

A (9) Lady Saltburn, Daphne, Roland, Garry, Joanna, Henry and Morris

*LADY SALTBURN enters up right accompanied by DAPHNE STILLINGTON. LADY SALTBURN is a majestic but rather effusive society woman. DAPHNE is wearing a set expression of social poise. There is a glint in her eye. ROLAND rises. GARRY crosses right below the settee to greet her.*

**LADY SALTBURN** *(advancing down right to GARRY)* Mr Essendine, this is so charming of you. *FRED exits up right.*

**GARRY** *(moving up right of the settee and shaking hands)* Not at all - it's a pleasure.

**LADY SALTBURN** *(easing a little to centre above the right end of the settee)* This is my niece, Daphne. I believe you knew her mother years ago. *GARRY looks round at HENRY and MORRIS.* She died you know - in Africa.

**GARRY** In Africa!

**DAPHNE** *(moving down right)* I've been longing to meet you, Mr Essendine. *(with intensity)* I've loved everything you've ever done.

**GARRY** *(speaking to HENRY and MORRIS)* What a charming tribute.

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

**GARRY** She must be. *(He crosses to LADY SALTBURN.)* I must introduce you to everybody. My wife - Lady Saltburn. *(They shake hands.)* My secretary, Miss Reed! *He glares at MONICA and crosses right below the armchair. MONICA crosses below LIZ above the settee.*

**LADY SALTBURN** *(shaking hands)* How do you do? You were so kind on the telephone.

**MONICA** *returns down left.*

**GARRY** And these two vivacious figures are Mr Lyppiatt in blue - Mr Dixon in grey...

**HENRY** and **MORRIS** murmur "How do you do?".

**GARRY** Mr Maule in yellow!

*ROLAND shakes hands with both LADY SALTBURN and DAPHNE.*

**LADY SALTBURN** This is quite a peep behind the scenes, isn't it, Daphne dear?

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

**LADY SALTBURN** You mustn't embarrass Mr Essendine, Daphne.

**DAPHNE** I'm sure he understands - don't you, Mr Essendine?

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**GARRY** Of course, my dear, I understand perfectly, but I'm afraid I can only give you just a few minutes - you see I'm terribly busy - *(He looks at HENRY and MORRIS.)* with my associates, making arrangements for my forthcoming tour - *(He looks at LADY SALT BURN.)* in Africa.

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

**GARRY** Right on the top? *(to HENRY and MORRIS)* Right on the top!

**HENRY** *(to LADY SALT BURN)* Please excuse us, we really must go - we have to go to the office. Goodbye!

**LADY SALT BURN** How sad. Goodbye.

**HENRY** Morris? Liz?

**LIZ** I'm staying here for a little - I'll come later.

**HENRY** *(moving up right)* All right - goodbye. *He exits up right.*

**MORRIS** *(moving up right)* Goodbye, Lady Saltburn. *(to DAPHNE)* Goodbye. *He exits up right. GARRY says goodbye to each of them as they go, then crosses to ROLAND with outstretched hand.*

**GARRY** *(crossing)* Goodbye, Mr Maule.

**ROLAND** I'm staying too.

*GARRY moves down right behind the armchair.*

**LIZ** Won't you sit down, Lady Saltburn?

**LADY SALT BURN** *(moving left and below the settee)* Thank you so much. *LIZ follows and arranges cushions behind her, ROLAND hovers at the back trying to help.* Are you ready, Daphne? You know how busy Mr Essendine is - I'm sure it's very sweet of him to see us at all - we mustn't impose on him. *She sits centre on the settee.*

*LIZ sits beside her at the left end of the settee. MONICA sits on the chair below the window.*

**DAPHNE** *(almost defiantly)* Yes - I'm ready. *She moves to right of the settee, takes off her coat and puts it with her bag and gloves on the settee arm.*

**GARRY** What are you going to do?

**DAPHNE** *(taking off her hat)* Nothing very much... I'll try not to bore you. You see I want you to hear me so very much - it means everything to me - you will hear me, won't you - you can hear me, can't you? And you're not angry, are you?

**LADY SALT BURN** Daphne - really! What are you talking about?

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**DAPHNE** (*putting her hat on the settee*) Mr Essendine understands, don't you, Mr Essendine?

**GARRY** Mr Essendine understands everything. Mr Essendine always understands absolutely everything. What nobody else seems to understand is that the strain of it is driving him step by step to a suicide's grave!

**LIZ** Don't be affected, Garry!

**GARRY** My wife, Lady Saltburn, left me several years ago. Gnawing regret has soured the old girl up.

**ROLAND** (*tapping LADY SALT BURN on her right shoulder and leaning over her*) There's nothing worse than regret. Look at Chekhov - he knew. *He steps back to the piano.*

**GARRY** (*crossing to ROLAND*) Mr Maule, I am very sorry but I fear we have no time to look at Chekhov at the moment. Will you please be quiet? (*turning to DAPHNE*) Don't be nervous, my dear.

**DAPHNE** I'm not nervous but I wish you weren't so many miles away.

**GARRY** What are you going to do. Sing?

**DAPHNE** No, I'm not going to sing. I'm just going to say a few lines.

**GARRY** Say a few lines. Would you like to stand on anything? Sit on anything? A glass of water? *DAPHNE shakes her head to each one, crossing and sitting in the armchair.* Very well.

*ROLAND moves left of the settee. He lies down on the floor with his head to left, ankles crossed, knees raised, and hands under his head. GARRY rises, goes over and looks at him, shrugs his shoulders at LIZ and resumes his seat in the armchair.*

**GARRY** Fire away.

**DAPHNE** "We meet not as we parted..."

**GARRY** I knew it!

**DAPHNE** "We feel more than all may see;

My bosom is heavy-hearted

And thine full of doubt for me,

One moment has bound the free.

That moment has gone for ever

Like lightning that flashed and died, Like a..." (She dries up.)

**GARRY** A snowflake, dear.

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**DAPHNE** "... snowflake upon the river,

Like a sunbeam upon the tide

Which the dark shadows hide.

That moment from time was singled..."

**GARRY** What? Singled? Very good. Never heard that before.

**DAPHNE** "As the first of a life of pain

The cup of its joy was mingled..."

**GARRY** Even better - mingled!

**DAPHNE** "Delusion too sweet though vain,

Too sweet to be mine again."

**GARRY** (*applauding*) Very good indeed...

*JOANNA enters swiftly down right. She is wearing her evening dress and cloak of the night before. She is obviously extremely angry. GARRY rises, and moves below the armchair to behind it. ROLAND sits up. MONICA rises.*

**JOANNA** That room is like a frigidaire and I have no intention of staying in it one moment longer. Will someone kindly call me a taxi.

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

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

**LADY SALTBURN** Daphne!

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

*She makes a sweeping exit up right. DAPHNE gives a loud cry and faints dead away. LADYSALTBURN and MONICA run to her. LIZ runs left of the settee to the sideboard for brandy. ROLAND, on his hands and knees, tries to see below the settee, then rises and runs wildly left and above it. GARRY drops to his knees beside DAPHNE.*

**ROLAND** (*exultantly*) Oh, this is splendid! Splendid! I feel reborn.

**GARRY** (*fanning DAPHNE with his hanky*) Go to hell!

*Quick curtain.*

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