

A (6) Monica, Liz and Fred

LIZ enters up right and comes down to the piano-stool. She is a charming-looking woman in her thirties, and is well dressed but not elaborate. She carries two parcels. MISS ERIKSON follows her in, crosses below her and exits up left.

LIZ (*easing below the piano*) Good morning, Monica dear.

MONICA Liz, darling. We thought you weren't coming back until tonight.

LIZ (*placing one parcel on the piano*) I came over on the ferry, loaded with gifts like an Eastern potentate. Here's one for you. (*She holds out a parcel.*)

MONICA (*taking the parcel*) How lovely!

LIZ It's a bottle of scent and very expensive.

MONICA Thanks so much, Liz, you're a darling.

LIZ What's God up to? (*She puts her bag on the piano, looks in the piano mirror and lifts her veil.*)

MONICA In the bath.

LIZ (*turning*) I've brought him a dressing-gown.

MONICA How thoughtful - he's only got eighteen.

LIZ (*placing her bag on the centre table and taking off her gloves*) Don't be acid, Monica, you know he loves peacocking about in something new. It's nice and thin and highly suitable for Africa. Miss Erikson looked more peculiar than ever this morning. Is her spiritualism getting worse?

MONICA (*joining her above the centre table*) She got in touch with a dead friend at a seance on Sunday, and all he said was "No, no, no" and "Christmas Day"! It upset her very much.

LIZ (*moving round left of the settee, and sitting on it*) I do hope she won't get any dottier and do something awful.

MONICA I don't think she will. Hers is quite a tranquil madness. *The telephone rings.* This damned thing never stops. (*She lifts the receiver. Into the telephone.*) Hello? ...Morris? ...No, he's in the bath. Liz is here if you'd like to speak to her... She's just arrived. Here, Liz, it's Morris.

MONICA gives LIZ the telephone, and, while she's talking, opens her present right of the settee. She puts the wrapping in the box under the centre table.

LIZ (*into the telephone*) Good morning, dear... No, on the ferry... Yes, I saw the play twice... We shall have to alter the end for England, but I talked to Vallion and he didn't seem to mind what happened as long as Garry played it ... I told him your idea about Janet playing Eloise, and he said that although he knew she was a formidable actress he'd rather have someone who looked less like a guinea pig! ...Cochon d'Inde... Yes, dear, pig of India... He's a very sweet little man and I adore him...No, I'm lunching with poor Violet but I'll come to the office

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directly afterwards if you like... Yes, I'll get rid of her, you needn't be frightened... All right.
(She replaces the receiver.)

MONICA *(with her bottle of scent)* Liz, this looks absolutely wonderful. I shan't open it until I get home.

FRED enters down the stairs.

LIZ *(turning her head)* Hallo, Fred - how's everything?

FRED *(coming down to left of the settee)* Bit of a lash-up, Miss, same as usual.

LIZ Do you think I could have a cup of coffee - I feel a sinking.

FRED Rightyo, Miss. *FRED exits up left.*

LIZ It's very resolute of Fred to go on calling me Miss, isn't it?

MONICA *(repacking the scent in its box, and placing it on the centre table)* I think he has a sort of idea that when you gave up being Garry's wife you automatically reverted to maidenhood.

LIZ It's a very pretty thought.