to concentrate for a minute.

GARRY. How can I concentrate? (*Rises, crosses to center.*) You come here and say the most awful things to me, tear the heart out of me and jump up and down on it and then say calmly – "Now then about Morris," as though you'd been discussing the weather. (*Exasperated.*) What about Morris? What's wrong?

LIZ. (*She motions him to sofa.*) I'm very worried. I think you'll have to do a little of your famous finger-wagging. It's – it's Joanna.

GARRY. Joanna? (*Crosses and sits right of her.*)

LIZ. Morris is in love with her.

GARRY. How do you know?

LIZ. Everybody's talking about it. I don't know how far it's gone, or any details, but I do know that if it's true something ought to be done about it and at once.

GARRY. Does Hugo suspect anything?

LIZ. I don't think so, but then he never would, would he? Until it was shoved under his nose.

GARRY. He ought never to have married that stereotyped diamond-studded siren. I always said it was a grave mistake.