

A (8) Joanna and Garry

JOANNA enters up right, followed by GARRY. She is an exquisitely gowned woman in the early thirties. She has a great deal of assurance and considerable charm.

JOANNA *(moving above the centre table)* I can't tell you how relieved I am that you're in. I've done the most idiotic thing.

GARRY *(moving a little down right)* Why, whatever's happened?

JOANNA I've forgotten my latch-key!

GARRY Oh, Joanna!

JOANNA Oh, don't look at me like that - I'm not in the least inefficient as a rule, this is the first time I've ever done such a thing in my life. I'm in an absolute fury. I had to dress in the most awful rush to dine with Freda and go to the Toscanini concert and I left it in my other bag.

GARRY And I suppose the servants all sleep at the top of the house?

JOANNA They do more than sleep, they apparently go off into a coma. I've been battering on the door for nearly a half an hour.

GARRY *(moving to the sideboard)* Would you like a drink?

JOANNA *(taking off her gloves)* Very much indeed - I'm exhausted.

GARRY We must decide what is best to be done. *(He pours her a drink.)*

JOANNA *(taking a mirror from her bag)* I went to a call-box and rang up Liz, but she must be out because there wasn't any reply. *(She looks at herself in the mirror.)*

GARRY *(crossing to her with the drink)* You rang up Liz and there wasn't any reply!

JOANNA *(replacing the mirror in her bag)* Mm! *(She takes the glass.)* Thank you. As I hadn't any more coppers and the taxi-man hadn't either, I came straight here. ...You're looking very whimsical, don't you believe me?

GARRY Of course I believe you, Joanna. After all, why on earth shouldn't I? *He moves to the sideboard and pours himself a drink.*

JOANNA *(moving down left of the settee)* I don't know, you always look at me as though you didn't trust me an inch. *(She puts her glass and cigarette down on the table left of the settee.)* It's a shame, you know, because I'm so nice really. *She slips her cloak from her shoulders.*

GARRY *(speaking over his shoulder; smiling)* I'm sure you are, Joanna.

JOANNA *(moving up and placing her cloak on the chair below the piano)* I know that voice, Garry, you've used it in every play you've ever been in. *She moves down left of the settee and picks up her drink.*

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GARRY (*moving down right with his drink to the armchair*) Complete naturalness on the stage is my strong suit.

JOANNA (*moving below the settee*) You've never really liked me, have you?

GARRY (*smiling*) No, not particularly.

JOANNA (*sitting on the left end of the settee*) I wonder why.

GARRY (*sitting in the armchair*) I always had a feeling you were rather tiresome.

JOANNA In what way tiresome?

GARRY Oh, I don't know. There's a certain arrogance about you, a little too much self-assurance.

JOANNA (*drinking*) You don't care for competition, I see.

GARRY You're lovely-looking, of course, I've always thought that.

JOANNA (*smiling*) Thank you.

GARRY (*drinking*) If perhaps a little too aware of it.

JOANNA You're being conventionally odious but somehow it doesn't quite ring true. But then you never do quite ring true, do you? I expect it's because you're an actor, they're always inclined to be a bit papier mâché. (*She drinks.*)

GARRY Puppets, Joanna dear, just creatures of tinsel and sawdust; how clever of you to have noticed it.

JOANNA (*placing her glass on the table left of the settee*) I wish you'd stop being suave, just for a minute.

GARRY What would you like me to do, fly into a tantrum? Burst into tears?

JOANNA I think I should like you to be kind.

GARRY Kind?

JOANNA Yes. At least kind enough to make an effort to overcome your perfectly obvious prejudice against me.

GARRY I'm sorry it's so obvious.

JOANNA I'm not quite an idiot, although I must say you always treat me as if I were. I know you resented my marrying Henry, you all did, and I entirely see why you should have, anyhow at first. But after all that's five years ago. During that time, I've done my best not to obtrude myself, not to encroach on any special preserves. But my reward has been rather meagre, from you particularly, nothing but artificial politeness and a slightly frigid tolerance.

GARRY Poor, poor Joanna.

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JOANNA (*rising and moving up left*) I see my appeal has fallen on stony ground. I'm so sorry.

GARRY What are you up to?

JOANNA (*turning*) I'm not up to anything.

GARRY Then sit down again.

JOANNA (*moving down and up again*) I think I should like you to call me a taxi.

GARRY Nonsense, there's nothing you'd hate more. *JOANNA pauses and looks at him.* After all, you came here with a purpose, didn't you?

JOANNA (*moving down above the table left of the settee*) Of course I did. I lost my latchkey, I knew you had a spare room and ...

GARRY Well?

JOANNA I wanted to get to know you a little better.

GARRY I see.

JOANNA (*moving down below the table left of the settee*) No, you don't. I know exactly what you think but I can't altogether blame you. In your position as one of the world's most famous romantic comedians, it's only natural you should imagine every woman is anxious to hurl herself at your head. I'm sure, for instance, you don't believe for one moment that I lost my latchkey!

GARRY (*placing his glass on the table below the armchair*) You're good... By God, you're good!

JOANNA What's the number of the taxi-rank? I'll ring up myself. *She moves above the settee and lifts the telephone receiver.*

GARRY Sloane two-six-six-four.

JOANNA *dials the number, looking at him whilst doing so. She waits a moment. (into the telephone)* Hallo... Is that Sloane two-six-six-four? ...Oh, I'm so sorry, it's the wrong number. *GARRY rises, laughing, and moves above the armchair. She replaces the receiver. What are you laughing at?*

GARRY (*moving above the centre table*) If only you knew!

JOANNA (*lifting the receiver and dialling again*) You're enjoying yourself enormously, aren't you?

GARRY (*reaching over and depressing the receiver rest*) You win! *(He takes the receiver from her and replaces it.)*

JOANNA Give me the phone and don't be so infuriating.

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GARRY Have another drink?

JOANNA (*turning her back on him*) No, thank you.

GARRY Oh, please - I'm sorry.

JOANNA looks at him, then moves below the settee in silence. GARRY moves down left. JOANNA stops below the right end of the settee, looks at him over her shoulder then sits on the settee with her back to him.

JOANNA I wish you were really sorry.

GARRY Who knows, maybe I am.

JOANNA I could cry now very effectively, if only I had the technique.

GARRY (*moving to the settee and sitting on the left end of it*) Technique certainly is very important.

JOANNA Oh, dear. *She rests her elbow on the settee arm, and cups her chin in her hand.*

GARRY Conversation seems to have come to a standstill.

JOANNA (*turning*) I think perhaps I would like another little drink after all, just a very small one. You make me feel extraordinarily self-conscious. *GARRY rises and goes to get her a drink.* That's one of your most renowned gifts, isn't it - frightening people?

GARRY (*crossing above the settee to the sideboard*) You're surely not going to pretend that I frighten you.

JOANNA You terrify Freda Lawson out of her life, she told me so the other day.

GARRY (*pouring out a drink and emptying the syphon*) I can't imagine why; I scarcely know her.

JOANNA It's personality, I expect, plus a reputation for being - well - (*She laughs.*) rather ruthless.

GARRY (*moving down right of the settee and giving her the drink*) Amorously or socially?

JOANNA Both.

GARRY sits on the upstage arm of the chair. JOANNA leans back with knees crossed. Whilst drinking, she pulls her dress above her ankle. GARRY pulls his dressing-gown above his knee.

GARRY Well - how are we doing?

JOANNA Better, I think.

GARRY That's a very pretty dress.

JOANNA I wore it for Toscanini.

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GARRY He frightens people too, you know, when they play wrong notes.

JOANNA You look strangely young every now and then. It would be nice to know what you were really like, under all the trappings.

GARRY Just a simple boy, stinking with idealism.

JOANNA Sentimental too, almost Victorian at moments.

GARRY I spend hours at my sampler.

JOANNA Are you happy on the whole?

GARRY Ecstatically.

JOANNA You never get tired of fixing people's lives, of being the Boss, of everyone adoring you and obeying you?

GARRY Never. Never. I revel in it.

JOANNA I suspected that you did but I wasn't quite sure.

GARRY (*looking towards the piano*) Would you like me to play you something?

JOANNA No, thank you.

GARRY Why ever not? You must be mad!

JOANNA Not mad, just musical. *She turns away and puts her glass on the table above the settee.*

GARRY Snappy too. Quite rude in fact.

JOANNA (*arranging a cushion and lying on the settee with her head left*) Yes, that was rather rude, wasn't it? I'm sorry. **GARRY** *softly whistles a few bars of something.*

GARRY What shall we do now?

JOANNA Do? Is there any necessity to do anything?

GARRY Well, my social sense tells me that something is demanded, but for the life of me I can't think what it is. That's why I suggested playing the piano.

JOANNA There's always the radio.

GARRY Not here there isn't!

JOANNA I'm so glad I'm adult. You must be pretty shattering to the young and inexperienced.

GARRY Is that a subtle allusion to my charm?

JOANNA You glitter so brightly. You're so gaily caparisoned - all the little bells tinkling.

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GARRY I sound like a circus horse.

JOANNA You are rather like a circus horse, as a matter of fact! Prancing into the ring to be admired, jumping with such assurance, through all the paper hoops.

GARRY (*rising and moving to right of the settee*) You know, Joanna dear, you really must make up your mind. This provocative skirmishing is getting me down. What do you want?

JOANNA (*putting her feet down and leaning towards him*) I want you to be what I believe you really are, friendly and genuine, someone to be trusted. I want you to do me the honour of stopping your eternal performance for a little, ring down the curtain, take off your make-up and relax.

GARRY (*sitting in the armchair and leaning back*) Everyone keeps on telling me to relax.

JOANNA (*leaning back in the right corner of the settee*) One can hardly blame them.

GARRY Shouldn't I be very vulnerable, dear Delilah, shorn of my nice silky hair?

JOANNA Why are you so afraid of being vulnerable? Wouldn't it be rather a relief? To be perpetually on guard must be terribly tiring.

GARRY I was right about you from the first.

JOANNA Were you?

GARRY Yes. You're as predatory as hell!

JOANNA (*sitting up*) Garry!

GARRY (quietly) You got poor wretched Henry when he was convalescent, you made a dead set at Morris, and now by God you're after me! Don't deny it - I can see it in your eye. You suddenly appear out of the night reeking with the lust of conquest, the whole atmosphere's quivering with it! You had your hair done today, didn't you? And your nails, probably your feet too! That's a new dress. Those are new shoes. And your mind, even more expertly groomed to vanquish, than your body. Every word, every phrase, every change of mood cunningly planned. Just the right amount of sex antagonism mixed with subtle flattery, just the right switch over, perfectly timed, from provocative implication to wistful diffidence. (*He rises and stands right of the settee.*) You want to know what I'm really like do you, under all the glittering veneer? Well, this is it. This is what I'm really like - fundamentally honest! When I'm driven into a corner, I tell the truth, and the truth at the moment is that I know you, Joanna, I know what you're after, I can see through every trick. Go away and leave me alone! (*He moves up right to the sideboard.*)

JOANNA (*laughing*) Curtain!

GARRY Oh! (*He pours himself a whisky and tries the syphon.*) Damn, there isn't any more soda.

JOANNA Take it neat, darling.

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GARRY (*moving down right with the glass*) How dare you call me darling!

JOANNA (*still laughing*) I think you are a darling - I always have.

GARRY Will you please go away immediately.

JOANNA You're really the reason I married Henry.

GARRY Are there no depths to which you won't descend?

JOANNA Absolutely none. I'm in love with you - I've been in love with you for over seven years now and it's high time something was done about it.

GARRY This is the end! *He drinks.*