

A (7) Roland, Garry, Liz and Monica

She exits up left. ROLAND MAULE enters up right. He is an earnest young man and is obviously petrified with nerves but endeavouring to hide it by assuming an air of gruff defiance. He comes down right to the end of the sideboard.

GARRY *(crossing above the settee; with great charm)* How do you do? *(They shake hands.)*

ROLAND shakes hands once up and down - almost breaking the other person's wrists.

ROLAND How do you do?

ROLAND steps back. GARRY holds his wrist and looks at LIZ who crosses above the right end of the settee.

GARRY This is my wife - Mr Maule. She just popped in for a minute and is now about to pop out again.

ROLAND *(stepping forward)* Oh! How do you do? *(He shakes hands and steps back again.)*
GARRY laughs.

LIZ I know you have an appointment with Garry and I wouldn't dream of interrupting it, *(crossing below GARRY)* so I'll say goodbye.

ROLAND *(shaking hands with her again)* Goodbye. *GARRY moves below the piano, laughing.*

LIZ *(moving to right of GARRY)* Remember, Garry, I shall be sitting by the telephone.

GARRY I'm so sorry it's the wrong number.

LIZ *(gesturing with right hand)* All right!

GARRY I'm so terribly sorry it's the wrong number.

LIZ *(gesturing again)* All wrong!

GARRY Goodbye. *He seizes her hand and shakes it in the "ROLAND MAULE" manner. LIZ exits up right. GARRY motions ROLAND to the settee. Do sit down, won't you?*

ROLAND *(sitting on the right end of the settee)* Thank you.

GARRY Would you like a drink?

ROLAND No, thank you.

GARRY *(getting himself a drink)* Tell me - how old are you?

ROLAND Twenty-five. Why?

GARRY It doesn't really matter - I just wondered.

ROLAND How old are you?

GARRY takes a large gulp of brandy.

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GARRY Forty in December - Jupiter you know - very energetic.

ROLAND (*laughing - then serious*) Yes, of course. (*He has a nervous, braying laugh.*)

GARRY So you've come all the way from Uckfield?

ROLAND It isn't very far.

GARRY I know but it sort of sounds far, doesn't it?

ROLAND (*defensively*) It's quite near Lewes.

GARRY Oh, there's nothing to worry about then, is there? *MONICA enters up left.*

MONICA It's a sweet little thing, but it looks far from well. *ROLAND rises.*

GARRY What did she want?

MONICA Her sister.

GARRY We haven't got her, have we?

MONICA (*moving down left*) She lives two doors down the mews. It was all a mistake.

GARRY Oh! Monica, I simply must introduce you. My secretary - Miss Reed- Mr Maule.

ROLAND (*shaking hands*) How do you do? *GARRY laughs.*

MONICA I have your script in the office if you'd like to take it with you.

ROLAND Oh, thank you very much.

MONICA I'll put it in an envelope for you.

ROLAND Yes. *MONICA exits down left and shuts the door.*

GARRY Do sit down again, won't you? *ROLAND sits at the left end of the settee.* Now I must talk to you about your play.

ROLAND (*gloomily*) I expect you hated it.

GARRY Well, to be candid, I did think it was a little uneven.

ROLAND I thought you'd say that.

GARRY I'm glad I'm running so true to form.

ROLAND Well, I mean it really isn't the sort of thing you would like, is it?

GARRY In that case why on earth did you send it to me?

ROLAND I just took a chance. I mean I know you only play rather trashy stuff as a rule but I thought you just might like to have a shot at something deeper.

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GARRY What is there in your play, Mr Maule, that you consider so deep? Apart from the plot, which is completely submerged after the first four pages.

ROLAND Plots aren't important, it's ideas that matter. *(He points at GARRY.)* Look at Chekhov.

GARRY In addition to ideas, I think we might concede Chekhov a certain flimsy sense of psychology, don't you?

ROLAND You mean my play isn't psychologically accurate?

GARRY *(gently)* It isn't very good, you know, really it isn't.

ROLAND I think it's very good indeed.

GARRY I understand that perfectly but you must admit that my opinion, based on a lifelong experience of the theatre, might be the right one.

ROLAND *(contemptuously)* The commercial theatre.

GARRY Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!

ROLAND I suppose you'll say that Shakespeare wrote for the commercial theatre and the only point of doing anything with the drama at all is to make money! All those old arguments. *(He moves to the right end of the settee and points his finger.)* What you don't realize is that the theatre of the future is the theatre of ideas. *(He taps his forehead.)*

GARRY That may be but at the moment I am occupied with the theatre of the present. *(He taps his forehead.)*

ROLAND *(rising; heatedly)* And what do you do with it? Every play you appear in is exactly the same - superficial, frivolous without the slightest intellectual significance. *(He points.)* You have a great following and a strong personality and all you do is prostitute yourself every night of your life. *(He moves below the right end of the settee.)* All you do with your talent is wear dressing-gowns and make witty remarks when you might be really helping people, making them think! Making them feel! *(He moves up right a little and stands with his back to GARRY.)*

GARRY There can be no two opinions about it. I am having a most discouraging morning. *ROLAND turns and points; his hand in GARRY's face. GARRY cringes away.*

ROLAND If you want to live in people's memories, to go down to posterity as an important man, you'd better do something about it quickly. There isn't a moment to be lost. *He comes down to below the settee.*

GARRY *(rising)* I don't give a hoot about posterity. Why should I worry about what people think of me when I'm dead as a door-nail anyway? My worst defect is that I am too apt to worry about what people think of me when I'm alive. But I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm changing my methods and you're my first experiment. Sit down. *(He pushes ROLAND down on to the settee, then stands right of it.)* As a rule, when insufferable young beginners

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have the impertinence to criticize me, I dismiss the whole thing lightly because I'm embarrassed for them and consider it not quite fair game to puncture their inflated egos too sharply. But this time, my highbrow young friend, you're going to get it in the neck. To begin with your play is not a play at all. It's a meaningless jumble of adolescent, pseudo-intellectual poppycock. It bears no relation to the theatre or to life or to anything. And you yourself wouldn't be here at this moment if I hadn't been bloody fool enough to pick up the telephone when my secretary wasn't looking. Now that you are here, however, I would like to tell you this. If you wish to become a playwright you leave the theatre of tomorrow to take care of itself. Go and get yourself a job as a butler in a repertory company if they'll have you. Learn from the ground up how plays are constructed, what is actable and what isn't. Then sit down and write at least twenty plays one after the other and if you can manage to get the twenty-first produced for a Sunday night performance you'll be damned lucky!

ROLAND (*hypnotized*) I'd no idea you were like this. You're wonderful.

GARRY (*flinging up his hands*) Oh! (*He takes a few paces up right, turns and moves down again below the settee.*)

ROLAND I'm awfully sorry if you think I was impertinent, just now (*he crosses his feet on the settee*) but I'm awfully glad too, because if I hadn't been you wouldn't have got angry, and if you hadn't got angry, I shouldn't have known what you're really like.

GARRY You don't in the least know what I'm really like.

ROLAND Oh yes, I do - now.

GARRY I can't see that it matters anyway.

ROLAND It matters to me.

GARRY How do you mean?

ROLAND Do you really want to know?

GARRY What are you talking about?

ROLAND Well, it's rather difficult to explain really.

GARRY What is rather difficult to explain?

ROLAND What I feel about you.

GARRY (*indicating the door*) Now, my dear young man...

ROLAND No, no, no, please. Let me speak. You see, in a way I've been rather unhappy about you, for quite a long time - you've been a sort of obsession with me. I saw you in your last play forty-seven times; one week I came every night, in the pit, because I was up in town trying to pass an exam.

GARRY Did you pass it?

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ROLAND No, I didn't.

GARRY (*sitting in the armchair*) I'm not entirely surprised.

ROLAND (*rising, putting his hands in his pockets and looking front*) My father wants me to be a lawyer. Ha! Imagine.

GARRY Imagine!

ROLAND That's what the exam was for. (*He moves round right of the settee to above it.*) But actually I've been studying psychology a great deal because somehow I felt that I wasn't at peace with myself. (*moving round left of the settee to below it*) Then gradually, bit by bit, I began to realize that you signified something to me.

GARRY What sort of something?

ROLAND I don't quite know - (*He sits on the right arm of the settee.*) not yet.

GARRY You know, that "not yet" is one of the most sinister remarks I've ever heard.

ROLAND Don't laugh at me, please. I'm always sick if anyone laughs at me.

GARRY (*smiling behind his hand*) Forgive me but you know, you really are the most peculiar young man.

ROLAND I'm all right now though. (*He crosses his feet on the arm of the settee.*) I feel fine!

GARRY I'm delighted to hear it.

ROLAND When can I come and see you again?

GARRY I'm afraid you can't. You see I'm going to Africa.

ROLAND Would you see me if I came to Africa too?

GARRY I really think you'd be far happier in Uckfield.

ROLAND (*laughing and pointing*) I expect you think I'm mad, but I'm not a bit really, I just mind deeply about certain things, but I feel much better now because I think I shall be able to sublimate you all right.

GARRY Sublimate me?

ROLAND Yes.

GARRY Then I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to go away and start now. (*He looks at his watch and rises.*) I'm expecting my manager and we have some business to discuss. (*He stands below the armchair.*)

ROLAND (*rising*) Oh, that's all right. I'm going immediately.

GARRY Shall I get you your script?

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ROLAND Oh! *(He looks left.)* No, no - tear it up - you were quite right about it - it was only written with part of myself. I see that now. Goodbye. *He attempts to shake hands. GARRY puts his hand behind his back. ROLAND bows.*

GARRY Goodbye.