

Audition (1): Daphne, Miss Erikson, Monica and Fred

When the curtain rises the studio is rather dim, the curtains being drawn. DAPHNE STILLINGTON enters down right. She is a pretty girl of about twenty-three. She is wearing a man's dressing-gown and pyjamas, which are too big for her. She goes to the foot of the stairs, pauses, and then moves down to the telephone and, almost furtively, dials a number.

DAPHNE *(into the telephone)* Hallo-hallo! Is that you, Saunders? Can I speak to Miss Cynthia? ...All right, I'll hold on... Hallo... Cynthia darling, it's Daphne... Yes-are you alone? Listen. I'm-you know where... Yes, I did... No, he isn't awake yet. There's nobody about at all... No, in the spare room... I've only just got up, I'm not dressed or anything... I can't go on about it now, someone might come in. If anybody rings up from home, will you swear to say I spent the night with you... Darling, you promised... In that case say I'm in the bath or something... Yes, as soon as I'm dressed, in about an hour I should think. Of course..... I can't wait to tell you... All right. *(She replaces the receiver.)*

MISS ERIKSON enters up left. She is a vague-looking Swedish housekeeper, wearing a chintz smock, gloves and white plimsolls. She is smoking a cigarette and carries a duster and a syphon of soda.

DAPHNE *(a trifle nervously)* Good morning.

MISS ERIKSON *(betraying no surprise)* Good morning. *(She goes to the window, puts down the syphon on the desk with a bang and opens the curtains.)*

DAPHNE What time is Mr Essendine going to be called?

MISS ERIKSON He will ring.

DAPHNE What time does he usually ring?

MISS ERIKSON *(picking up the syphon and taking it to the sideboard)* That depends what time he went to bed.

DAPHNE *(following her and speaking hurriedly)* I'm afraid we were rather late last night. You see, we were at a party and Mr Essendine very kindly said he'd drive me home, and then I found I'd forgotten my latchkey...

MISS ERIKSON crosses below her to the centre table with the ashtray, which she empties into the box under the table.

...and I knew I shouldn't be able to make any of the servants hear because they sleep at the top of the house, so Mr Essendine very sweetly said I could stay the night here and - so I did.

MISS ERIKSON *(returning below DAPHNE to the sideboard with the ashtray)* If you were very late he will probably sleep until the afternoon.

DAPHNE *(following her again)* Oh dear! Couldn't you call him?

MISS ERIKSON *(picking up the empty syphon)* Alas no, we can never call him.

Audition (1): Daphne, Miss Erikson, Monica and Fred

DAPHNE Well, do you think I could have some coffee or orange juice or something?

MISS ERIKSON (*crossing left below DAPHNE*) I will see.

DAPHNE ... or something?

MISS ERIKSON exits up left. DAPHNE moves to the settee and sits gloomily on the edge at the right end. After a few moments FRED enters up left. FRED is GARRY's valet. He is smartly dressed and wears a black alpaca coat.

DAPHNE (*rising*) Good morning.

FRED (*moving down left*) Good morning, miss.

DAPHNE Have you any idea what time Mr Essendine will get up?

FRED Might be any time, he didn't leave no note.

DAPHNE Couldn't you call him? It's nearly eleven o'clock.

FRED The whole place goes up in smoke if we wake him by accident, let alone call 'im.

DAPHNE Well, do you think I could have some breakfast?

FRED Well, now, what would you fancy?

DAPHNE Some coffee, please, and some orange juice, and...

FRED Rightyo, miss.

He exits up left. DAPHNE resumes her seat on the edge of the settee. The front door slams and a moment later MONICA REED, GARRY's secretary, enters up right. She is wearing her hat and carries a bundle of letters. MONICA is a pleasant, rather austere woman in the early forties. She enters looking at the letters.

DAPHNE (*rising*) Good morning.

MONICA (*looking up*) Good morning. I am Mr Essendine's secretary. Is there anything I can do for you?

DAPHNE Well, I'm afraid it's rather awkward-you see, Mr Essendine drove me home last night from a party and I idiotically forgot my latchkey and so Mr Essendine very sweetly said I could spend the night here - in the spare room.

MONICA I hope you were warm enough.

DAPHNE Oh yes, quite, thank you.

MONICA (*moving down right*) It's liable to be a bit nippy in the spare room.

DAPHNE I kept the heater on.

MONICA Very sensible .

Audition (1): Daphne, Miss Erikson, Monica and Fred

DAPHNE And now I was wondering if somebody could tell Mr Essendine that I'm - *(She giggles)* well - here.

MONICA I expect he'll remember when he wakes up.

DAPHNE Have you any idea when that will be?

MONICA *(taking off her hat)* I'm afraid not. If he didn't leave any special time to be called, he might sleep on indefinitely.

DAPHNE I don't want to go away without saying goodbye and thanking him.

MONICA If I were you, I should have some breakfast and dress and if he isn't awake by then you can leave a message for him. Have you asked for any breakfast?

DAPHNE Yes, I think the man's bringing it.

MONICA *(sitting on the right arm of the settee)* Have you known Mr Essendine long? *(She puts the letters into her bag.)*

DAPHNE *(with one knee on the settee)* Well, no, not exactly - I mean of course I've known *him* for ages. I think he's wonderful but we actually only met last night for the first time at Maureen Jarratt's party.

MONICA *(quizzically)* I see. *(She puts her hat and bag on the settee.)*

DAPHNE I think he's even more charming off the stage than on, don't you?

MONICA *(smiling slightly)* I can never quite make up my mind.

DAPHNE Have you been with him for a long while?

MONICA *(taking off her gloves)* Just on seventeen years.

DAPHNE *(enthusiastically)* How wonderful! I expect you know him better than anybody.

MONICA Less intimately than some, better than most.

DAPHNE Is he happy, do you think? I mean really happy.

MONICA I don 't believe I've ever asked him.

DAPHNE He has a sad look in his eyes every now and then.

MONICA Oh, you noticed that, did you?

DAPHNE We talked for hours last night. He told me all about his early struggles.

MONICA Did he by any chance mention that Life was passing him by?

DAPHNE Yes, I think he did say something like that.

MONICA *(rising)* Oh dear!

Audition (1): Daphne, Miss Erikson, Monica and Fred

DAPHNE Why?

MONICA I just wondered.

DAPHNE (*sitting back*) You've no idea how I envy you, working for him, but then I expect everybody does. It must be absolute heaven.

MONICA It's certainly not dull.

DAPHNE I do hope you don't think it's awful me staying the night here like this - I mean it does look rather bad, doesn't it?

MONICA Well, really, Miss...?

DAPHNE Stillington. Daphne Stillington.

MONICA Miss Stillington - that's hardly my business, is it?

DAPHNE No, I suppose not, but I wouldn't like you to think...

MONICA Seventeen years is a long time, Miss Stillington. I gave up that kind of thinking in the spring of nineteen-thirty.

DAPHNE Oh, I see.

FRED enters up left with a tray of orange juice, coffee and toast. MONICA picks up her things from the settee.

FRED (*coming down left of the settee*) Will you 'ave it in here, Miss, or in the bedroom?

DAPHNE In here, please.

MONICA (*moving above the centre table with her hat and gloves*) I really think you'd be more comfortable in the bedroom. The studio becomes rather active round about eleven. People call, you know, and the telephone rings...

DAPHNE (*rising*) Very well. (*She hesitates.*)

MONICA I'll let you know the minute he wakes up.

DAPHNE (*crossing right to the door*) Thank you so much.

FRED (*following her*) Now, you pop right back into bed, Miss.

DAPHNE exits, followed by FRED with the tray. MONICA watches them off, then exits down left, taking her hat and gloves. She re-enters in time to meet FRED re-entering right.

MONICA Is there any soap in that bathroom?

FRED (*moving above the settee*) Yes, but the tap's a bit funny. You 'ave to go on turning it till Kingdom come.

MONICA Did you tell her?

Audition (1): Daphne, Miss Erikson, Monica and Fred

FRED No, she'll find out for herself.

MONICA You'd better send Miss Erikson in to her.

FRED Well, she's gone to the grocer's, but I'll tell 'er when she comes back.

MONICA Were you here last night?

FRED No. She's news to me.

MONICA If he hasn't rung by twelve we'd better wake him.

FRED You know what 'appened last time!

MONICA (*moving in a little*) It can't be helped. He's got to lunch out, anyhow.

FRED (*moving to left of the settee*) Well, if the balloon goes up don't blame me.

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