



The Sugar Mother

by **John Senczuk**
based on the fiction of
Elizabeth Jolley

The Sugar Mother was first performed at the Sydney Opera House Playhouse on 5th February 1993 with the following cast:

CECILIA PAGE	Tina Bursill
EDWIN PAGE	Robert Alexander
THE YOUNG MAN	Michael Coe
DAPHNE	Julie Hamilton
LEILA	Clodagh Crowe
LEILA'S MOTHER	Faye Montgomery

Directed by Des Davis
Designed by John Senczuk
Lighting by Karen Norris
Choreography by Paul Mercurio
Music by David Vance

It was as if he had come into existence
simply because someone, hopelessly lost among words,
had created him in thoughtful ink on the blotting paper.
WOMAN IN A LAMPSHADE, Elizabeth Jolley

'Much of adaptor John Senczuk's success stems from the fact he is a designer, and has been creatively challenged to show two simultaneous narratives on a single set. ... The resolution is surely one of the evening's most satisfying moments, as much for its elegance as for the fact that Senczuk's adaptation does not unduly telegraph it. ... Director Des Davis and designer Senczuk have combined well, and sometimes brilliantly ...'

Ken Healey, *The Sun-Herald*

Characters

Cecilia Page, gynaecologist and writer
Edwin Page, associate professor of Elizabethan Studies
The young man, 20
Daphne, friend to Cecilia, teacher
Leila, 22
Leila's mother

Setting

The overall impression of the set is one of a very large, pleasantly shabby, home that nestles comfortably by a suburban park of pines. It is the kind of book-lined house where the cat ate from "Royal Doulton plates and potted plants stood on Wedgewood".

EDWIN's bedroom-study and CECILIA's (Cottage) bedroom should be separated by a nebulous acting space within the house which allows exterior (the expressway - car optional! - and the Pines) and interior (University Lecture room, a party space, the living room and kitchen) scenes.

ACT ONE

(Late afternoon. The Doctors' House.)

(As the audience enters the auditorium, EDWIN takes an electric cleaner and vacuums the hall and the sofa cushions. He prowls in and out of the rooms of what seem to him an absolutely deserted house.)

CECILIA *(Flamboyantly dressed with an exquisite purple shawl, she stands alone holding an old, but beautiful lampshade. Beside her a suitcase and an old portable typewriter. (To the Audience.)* I'm leaving him - for a time. Page. Edwin Page. Teddy! That is, my husband Edwin, open brackets, Teddy, close brackets, Page. Associate Professor of Elizabethan Studies. An old Aspro. I'm leaving him working on a paper: a lecture.

EDWIN *(At the desk in his study, he puts on his cardigan and switches on his reading lamp. He begins work)*.

My salad days,

When I was green in judgement, cold in blood ...

CECILIA. A lecture on Antony and Cleopatra I believe, or is it some other Roman relic. No matter.

EDWIN. *To say as I said then.*

But come, away,

Get me ink and paper.

CECILIA. I'm leaving him with Daphne and those whom we call friends - for a time.

(Late afternoon. Next door.)

LEILA'S MOTHER *(Dressed to go out, on the doorstep of their house)*. Leila dear, we'll be running out of knickers. Remind me, dear, to do some washing tonight when we come home. Now, have we got everything? Got the tickets? Yes? The umbrellas, Leila-pet. It looks like rain.

(LEILA returns to get the umbrellas.)

Righty-oh? Slam the door then dear. We'll wait by the gate for our taxi. He should be here any minute. You know, dear, I am certain that the people next door have separate bedrooms.

LEILA. There's only one light on now.

LEILA'S MOTHER. It isn't bedtime yet, and I have the feeling that She has gone away. I'm pretty certain. I saw him wave to her from the edge of the verandah. This afternoon, dear, this afternoon she left.

LEILA. She goes every day and he always waves. I think she goes in the night too sometimes. She goes to work.

LEILA'S MOTHER *(Musing)*. This time, dear, She had Luggage. Luggage. You know, dear, I've seen him often, from the bus, dear. He seems to walk out from the end of that plantation of trees and he stands at the edge of the playground and watches the kiddies playing. No kiddies, Leila pet. No kiddies?

LEILA *(Yawning)*. Perhaps he's someone's gran'pa.

LEILA'S MOTHER. I don't think so, dear, he only stands and doesn't seem to own any of those children. A grandfather would push the swing or run to the

end of the slide to catch ... I mean a grandfather would. He's such a fine-looking man, very handsome Leila, not young but handsome all the same, well bred I should say and well groomed, always a good sign, dear. He should have children of his own. Shouldn't he dear? (*Carhorn off.*) She's gone, there's no doubt about that. Is that our cab? Wave Leila, dear, wave your scarf. It's all right the driver's seen us, he's coming back. You know, I simply cannot imagine where the bathroom is in that house.
(*Carhorn off. They put up their umbrellas and run off.*)

(*Evening. The Doctors' house.*)

(*Lightning, then a crash of thunder.*)

(*EDWIN, disturbed by the carhorn, gets up from his desk and stands gazing out of his window at the approaching storm.*)

(*Lightning.*)

EDWIN (*Reciting.*)

*The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were lovesick with them;
The oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes.*

(*Evening. The Expressway.*)

(*The lightning turns into headlights and CECILIA in her car - a gold VW - sees a YOUNG MAN standing in the dark. He seems to be leaning rather than standing, the storm holding him up in its force.*)

CECILIA. A young man! (*She stops the car and, leaning over, opens the car door with some difficulty.*) Hop in quick young man, you're getting drowned!

YOUNG MAN. Thanks. Thanks a lot ...

CECILIA. You'll catch your death. Far too dangerous for anyone to be on the road at this time of night ... in this type of weather ... (*Distracted.*) "Freeway Terror" by Cecilia Page. (*Looking at the YOUNG MAN.*) Not bad ... not bad at all.

YOUNG MAN. I just need a lift, lady.

CECILIA (*Distantly*). "... Young man - rather splendid young man," no plain ... must be plain, no where to go ... "young man vanishes on stormy night on deserted expressway ... no clues". No young person is safe alone anywhere these days ... (*Directly to the YOUNG MAN.*) ... Relax son, it's my over-ripe mothering instinct. Pop your seatbelt on, there's a good boy.

YOUNG MAN. Look lady, I trying to get away from an over-ripe mothering instinct of one sort or another. I've been standing there for hours. Really, I really appreciate this ... if you hadn't picked me up ...

CECILIA (*Savouring the words*). "... Picked him up."

(*A short but uncomfortable silence.*)

YOUNG MAN. Got any matches?

CECILIA. Certainly not!

YOUNG MAN. Sorry.

CECILIA. But you can listen to the radio. Or I do have some music ... somewhere.

YOUNG MAN. I'll be ok. Do you mind if, maybe, I might ... get some sleep ...

CECILIA. Go right ahead. Do you need a rug? "Picked him up, and tucked him in."

(*Evening. The Doctors' house.*)

EDWIN (*Writing at his desk surrounded by piles of reference books and pages.*)

"There are two types of plays. Those which end with the characters getting married and living happily ever after and those which start with the characters married and living unhappily." Or maybe it should be three types ... those whose characters just live together ... unmarried ... in sin ... in Alexandria ... inappropriate! It would only confuse the issue for the poor mites. The young university mind is far too impressionable these days.

(*A door slams.*)

DAPHNE (*Off*). Teddy! Have you heard from Cecilia?

EDWIN. Who's there?

DAPHNE (*Enters in jogging attire. She shouts because of the music she is listening to on her walkman.*) Sorry to drop in so late. Are you still working? Prince needed his walk and the drizzle has held off ... saw the light, and you must remember to lock the back door. Anybody could come in.

EDWIN. Daphne, what on earth are you doing out this late? Cecilia only left this afternoon.

DAPHNE. I thought she might have phoned already.

EDWIN. Yes, she did. Daphne, you're shouting! I really am busy. I've this lecture to finish before Monday.

DAPHNE. I can't hear you ... Haydn ...

EDWIN (*Shouting*). To finish before Monday. Cecilia rang. She had just stopped for petrol.

DAPHNE. I've got Haydn's Trumpet just about to climax!

EDWIN. You're very keen to be out in this weather ... Cecilia said the storm was heading our way.

DAPHNE. Yes I know. Yes. (*Removing her earphones.*) Smashing! (*She slumps, exhausted, into a chair.*) I just dropped by to see if you would like to share an incredible pizza. Cecilia did ask me especially, you see, to keep an eye on you.

EDWIN. No thank you, dearest Daphne. Not right now.

DAPHNE. I thought I should check on you to see how you are managing. Cecilia, you know, has left all sorts of arrangements and instructions. She told me she was divinely inspired to make a macaroni cheese yesterday. A sort of Grand Gesture, a tour de force, as we say at St Monica's. Grating cheese - after doing all that packing. Such self discipline.

EDWIN. I must get on with this work and since Cecilia ...

DAPHNE. Cecilia's arranged for lot of people to look after you and entertain you. I though I'd be the first ...

EDWIN. She only left this afternoon - perhaps next week some time?

DAPHNE. If you're sure ... Till later then. Auf Wiedersehen. (*Shouts from off.*)
Lock the back door!

(*DAPHNE jogs out. EDWIN resumes his lecture preparation.*)

EDWI. *Now for the love of Love and her soft hours,*

Let's not confound the time with conference harsh.

There's not a minute of our lives should stretch

Without some pleasure not.

(*There is a noise outside his window.*)

What sport to-night?

Perhaps that will interest the students without being too provocative.

(*Evening. The Doctors' house.*)

(*Outside the window, a further rustling in the garden. Silence. Then another rustling sound in the blackness.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER (*Shouting from outside*). We're locked out of our house.

EDWIN. Oh!

LEILA'S MOTHER. Leila just doesn't like the thunder.

EDWIN. Oh?

LEILA'S MOTHER. We are you new neighbours, next door.

EDWIN. Ah yes, of course!

(*He lets them in through the front door.*)

Page, Edwin Page. Do come in.

LEILA'S MOTHER (*Barging past him into the living room*). Oh Dr Page, may we come in ...?

EDWIN. Do come in ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. We have been going round and round our house, and you know how dark it is, trying to see if there was one teeny weakness, one teensie-weensie little place where we could break in like burglars. I just don't know what we are going to do. We've been to a play. As you know we've only recently moved in. With all this rain and ... I am very much afraid it is impossible to break into our house. It's absolutely burglar-proof, metal grilles, locks and bolts on the doors and windows. Oh! I feel we are going to be a terrible nuisance.

(*LEILA, slow to enter the house, comes into the hall.*)

We joined the Theatre Club, I want Leila to meet nice people.

EDWIN (*Seeing LEILA for the first time*). Do come in and dry yourselves. (*He takes the umbrellas from LEILA.*) I'll get you towels.

(*He goes into the bathroom. The two women stand together. EDWIN returns with two pink bath towels.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Oh, aren't they lovely. Are they to match the bathroom, Dr Page? Too kind, Dr Page. Too kind. Leila, dear. Say "Hello and too kind" to Doctor Page.

LEILA. Too kind, Dr Page.

LEILA'S MOTHER. There was this man in the play ... could be the spitting image of yourself if you had an Afro hair-do. He was handsome, wasn't he Leila-pet? Had all the women after him, didn't he Leila? Quite the Dong Choon. A real heartbreak and a scream really. I enjoy a good laugh. Of course this was Russian; they're so slow, as a rule, aren't they? Nothing much happens. It was just when the man, not the one with the Afro, the other one - when he gets run over on the railway line - how they do that on stage beats me - it was ever so real - it was then that I remembered seeing our keys on the kitchen table where I left them. I never picked them up! So near and yet so far!

(*A long, uncomfortable pause.*)

EDWIN. Is there anything I can do. Anything I can get you. Some tea, perhaps?

LEILA'S MOTHER. So stupid of me. I'm afraid we are disturbing you, Dr Page. I just don't know at all what we are going to do.

EDWIN. You must sit down. Please.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Oh. No no. I don't want to disturb your household more than we have already. Your wife?

EDWIN. My wife is not at home. Please do sit down.

LEILA'S MOTHER (*She sits*). You don't have telly then?

EDWIN. In the other room.

(*An uncomfortable silence.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Excuse me, Dr Page but Leila needs to pay a call.

EDWIN. Sorry? Oh, of course, this way. I'll show you where the light switch is.

(*Led by EDWIN, LEILA exits to bathroom.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER (*Shouting*). Wash your hands, Leila dear!

(*She takes the opportunity to inspect the room.*)

(*EDWIN re-enters.*)

You wouldn't read about it, she looked like a poached egg, her daddy said, when she was born but everybody else saw Queen Victoria. "My!" they all said it. "She's Queen Victoria" - well it's funny isn't it I mean Queen Victoria, dead all these years and not even a relation.

(*Pause.*)

(*She picks up a framed portrait of CECILIA.*)

Your wife's a doctor. Our agent did explain we were next door to two doctors.

EDWIN. Only one at present. For the time being. I am deserted.

LEILA'S MOTHER. That's a shame. Fancy anyone leaving a lovely home like this. Perhaps she's bored, needs a change, change is as good as a feast so they say. Perhaps she's been working herself too hard. A woman needs - Any kiddies? I suppose if you have children they'd all be up and away but then again, there's sometimes a late little littley pattering around the place.

EDWIN. No. Unfortunately, no.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Aw, well, what will be - will be as I always say. (*Pause.*)

They seem to go in these days for sugared mothers don't they.

EDWIN. Sorry?

LEILA'S MOTHER. Sugared mothers

EDWIN. Sugared?

LEILA'S MOTHER. You know. Sugared mothers. Someone else's, you know ... very popular.

EDWIN. Ah! Surrogate. (*Laughs.*) Not sugared, surrogate.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Yes, that's the word. With no family, a woman can be very lonesome.

(*Evening. The Expressway.*)

(*The YOUNG MAN sits in the passenger seat of the car next to CECILIA.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Taking blanket*). Thanks, thanks a lot.

CECILIA (*Musing*). Must be uncomfortable in those wet clothes? Perhaps he should take them off.

YOUNG MAN. I'll be fine.

CECILIA. Such a horrid night, is he going far?

YOUNG MAN. As far as I can get.

CECILIA. I can take him as far as the end of the expressway. The toll way. Then I turn off. What then?

YOUNG MAN. That'll be fine. The tollway's fine. Just leave me there.

CECILIA. It's very late.

YOUNG MAN. No problem. Just leave me at the tollway ... do you need change? I know I've got some coin ...

CECILIA. I've got money.

YOUNG MAN. I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't stopped.

(*A long pause.*)

CECILIA. He's drenched! Drenched ... must get him out of those wet clothes.

YOUNG MAN. Now look here, lady. I don't want any trouble. How far are you going to go? It'll do if you drop me off when you've gone as far as you're going.

CECILIA. Nonsense.

YOUNG MAN. Just here. Stop here!

CECILIA. Here? No. I insist. You'll spend the night at the cottage. I could do with the company. Then in the morning we'll arrange something.

YOUNG MAN. Slow down!

CECILIA. Whatever would Edwin think? I do need to experience as much as I can. That, of course, was the entire reason why we ... why I brought the holiday cottage. A first option for independence. I needed a place where I could get away to write and the property was just inspiring.

YOUNG MAN. Pull up ...

CECILIA. It's a little in need of ... well, tender loving care. All I need is someone to throw a bit of paint around, and just to tighten a few screws ... Edwin is no help at all in that department. No good with his hands at all. That's all I need ... a handy man.

YOUNG MAN. ... I need a piss, lady. Quick, stop the fucking car.

CECILIA. Now? That's clever, I would never have thought of that! Hold on!

(*Evening. The Doctors' House and the Expressway.*)

EDWIN. Ah, no.

(*The toilet flushes in the bathroom.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER (*As LEILA re-enters*). Does that feel better dear?

EDWIN. No, no. Cecilia's not at all lonely, not in the least. Her work is tremendously important to her. She's gone away for ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. Aw fancy!

EDWIN. My wife -

EDWIN/CECILIA. Cecilia.

CECILIA. Is that better?

YOUNG MAN. Much.

EDWIN. Her work is obstetrics and gynaecology.

YOUNG MAN. Sorry. I panicked! I'm not used to ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. Women's problems! Private parts.

YOUNG MAN. ... I've never done this type of thing before. Hitched!

LEILA'S MOTHER. All the same it must be dull for Dr Sissilly, I mean, no family.

YOUNG MAN. Hitched. I'd just had enough.

CECILIA. My name is Cecilia.

YOUNG MAN. So I just packed up and left. Just like that. Didn't even leave a note.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Always other people's kiddies - not the same as having your own.

(*Evening. The Expressway.*)

CECILIA. Cecilia Page.

YOUNG MAN. You're a real life saver. (*A nervous laugh.*) And I'm ...

CECILIA. I don't want that revealed yet. My exposition is always clumsy. I don't spend enough time with young people ... I'm a little out of practice with, you know, talking ... pre-pubescent intercourse.

YOUNG MAN. What are you staring at? Is there something wrong?

CECILIA. What I mean is, I'm out of touch. I'm dreadfully preoccupied at present.

YOUNG MAN. What, with driving?

CECILIA. There's something about you.

YOUNG MAN. I could drive for a while if you like.

CECILIA. It's special, the way the light gives you a sort of halo. Like some sort of Renaissance saint.

YOUNG MAN. I've got a licence.

CECILIA. I like driving!

YOUNG MAN. With what then? What do you do?

CECILIA. I'm ... I'm a writer.

YOUNG MAN. A writer? What sort of writer?

CECILIA. Actually, that's not true. I'm trying to be a writer. Fiction, short stories, novellas. dramatic interludes ... that type of thing. Short things.

YOUNG MAN. I suppose you'll put me in a story or something. Will you?

CECILIA. Absolutely. I'm in the middle of a little scenario at the moment.

YOUNG MAN. Unreal!

CECILIA. It's only a draft, a draft scenario. It's only in my head.
YOUNG MAN. How far?
CECILIA. Nothing on the page yet.
YOUNG MAN. No. I meant are we very far from the cottage?
CECILIA. Not too much farther. Father? Do you have family?

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(Evening. The Doctors' house.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. It must be dull for Dr Sissilly. I mean it's always the same old story, childbirth is so repetitive. Dr Sissilly must in her most secret heart wish for a little boy or girl just like you. All of us ladies are mothers in our real true hearts ...
EDWIN. Not really, you see Cecilia really feels the individuality, "the special light", she calls it, which surrounds every new-born baby. Every birth is an event, a miracle. Every time she comes home radiant.

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(Evening. The Expressway.)

YOUNG MAN *(Yawns)*. Family? Not that I want to remember.
CECILIA. You poor baby. I actually work in a hospital. A gynaecologist in fact. I'm a doctor. But I am sick to death of giving birth.
YOUNG MAN. You want something different. I know what you mean.
CECILIA. "Therefore I praise the dead more than the living but above all I praise those who never were born." Ecclesiastes.
YOUNG MAN. Yeah, right!
CECILIA. You know, I've always wanted to keep a diary but have always just stared down at the date at the top of an empty page. I want to write about my life being absolutely sensational. I'm being selfish I know but I've left my husband at home to look after himself.

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(Evening. The Doctors' House.)

EDWIN. I often see that radiance give way to a wonderfully calm expression, and "exquisite tenderness and purity", I'm afraid I'm quoting now, it's a bad habit of mine. Do you, by any chance, know Hans Memling? The Virgin and Child or Albrecht Dürer?
LEILA'S MOTHER. I don't think we have met them - have we Leila? But we both love ickle babies, don't we Leila, honey. Come and sit down by mother. She's so shy, and we've had a fright at not being able to get in.
EDWIN. We, that is Cecilia and myself, did miss awfully having children, expanding; children lead to pets and sports and parties and hobbies - all sorts of things and places and holidays one would never have thought of. It's not that we didn't try. Cecilia did conceive ... three times ... but with one thing and another ... miscarriages. Pregnancy didn't seem to agree with her career.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Aw! lost three little ones, that is sad, very sad.
EDWIN. At least she has her work.
LEILA'S MOTHER *(Stands and allows LEILA to take her seat)*. Nursery ready three times. Funny thing, I seem to hear a baby crying in this house. Goodness, I am clucky this evening. I wonder if the tea leaves would tell me something tomorrow. Remind me, Leila, tea-leaves. Children, they're like teeth, all trouble. Trouble coming, trouble while you've got them and trouble when they go. But for all that who'd be without them. Just think Leila we are next door to a house with two doctors.

EDWIN. Only one real one. I work at the University.
LEILA'S MOTHER *(Bearing down)*. And what is your speciality? Do you carve people up or are you a bedside man?
EDWIN. Unfortunately for the purse, neither. I deal only in words and phrases and not with the body. And alas! I am no longer young. I am, how shall I put it, a tattered cloak upon a stick.
LEILA'S MOTHER. Come again? I beg yours?
EDWIN. Shakespeare at the moment. I was working of a lecture just before you ... arrived. *(He looks around the room nervously.)*
LEILA'S MOTHER. Shakespeare? We Shakespeare, don't we Leila pet. He writes some good mysteries. What's that one about the jack-in-the-box, Leila pet?
EDWIN. Jack-in-a-box? Ah ... Iachimo-in-a-box. It's Italian. Who'd have thought? The play is *Cymbeline*. A late romance, or is it a tragedy. *(Lost in thought.)* To have books in more than one room in a house is positively gross. But I am helpless!
LEILA'S MOTHER. Well never mind!
EDWIN. Port anyone?
(EDWIN pours and offers her a glass of port.)
LEILA'S MOTHER. Mercy Buttercups.

(EDWIN pours a glass for himself and one for LEILA.)
It's no use our trying to get into that house, is it Leila-pet? We know! The agent who we rented it off, he stressed emphatic that it was burglar-proof. *(EDWIN checks with LEILA'S MOTHER as he offers the port to LEILA.)*
LEILA'S MOTHER nods in the negative.)
(EDWIN stands alone in the centre of the room with both glasses. He is awkward and drinks from neither glass.)
"Can we get raped in there", I asked him, and he made a point of that, "No my dear", he said, "you can't ever be raped in there". That's what he said. "No one can break in there and you cannot be raped and burglarised. Two ladies on their only", he said, "need protection". Take Mr Bott. Your daddy, Leila. Mr Bott, he would have said the same thing wouldn't he dear. He always said, "If I'm not spared, if I'm took, be sure to choose a house you can't be raped in." *(Emotionally affected.)* I'm sorry, have you a tissue? *(Recovering.)* So Dr Page, we are so to speak completely at your mercy.

EDWIN *(Completely draining one glass of the port)*. Perhaps you would sleep here?

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(Evening. *The Expressway*.)
(*The YOUNG MAN has fallen asleep.*)

CECILIA (To herself). "My young man." He must be exhausted. He'll need something to eat, poor darling ... then bed.

(Evening. *The Doctors' House*.)

EDWIN (Standing with a handful of tissues). We have a comfortable spare room.

LEILA'S MOTHER (*Taking tissues*). Too kind, Dr Page.

EDWIN. And in the morning we can sort out the problem of entry.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Now that would be nice.

EDWIN. Perhaps if you were to take the bathroom ... then, Leila ... is it?

LEILA'S MOTHER. Yes. Leila. Say hello to Dr Page.

LEILA. Hello, Dr Page.

LEILA'S MOTHER. She was always sturdy and very healthy. The biggest little girl in her class.

EDWIN. ... and I shall lock up.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Mr Bott always locked up.

EDWIN. I expect you'll both need something to sleep in ... (*He leaves the room and returns with two nightdresses belonging to Cecilia.*) Perhaps these might be of some use ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. I think I might be one size bigger than Dr Sissilly ... but perhaps Leila might ...

EDWIN. I hope the night will be comfortable for you.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Thank you. Dr Sissilly's lingerie? Lovely lingerie, isn't it Leila, pet?

EDWIN. It's a funny thing about lingerie. Lingerie, seems to be based on the idea that we are attracted to clothing which reveals a great deal but not our All. We enjoy the suspense of peeking at each other even though we know, often very well, what we are peeking at.

LEILA'S MOTHER. No peeking, then, Dr Page. Good night. Say "Nighty-night, Dr Page" Leila, pet.

EDWIN. Please. Do call me Edwin.

LEILA. Nighty-night, Dr Page.

(*LEILA and LEILA'S MOTHER take the nightgowns and exit to the bathroom. The water runs for a long time. EDWIN sits at his desk.*)

EDWIN. *If every of your wishes had a womb,
And fertile every wish, a million.*

(*EDWIN continues to work at his lecture. We hear the regular beat of the water meter. EDWIN grows weary. He stands and turns off his desk lamp. Puts on his dressing gown, folds back the cover of his bed, neatly, and puts his pyjamas out. The water stops. He stands uneasily in the middle of his study.*)

(*The noise of someone - LEILA'S MOTHER - in the hall stifles his attempt to use the bathroom. After he suspects all is clear he leaves his study only to come face to face with LEILA just emerging from the bathroom. He*

can't help but notice that her blouse is unbuttoned. LEILA gives a shy half smile and slides by him sideways.)

EDWIN (*Awkwardly*). "Nighty-night."

(*LEILA, without attempting to pull her clothes together, disappears into the guest-room.*)

Just call if you need any extra blankets ... or anything?

(*The Cottage.*)

(*CECILIA enters the cottage. Prepares for bed and works through a familiar ritual with adjusting the lampshade on her head and settling into bed balancing the old portable typewriter on her knee.*)

(*The lampshade is the colour of ripe peaches and made of soft pleats of silk. It is light and it fits CECILIA perfectly. It is like a garden party hat only more foolish because it is, after all, a lampshade.*)

(*The bed is piled high with old furs and and an old but beautiful quilt. Various pieces of screwed up typing paper are scattered about the bed and floor.*)

CECILIA (*Singing softly*).

I love my little lampshade

So frilly and so warm

If I wear my silky lampshade

I'll come to no harm.

(*She begins to type.*)

Friday night. (*She stops and composes.*) I never guessed the first time that I put the lampshade on my head how I would feel. I'd never experienced such a feeling before. It had taken me by surprise. (*She caresses the great bulk of the folds in the bedding.*) After that first time I couldn't help but look with shy curiosity at other women, younger women, in shops and at parties, at the hairdressers and even while passing them in the street, quietly noticing the private things about them, the delicate shaping of the back of the neck or the imaginative tilt of the ears. I wondered too about all the tiny lines and folds and creases, all the secret things. I was desperate to know what secret pleasures they had and whether they had known them long before I had discovered mine. (*She types.*)

(*Morning. The Doctors' House.*)

DAPHNE. Rise sunshine! Anyone for tennis?

(*It is hardly light. EDWIN, on his bed, wakes. He is still partly dressed and in his dressing gown.*)

Anyone for tennis? Three times round the oval and a jog-jog-jog through the pines. I promised Cecilia. I promised Cecilia that I'd exercise you every day.

EDWIN. Daphne, I'm not your dog. Whatever time is it?

DAPHNE. Five, or just back or front of five.
 EDWIN. Sssh! Do keep your voice down. I have guests, you know, house guests.
 DAPHNE. You what!
 EDWIN. Yes, Leila and her mother, forget their other name ... Bott. That's it, Bott.
 DAPHNE. Bott? Good grief! But how! Does Cecilia know?
 EDWIN. Of course not, they only arrived last night. Locked out. That house, next door, they left the keys inside.
 DAPHNE. What a hoot! But why on earth, Teddy, didn't you pack them off to the El Sombrero or that darling little chez Nooky Nook, the guest-house, Pilgrims Roost?
 EDWIN. I must say, the wise thought did not occur to me.
 DAPHNE. You'll have to get rid of them, straight away, otherwise you'll be stuck. Well come along, Leila or no Leila, Bott or not, we'll do the oval.
(Running on the spot.) High knee raising, one two, one two.
 EDWIN. Oh, I can't Daphne. I haven't finished my lecture.
I am dying, Egypt, dying.
Give me some wine, and let me sleep a little.

(The Cottage.)
(The YOUNG MAN we realize is buried under a heap of old fur coats and several spoiled pages.)

CECILIA. Are you awake? Hey! Are you awake? God? You can sleep! It's youth, I suppose, hey! Wake up!
 YOUNG MAN (Hardly moving). What's that? What the...?
 CECILIA. Wake up, I need you to help me with this story.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

DAPHNE. Rubbish. Ten minutes in the fresh air is worth an hour of sleep. Let me into the kitchen then. I could do with a pot of tea.
 EDWIN. Oh I don't think you should ... really Daph.
 DAPHNE. Decision's made. Just hurl yourself through the ablutions, Teddy, and a fresh pot of tea will be waiting for you. One, two. One, two. *(She jogs into the kitchen.)*

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Young man, could you move over a bit.
(She is having trouble balancing the typewriter.)
 I'm getting the most awful cramp ... and a pain in my back. Ah! that's better. No, no further or you'll fall out. That'll do beautifully. Now, I'm interested in my young man traveling. But how? That's the big problem. And where?

(She looks back to the sleeping boy.)

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)
(DAPHNE jogs, backwards, out of the kitchen. She is followed closely by LEILA'S MOTHER carrying a tray with a pot of tea, cup and saucers and other breakfast items.)
(The toilet flushes.)
(EDWIN joins them from his bedroom on his way to collect his newspaper from the front verandah.)

LEILA'S MOTHER *(Entering from the kitchen)*. "See the world. Travel. Experience life," Mr Bott would always say.
(LEILA enters from the bathroom. She pulls her cardigan closer and is still in her night dress. LEILA'S MOTHER is pouring tea.)
 Remember Leila pet. Remember when we were on the telly, the both of us. *(She hands LEILA a cup of tea.)* The both of us interviewed by ever such a nice young man, remember Leila? That nice young man, not the one with glasses - the other gingery one, well - we made a complaint, you see, about this holiday tour we'd been on. Really dreadful it was.
(As EDWIN passes, LEILA'S MOTHER automatically hands him a cup of tea. He proceeds, perplexed, to the front door.)
 We never knew where we were going to sleep. And you know what Spain is! And once, the coach left without us and there we were stranded!

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Hey! *(Laughing)* Don't roll back! If you lie on the edge of the bed, you'll drop off!
(The YOUNG MAN draws the coats closer and tries to go back to sleep.)
(Noisily rearranging the papers.) That was supposed to be a joke!

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

(EDWIN re-enters with rolled Newspaper.)

DAPHNE *(Sotto voce)*. Good Lord! Edwin ...?
 EDWIN *(Rustling his paper)*. Yes ... yes ...?
 DAPHNE *(Sotto voce)*. Where ever did you find them?
 LEILA'S MOTHER *(From the kitchen)*. Who's for eggs and bacon?
 DAPHNE. Oh rather! Scrumptious!
 LEILA'S MOTHER. Bread anyone? Or would everyone prefer toast?
 DAPHNE. Toast please.
 LEILA'S MOTHER *(Entering with a tea-towel over her shoulder. She takes the teapot from the tray.)* More tea Doctor? *(She has the teapot almost level with his head.)* I like to pour from a height. Airyates the tea.
 DAPHNE *(After a pregnant pause, and attempting conversation)*. Good heavens!

who would credit it. Just look at that, we must each have been given identical wiping up cloths for Christmas. (To LEILA.) Mine has a greeny background with little pictures of bells - Hearnsted loves the bells: reminds her of St Monica's - and all the names of the rooms made into a delirious pattern, an ancient manor house I though was the nearest thing to it.

EDWIN. The colours of the Elizabethan court are green and ... white.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Mr Bott - God bless his soul - had a tea towel, pure linen, designed as a reminder of our lovely home in England before we had to part with it. It was, if my memory is not playing tricks today, one of the last things Mr Bott did. What was the very last think your daddy did Leila-pet? Can you remember? He always did something.

(LEILA'S MOTHER smiles at the assembled little company.)

LEILA. Tea-leaves, mummy!

LEILA'S MOTHER (Reading EDWIN's tea-leaves). Money, a great deal of money and a cradle, and a boy's bicycle. (LEILA's cup.) A ring. Either a friendship or a wedding Leila.

LEILA'S MOTHER (To EDWIN). Dr Page? I was saying to Leila this morning, wasn't I Leila pet, that it's an awful shame about you and Dr Sissilly not having any ickle ones. No family.

DAPHNE. He and Cecilia have me. I'm family. Aren't I Teddy?

(LEILA'S MOTHER takes DAPHNE's cup.)

I don't believe in that sort of thing, you know.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Oh?! These cups. (She stack the cup with the rest of the things on the tray.) The excitement's almost too much. It's like going to the theatre.

EDWIN (To LEILA). You know, the Elizabethans were very superstitious.

LEILA'S MOTHER. I meant real family, Dr Page. You should've adopted.

DAPHNE. What a hideous suggestion. Adoption. Really, what would Cecilia think of taking a stranger in.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Have you and Dr Sissilly ever considered adopting?

DAPHNE. Unthinkable.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. In my story - wake up and listen! I've adopted this young man - for the purpose of my story, you understand - he's a bit of a nuisance really. First he's in a suburban post office in Australia. You've never been a postman have you? I can imagine him behind the counter with his pale offended eyes about to burst into tears and all the little veins and capillaries flushed on his crooked boyish face, or something like that? Then he turns up in a depressing hotel in Calais where two lesbians have gone to have a bit of privacy. The younger one wants to get away from her husband and the older one is the husband's secretary, a really boring stuffy old maid.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

DAPHNE (Laughs). Adoption. What an idea.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. The Spinster, the old one, the secretary ... she's quite empty headed and very irritating to be with for more than a few minutes as the younger one discovers quite quickly. In addition, the secretary, the boring one, drinks heavily and is not really very clean. An unfortunate situation altogether. Anyway, my young man's there at the hotel reception desk, at night, being absolutely useless.

YOUNG MAN. Who?

CECILIA. My young man of course. He left the Post Office to be a hotel receptionist in Calais. And then, to my surprise, he moves to a cheap hotel in Egypt, Cairo to be exact, and I've got him there exactly the same, the pale offended eyes filled with tears, the same blushing capillaries, perhaps he's a bit thinner, more haunted looking and, as usual, he's no earthly use. He's absolutely unable to help the guests when they arrive exhausted in the night. It's two more lesbians, younger than the others and one is very uncomfortable with an unmentionable infection. Not a very nice subject really but, as a writer, I have to look closely at Life and every aspect of it. *C'est un triste metier*. In all the stories one of the women is horrible to my young man. Absolutely horrible! I mean one in all three. So that's three times he has a really bad time, in all, he's despised, rejected and betrayed. But I'm glad to say that on all occasions the awful unkind behaviour is deeply regretted as soon as the resulting wretchedness is evident.

YOUNG MAN (Sitting up and yawning). What's the problem?

CECILIA. What's the problem? What happens next, of course. What happens with my young man.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

(A dog barks off stage.)

DAPHNE (Shouting off). Prince!

EDWIN. I'm going for water, down to the spring.

DAPHNE. I really must walk Prince before I go to school. He's been terribly temperamental lately.

EDWIN. I've got the containers ready. Like to come?

DAPHNE (Shaking her head). Honestly Teddy, I don't think it's worth all the trouble you take - going to that so-called spring. Don't understand. Every time I pass there, in the car with Miss Hearnsted, you know, and we see you crouched there, even in the rain sometimes, filling all those dreadful plastic things. Miss Hearnsted told me to tell you that it isn't a sacred spring at all ... and she would know. And you shouldn't kneel there, getting your knees wet. That water, honestly Teddy, I bet it seeps

down there from all sorts of horrid places, factories, septic tanks, the cemetery is not all that far away ... and the dogs' home. I wouldn't touch it. Honestly Teddy!

EDWIN. You sound just like Cecilia.

DAPHNE. Well I did promise to do my best to look after you, to convert you if necessary. I'm only trying! First thing, however will you get rid of them?

EDWIN. They're supposed to be phoning the agent now to get a spare set of keys.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA *(Banging her typewriter)*. I'm stuck! I'm stuck. Stuck, stuck, stuck. I thought that by having you here I might be able to ... you know ... to break through. I thought that you might be able to help.

YOUNG MAN. How can I help. Tell me what to do. I haven't got any experience ... but I'm sure I could give anything a go. I quite like the idea of working on a farm.

CECILIA. This is not a farm. It's a retreat.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

EDWIN. The Owner's away. Place has been let, on and off, for some years.

DAPHNE. Pity Cecilia isn't here, she would straighten things out.

EDWIN. Well, I will have to manage alone.

(LEILA'S MOTHER removes her washing from EDWIN's bathroom.

The two of them, LEILA and LEILA'S MOTHER, carry the wet bed linen to the neighbouring garden where they throw them over the clothes line.)

DAPHNE. I've never known you to eat such a huge breakfast, Teddy. *(Prince barks.)* I'll have to get Prince.

(They look at the women with the washing in silence.)

I hope you don't have troubles.

EDWIN. It won't be a problem.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA *(Shuffling papers across the bed)*. Oh by the way, would you mind not smoking in bed. My husband can't stand it.

YOUNG MAN *(Uneasily)*. He's not here is he? He's not coming? You said this wouldn't be a problem ...

CECILIA. No of course not, but the smoke hangs around and he's very sensitive. *(She laughs.)*

(Late Morning. The Doctors' House.

(EDWIN works on his paper. LEILA'S MOTHER comes back into the house.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Dr Page. They've turned up with the spare keys, Dr Page, and let us into the house. I've stripped the bed and washed the sheets and remade the bed nicely. It was ever so good of you to have had the two of us to sleep the night. We felt very safe. I'll never be able to thank you enough. Leila would come to say thank you, but she would eat those radishes. "Leila", I said, "they're not digestible", but would she listen! She's fetched them straight up, pardon me for mentioning, but that's why she's not come back over to say "thank you, Dr Page". Really young people! they will not be told! Especially if there's a craving.

(The Cottage.)

(Afternoon. The Pines.)

CECILIA. Whatever shall I do with them.

YOUNG MAN. Who?

CECILIA. My characters of course. I suppose ... I suppose that they could carry on in bed. *(She begins to type rapidly.)*

YOUNG MAN. Eh? Yeah! *(He turns over in bed.)*

CECILIA. Mind the typewriter! Ooops! I thought it was gone that time. That's better. You know I must tell you I've got a friend, Daphne, well she's not a friend really, she's family.

DAPHNE Heel! Prince. Teddy! *(She calls as she strides towards EDWIN)*. Here Boy! Heel! I was hoping you'd be having a walk.

EDWIN. I was hoping I'd find you too.

CECILIA. She has a friend ... Miss Hearnsted.

DAPHNE. Miss Hearnsted said she saw you with your neighbours, that girl and her mother, yesterday.

CECILIA. I'm glad that writers don't have any friends.

EDWIN. Leila.

CECILIA. Only husbands.

(DAPHNE hurls a stick for Prince. She shivers as a cold wind rushes between the trees. Prince barks.)

DAPHNE. You've got to get rid of them Teddy, and then devote yourself selflessly to help me out of a fix. I've got a block, Teddy

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Well Daphne thinks she's a writer and she's trying to get a psychiatric musical off the ground. A very long and tedious story based on her Father's affair with their housekeeper, Miss Heller. God! Daphne's a Bore when she talks about her work. She's a teacher of course. St Monica's College for Girls only. She's purging herself ... purging herself of her childhood experiences.

(Early afternoon. The Pines.)

DAPHNE. Teddy, it's about Father.

EDWIN. Not again, Daphne. What is it this time?

DAPHNE. Simply, Father was awfully foolish about Miss Heller, you know. I don't talk about this as a rule.

EDWIN. Of course not.

DAPHNE. It's all over and done with now, but it was a very painful thing. That's why I must get it right in the staging.

EDWIN. The musical for the Parents' Weekend?

DAPHNE. A bit awkward having a plump nubile playing Father, I grant you.

EDWIN. Is it really appropriate, Daphne. Really?

DAPHNE. I don't mean that Father meant to deceive me, but anything like this does deceive someone. It was because he did not want to hurt me, I quite see that, he simply never said anything. He never told me and I had to ... I had to make certain discoveries for myself. It isn't that Miss Heller wasn't awfully kind or that she wasn't a good housekeeper. You remember what she was like of course? In the staging, I can see Father. I can see Miss Heller. But I still can't see Father and Miss Heller together ... naked ... in a bath ...!

(EDWIN nods. DAPHNE cries.)

I'm sorry, Teddy. But it's all too much and Miss Hearnsted is being far too nice about it all and I don't trust that. The wind is giving me goose bumps. Let's turn back. Prince!

EDWIN. Daphne, let me ask you. I simply must tell you about Leila. Can you see Leila and ... me, together?

DAPHNE (Correcting him). Really, Teddy! Leila and I.

EDWIN. I must explain it is all because of how Leila feels towards me - it is entirely innocent ... I am not doing anything to encourage her. She is unawakened, it is a pre-sexual feeling she has for me. Perhaps she is looking for a father figure - I don't know?

DAPHNE. I understand. I do understand. I don't understand! You are seeing far too much of that girl, Teddy.

EDWIN. For three days, Leila ... (Pause.) Leila has been arriving with all sorts of reasons for coming over. The first day was because the oven in their house was hopeless and could they put a cake in my oven. It was all mixed up and in the tin, naturally I said "yes". "It'll be a lovely cake", Leila said to me, "it takes Mother three whole days to ice this kind of cake".

DAPHNE. Not a sugar-daddy!

EDWIN. And then I was invited to dinner.

(They walk in silence.)

DAPHNE. So of course you said "Yes". Here Prince! (She throws another stick.)

EDWIN. That's right, I did. And then Leila's mother thought that the cutlery provided in their house was awful. "Cheap and nasty" she said, she wouldn't want me to eat with it. So I then said to her to use mine, and so it seemed simpler to eat the meal, which was by the way delicious, in my house. And today when I came home Leila was playing records ...

DAPHNE. In your place? Your house? Playing records in your house on your player.

EDWIN. Yes, the hot-water system in that house is apparently quite useless, and Leila's mother was sure I wouldn't mind if Leila washed her hair in my bathroom.

(The record player begins abruptly.)

(LEILA comes out of the bathroom in her dressing gown drying her hair with a towel. She goes to the record player and replays the same song. She wraps her hair in the towel and curls herself up in EDWIN's armchair very pleased with herself.)

And there she was curled up in my armchair with her head in a towel and the whole house full of what the dear child calls music. It was only one song, she'd bought the album the day before and wanted to hear it. She must have played it a dozen times, over and over again.

(Entering to LEILA.)

LEILA. Oh Dr Page. I'm sorry. Mummy said it would be alright if I just came across and used your ...

EDWIN. Bathroom. Yes, of course. Of course you can.

LEILA. I've finished.

EDWIN. Bathroom. Yes, of course. Of course you can.

LEILA. Mummy told me not to be too long and use all the hot water so I just filled up the basin.

EDWIN. Don't worry about the hot water. We never run out. Cecilia made sure that we had the deluxe hot water system. No, of course you're very welcome. Is Mrs Bott with you?

LEILA. She decided to go and talk to the Real Estate Agent about our washing line. It won't be big enough she says.

EDWIN. You just make yourself at home. You feel right at home. Leila.

LEILA. Mummy said you wouldn't mind if I used your record player. Do you? Mind I mean. Mummy said you wouldn't mind.

EDWIN. Please feel free to play ... whatever or whoever it is.

LEILA. When we first moved in., Mummy said that you were "not young ... but handsome all the same." That's what she said.

EDWIN. That's very generous of you Leila. Well, of your mother at least.

LEILA. Oh, but Dr Page I think you are very handsome.

EDWIN. Oh Leila don't be silly. I'm old enough to be your grand ... your father.

LEILA. You've been very kind to us Dr Page. I haven't enjoyed being in Australia as much as since we moved next door to you. I can still remember the night that we got locked out and Mummy said that she was sure you wouldn't mind if we came to you for help.

EDWIN. No Leila I don't mind at all.

DAPHNE. No record player in the house next door?

(Silence. They both look at Prince.)

EDWIN. I've said all along he's insane.

DAPHNE. Prince?

EDWIN. No. Your father.

DAPHNE. I'm inclined to agree with you.

(Pause.)

Playing records in your house on your player in ...

EDWIN. Yes, that's right. She kept playing the record and then she told me she hoped I wouldn't mind her saying what she was going to say and of course I said no

of course I wouldn't mind and she then told me that she liked me very much. She had really liked me straight away.

LEILA. I've never in my whole life ever really liked anyone as much as I like you Dr Page. I feel more at home in your house than in any other house ...
(*LEILA exits.*)

EDWIN. Even the last house they had with Mr Bott, she said.

DAPHNE. Oh Lord! All I know is that Father was most awfully foolish, Teddy, over Miss Heller. He was completely taken up in a sort of splendid insane self exaltation. He thought he could do and have anything and give it all to poor Miss Heller, who, as you know, did not turn out to be all that poor. Don't be like Father. If it wasn't for Miss Heller, I wouldn't be in the rather straitened circumstances I'm in now. I'm always falling out with bank managers, my new bank has a name which sounds like some kind of sensible tampon - can't remember the name - anyway that's not what I'm trying to say ... you know what I'm trying to say. Be sensible, Teddy.

(*The Cottage.*)

CECILIA. Daphne never stops talking! All last week she was on about an official speech she'd been asked to write for the ceremonial opening of a deep sewerage system, I mean what is there in deep sewerage?

YOUNG MAN (*Yawning*). Quite a lot I should think.

(*Afternoon. The Pines.*)

DAPHNE. I feel sort of responsible Teddy while Cecilia's away. Prince! You will have to be very firm. You must not be available. You must try not to be available and the house must not be available. Have it painted throughout, or something, to make it thoroughly uncomfortable. It's the only way. Here Prince! Sometimes men are flattered by younger women. Miss Heller, d'you see, was so much younger than Father, but the youthfulness was not only in years. He could teach her ... all sorts of things ... and, oh, well! Never mind all that. How old is Leila?

EDWIN. I don't know.

DAPHNE. It sounds to me very like what we, at St Monica's, call a crush. You know the sort of thing. One of the girls feels very passionate about one of the mistresses. For a time - while the crush is on - the girl in question wants to praise the mistress in all sorts of ways. (*She blushes.*) For example, I have a young girl, Fiorella, who is at present, at the present time, addressing all the poems she writes to me. She writes several every day. Naturally I don't want to hurt her feelings but I do take care not to encourage her too much in the direction her poetry is taking. It's one of the problems of boarding school.

(*EDWIN glances quickly at DAPHNE.*)

So you don't know how old she is?

EDWIN. No, I haven't any idea.

DAPHNE. Cecilia's good at guessing ages. It's a pity she's not here.

(*The Cottage.*)

CECILIA (*Pulling paper from her typewriter and watching it float to the floor.*)

You must feel so trapped and cheated. I mean, being here with me. Just think! I brought you all this way and then everything happening like that ...

YOUNG MAN. What d'you mean, happening. Nothing has happened yet, has it?

(*Afternoon. The Pines.*)

DAPHNE. You could get the painters in and have the house rewired at the same time. That really makes a terrible mess.

EDWIN. I'm not sure that Cecilia would like that. It wouldn't be kind to her to do something she wouldn't like.

DAPHNE. No I suppose not and she really is attached to that cabbage rose wallpaper. You wouldn't want to do anything to upset her.

EDWIN. No.

(*The Cottage.*)

CECILIA. Everything happening like that! It's so upsetting. I didn't expect my young man and the lesbians ...

YOUNG MAN. I thought they were in Cairo.

CECILIA. Yes, yes, that's right, so they should be, but my young man ...

YOUNG MAN. I thought the idea was we'd be having the place to ourselves.

CECILIA. Really I'm sorry. It's such a nuisance. I was so looking forward, you know, to getting acquainted ... intimate ... and here he is, stupid and useless!

EDWIN (*Talking to himself*). I simply have no real idea of her age. Leila, sixteen? Oh my God! Sixteen, fifteen? Worse! No, twenty-two surely or twenty-three - that's more like it.

YOUNG MAN (*Sitting up*). I'm old enough. Perhaps I could work the farm, maybe even give the cottage a fresh coat of paint - I'm starting to like it here.

CECILIA. Get my briefcase. Would you mind awfully? I left it just outside on the porch. No stop! Stay where you are in the warm. I must be mad! I'm the one who should go. I should go. You stay in bed.

(*CECILIA slips from the bed and patters with quick bare feet over the boards. The outside door opens and slam shuts.*)

(Afternoon. The Pines.)

(DAPHNE heads towards him without pleasure.)

DAPHNE. Teddy! I'm furious.

EDWIN. You're later than usual.

DAPHNE. I have to be back at school for our rehearsal - it's nearly Parents' Weekend. Today is my golf day as you know. A quick few holes with Miss Hearnsted. While I was at golf, Prince got out and ate a bikini.

EDWIN. Bikinis? At golf? You and Hearnsted, that must be a sight, Daph?

DAPHNE. Oh don't Teddy, it was too awful. I found him with what I thought was a bit of rag. He has a weakness for clothes. A craving. I got the rag away from him and shoved it into the dustbin. You see cloth does awful things to his bowels. Then just now, when I was about to come out, my neighbour rang. You see, she knows Prince. Apparently she'd spent the whole day doing the shops trying to find something smart yet big enough, something she could actually get into. She'd come home, left her shopping on the verandah and the next minute it, the bikini, was gone. I went to the bin, fished out the rags, washed them and took the unspeakable remains around there and apologised. It took simply ages and here I am, all that groveling and two hundred dollars down the drain. I'm worn out!

EDWIN. They must have had gold sequins on them.

DAPHNE. Everything's so damned expensive nowadays.

EDWIN. Daphne, I simply have no idea of Leila's age. Sometimes she seems a mere child of seventeen or less and sometimes she's a mature young woman in her early thirties.

DAPHNE. Which is still very young for people of our age. I suppose they've come back. Have they?

EDWIN. Yes, this time it's rats.

DAPHNE. In the next-door house? Rats?

EDWIN. Rats.

DAPHNE *(To Prince)*. I'm not throwing sticks for anyone who eats people's clothes. I suppose you can't get them to leave. It's one thing to be friendly to people next door, just friendly and another to have them squatting. There's only one thing to do. If you won't have the decorators in, you'll have to have a house guest turn up suddenly. Someone who'll be dreadfully in the way, in the bath all the time or on the phone for hours, someone who'll use up all the milk, preferably someone who can bring a pet, a dog.

(They both look at Prince.)

I've even a better idea. A weekend of sin under your roof. They would have to leave then. Champagne, music late at night in the bathroom, squeals from the bedroom, coming in late for breakfast, undressed still, and going back to bed till lunchtime, taking lunch back to bed, a hot lunch in bed, that sort of thing. You could have the music of Hiawatha, it's supposed to be frightfully erotic. I've got it somewhere. To get rid of these people, Leila's mother and Leila, it is essential that you have an affaire. You must fill them with disgust at your behaviour while your wife is away. You must do it for Cecilia.

EDWIN. Yes, but who shall I have an affair with?

DAPHNE. With me, of course.

EDWIN *(Dumbfounded)*.

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale

Her infinite variety ...

DAPHNE. I never thought I could be so creative Teddy! They will think that it's been going on for ages, that you are truly awful and that I'm awful too.

EDWIN. ... *Other women cloy*

The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry

Where most she satisfies.

DAPHNE. I'll bring Prince. What an inspiration! He can eat Leila's clothes.

EDWIN. *For vilest things*

Become themselves in her, that the holy priests

Bless her when she is riggish.

DAPHNE. Will you be sure to get in the champers? Teddy? We'll need a dozen bottles at least.

(The Cottage.)

(The noise of a champagne cork, plates and cups and cutlery, a plate dropped somewhere crashing and breaking.)

YOUNG MAN. Is that you?

CECILIA *(With a mouth full of food)*. It's nothing, nothing at all to worry about. I'm just having a cheese sandwich. I've sliced up an onion and a hard boiled egg. Would you like some or are you the kind of person who doesn't like eating in bed?

YOUNG MAN. No thank you. I'm not hungry really no; no thank you, really not hungry thanks all the same.

CECILIA *(Eating ravenously)*. Have some Champagne. No, of course not. He'd prefer a beer? *(She pours a generous glass of champagne for herself and opens a can of beer for her guest.)* Just move over a bit ... thanks. *(She continues to type.)*

(Late Afternoon. The Doctors' House.)

LEILA'S MOTHER *(At EDWIN's kitchen table. Peering into EDWIN's cup and then into LEILA's, looking up first at EDWIN and then, searchingly, at LEILA. Shaking her head she looks up at the ceiling and then again at LEILA and at EDWIN.)* Well I never! Who'd have thought it! You could knock me down with a feather. An incident ... we must look out for an unexpected incident. You never know with the leaves ... there might just be a sign, a warning, a promise. *(She sets her lips in a thin line and rinses the cups quickly under the cold tap.)*

(*The Cottage.*)

CECILIA. I'm sorry, really I am about these papers all over the bed. I'd like to be able to make it up to you in some way. When he materialised at the side of the road absolutely drenched I simply couldn't resist. So helpless, so lost. "It was as if he had come into existence simply because someone, hopelessly lost among words, had created him in thoughtful ink on the blotting paper." (*Studying the remains of the egg.*) Ever since I decided to become a writer I've been an absolute pain! I mean, take tonight, I've been perfectly terrible.

(*The YOUNG MAN Hiccups.*)

Please, please don't try to contradict me.

YOUNG MAN. Manners!

CECILIA (*Dismayed*). Perhaps you shouldn't drink in bed. When we, that is my husband and I, first got married I always knew when he wanted sexual intercourse because he would always bring cheap champagne to bed. I can't bear cheap champagne. Sexual intercourse with my husband, consequently, always gave me indigestion.

YOUNG MAN. I'm a beer man.

CECILIA. We've never had any children. Too busy, too old. It's funny, my husband always gets hiccups if he drinks lying down.

.

(*Late Afternoon. The Doctors' House.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Poor Dr Sissilly. You could adopt. Or there's always whatsaname, whatyoucall it, the surrated mother, sugared whatsit, thingumajig, sugar mother.

EDWIN. Surrogate.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Better than adopting. Like a cake you've made yourself, a home-made cake. You know what's in it. I always say home cooked is best. You can't go wrong.

.

(*The Cottage.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). Sorry.

CECILIA. Try walking about.

(*He hesitates.*)

Well, if you're shy put this old nighty on. You walk about and I'll think up a fright for you.

(*Self conscious and solemn in brushed nylon the YOUNG MAN paces to and fro on the creaking floor boards. He hiccups at regular intervals.*)

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(*Evening. The Doctors' House.*)

EDWIN (*Unwrapping a small package*). What on earth are these?

DAPHNE. I think they're called playboy jocks. I bought them for you. They're more dashing than plain boxers or PTU's, they have a sort of pattern, do

you see, bows and arrows - aren't they?

EDWIN. You're very knowledgeable.

DAPHNE. Oh, the man at the men's store was most helpful. Imagine selling men's underwear all day and every day and being fond of it.

EDWIN. Thank you for the present. (*Glancing at her luggage.*) Whatever is that?

DAPHNE. My portable gramophone. I've brought it for *Hiawatha* in the bathroom, that's an old seventy-eight. Hope it works, haven't used it for years. Father brought it one weekend and Cecilia and I had it in a cupboard at school. In secret we used to play Wagner, the Siegfried Idyll and Wotan's Farewell. Can you imagine! We used to stuff a towel in it to muffle the noise.

EDWIN. Oh I see, but look here, Daphne, we don't want to overdo things. They might hear us. I don't want to hurt Leila's feelings.

DAPHNE. That's the idea. The only trouble is they're not here. Whatever possessed them to go to *Death on the Nile*, it's just about the longest film ever made and it isn't even new? It's incredibly long and rather dull.

EDWIN. I told them I'd be out for dinner. It seemed thoughtless, indelicate somehow, to sit romantically with you at Lorenzo's in candle-light while they prepared a dinner expecting me to come home.

DAPHNE. I do understand.

EDWIN. So Leila's mother said if I was sure I'd be all right they would go out, they hadn't "been to the pictures in a while".

DAPHNE. We'll have to either put off or prolong our love-making till they come back. (*She sits on the edge of the bed and taking up the playboy jocks.*) How on earth will you get into these? Will they stretch or something? They're so small.

EDWIN. Size eight.

DAPHNE. I can't imagine them stretching.

EDWIN. Just my size, once ... Look it doesn't matter, you didn't need to give me a present.

DAPHNE (*Blushes*). I was afraid you might have an intimate gift for me.

EDWIN. Let's have some champagne. We might as well be comfortable.

DAPHNE. Oh rather!

.

(*The Cottage.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). Manners! ... Manners!

.

(*Night. The Doctors' House.*)

DAPHNE. It simply takes ages. *Death on the Nile!*

EDWIN. What about a game or perhaps some music? Mozart.

DAPHNE. Lovely, it would be a pity to waste the evening with the feeling that it was going to drag.

EDWIN. Do you know, there's a piano concerto where the pianist makes a mistake? It's in the recording: he makes the mistake then goes back and repeats it to try and get it right.

DAPHNE. That's silly, Teddy. They wouldn't let that happen.
EDWIN. Listen. We'll try number twenty-four in C minor.
(*EDWIN puts on the Mozart.*)

(*The Cottage.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). Manners! ... Sorry! Manners!
CECILIA (*Screaming*). Boo!
YOUNG MAN. What, who's there? Where the hell are you? (*Hiccups.*) Manners!
Beer does this to me sometimes. If I drink it too quickly.
CECILIA. If you stay, you'll have to get used to the fact: I really can't help it if he visits me in the middle of the night.
YOUNG MAN. Who? Here? Who visits you? (*He searches through the furs.*) I'd better be off. Look, I really shouldn't be here. Where'd you put my clothes?
CECILIA (*Laughs*). Oh relax! The Muse of course. Perhaps I should say My Muse. It's very amusing really. (*She laughs.*) Oh! I made a pun there. I wonder if I could use it somewhere in here, let me see. (*She rearranges several of the papers. She laughs again.*) Don't look so serious. Hop back into bed.

(*Night. The Doctors' House.*)

EDWIN. Daphne, old girl. What d'you say to hopping into bed for a nice sleep?
DAPHNE. Oh Teddy, did I tell you that Fiorella, you know, the amorous Fiorella - did I tell you that, in her adoration, she has copied out, by hand, the whole of *Charmides* by Mr Oscar Wilde in order to make a single comment on the poem?
EDWIN (*Simulated enthusiasm*). Good heavens! That's wonderful Daph, but now what about you going to bed for a nice sleep.
DAPHNE. Too much champers. Too quickly.
EDWIN. Go on, there's a good girl - you have first pop in the bathroom.
DAPHNE. Oh Teddy you are a dear! I feel terrible. I'm dizzy, I'll have to lie down. Thank you so much. You know Teddy, it must be the, what I mean is, I've always wanted to be the patron saint of a literary journal, you know, to pour blessings on learned writings ...
EDWIN. Yes, yes.
(*DAPHNE goes into the bathroom. EDWIN puts on a silky dressing gown.*)
My salad days...

(*The Cottage.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). Manners! ... Manners!
CECILIA (*From under the bed*). Help! Hellup!
YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). Manners! Where the hell are you?
CECILIA. Under the bed silly! (*Out of breath.*) Help me out there's not much

space. Such a pity it didn't work. (*Whispering.*) Look behind you! Look out! There's a spider behind you. Look out! A great, big, hairy black spider.

YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). What? Whatever are you doing?

(*Night. The Doctors' House.*)

(*Suddenly there is a tremendous noise from the bathroom.*)

EDWIN. Daphne. Daphne! Whatever are you doing! Be quiet at once. They'll hear you. You'll wake them, you'll wake the others.
DAPHNE. It's a love call. It's the Indian Love Call to accompany Hiawatha.
EDWIN. Daphne, turn off that noise and come out of there and go to bed.
DAPHNE. You should have said, "Come to bed".
EDWIN (*Pulling up the bedclothes, hiccups.*) Pardon. Manners!

(*The Cottage.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Hiccups*). Come to bed!
CECILIA. Why don't you try blowing into a paper bag ... or drinking a glass of water upside down. That's it. That's what Daphne always does. She's always got her head between her knees or somebody else's!
(*CECILIA offers him a glass of water that is on her bedside table.*)
Now try it.
(*He does so to disastrous results.*)
You'll simply have to wait till the hiccups wear off.
YOUNG MAN. I've been wondering?
CECILIA. Don't stare, it's very rude.
YOUNG MAN. What's that you're wearing on your head?
CECILIA. It's a lampshade.
YOUNG MAN. I can see that it's a lampshade. But why have you got it on your head?
CECILIA. Always when I'm writing. I feel safe in the lamplight. A woman in a lampshade. Do you like it?
YOUNG MAN. Sure. It's kind of pretty.
CECILIA. Pretty? I am, nor was ever a pretty woman. And I've never pretended to be. But the lampshade, when I put it on, it makes me feel pretty, softly so and feminine.
YOUNG MAN. It's an old lampshade isn't it? Why don't you get a new one?
CECILIA (*Declaring theatrically*). To wear this old lampshade suggests the dangerous and the exotic while still being sheltered under a cosy domesticity. (*Checking for his reaction.*) I do only wear it when I'm here. By myself.
(*Pause.*)
YOUNG MAN. But I thought we was going to have it off together.
CECILIA. Yes, I thought so too.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

(LEILA'S MOTHER in the kitchen. The kettle is boiling and there is a fragrance of toast. EDWIN enters. LEILA enters behind him and hands him a tray with breakfast set for two.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Leila's fixed a nice little tray for you both.

(EDWIN rejoins DAPHNE.)

A gentleman's got to have his little fling Leila, dear.

DAPHNE. Oh Teddy. I've got such an awful headache. I feel so utterly awful! I can't be what they call post-coital melancholy ... *(Sobbing.)* ... because I haven't - we haven't ...

EDWIN. No. There, there, don't cry Daph. You'll feel better in a minute. Don't cry, please don't be so upset. Everything's all right.

DAPHNE. Oh, you are a dear! I'm sorry to be sitting here in bed in your house howling my head of like this. What about, as one disillusioned sinner to another - what about the old hair of the dog.

EDWIN. Worth a try. *(Returning with bottle of whiskey.)* We'll try a spot of this with our tea.

DAPHNE. Oh yes, Father always swore by it. He maintained it saved his life - disinfecting his bowels, you know when he was in New Guinea, and it pickled his liver and mended his broken heart. I don't know who broke it, certainly it couldn't have been Mother, and Miss Heller stayed with him till death *(Overcome by weeping.)*

EDWIN. Come on Daph. Dry up and drink up. Drink up and chase it with a cup of tea.

DAPHNE. This tea is very nice.

EDWIN. Leila. Leila and Leila's mother have made us breakfast.

(Pause.)

DAPHNE. I feel such a fool sitting here like this.

EDWIN. Don't. I'm the fool, if you want to know. Daph, I'm very fond of you and very grateful to you.

DAPHNE. Oh Teddy. Darling! You are being so sweet!

(The Cottage.)

YOUNG MAN *(Pause)*. Perhaps I'd better go then.

CECILIA. Oh no, there's absolutely no need.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Just pop down to the Post Box with these will you, Leila, pet. You'll need an Air Mail sticker.

EDWIN *(To LEILA)*. I'll come to the post with you, if I may, Leila. We'll take a walk through the pines as far as the playground.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Right you are, then. Will she need to take a cardigan, Dr Page, or will you mind that she isn't chilly in the wind? Dr Page, the agent has just been and said that the house next door is now free from all pests, but we're advised to occupy alternative accommodation till the

effects of fumigation subside. Since the agency felt responsible they offered a motel on the other side of town. The motel the agent's suggest is in the less desirable part of town, not really very suitable for two ladies on their own. We could be raped.

EDWIN. Please do consider staying on a day or two.

LEILA'S MOTHER. That's very good of you. Motel life does not appeal to Leila unless it is for the purpose of travelling and seeing the wonders of the world. We're ever so grateful we feel really nicely at home in his house, don't we Leila-pet? Leila was just saying, "I'll miss it here. In this house." she said, "it feels so really nicely at home." Leila will be really sorry to leave. About dinner for tonight, Dr Page, did Dr Sissilly ever let you eat veal? I know some as couldn't touch it, but if you like, the butcher did say he had some prime.

EDWIN *(Leaving a handful of notes on the kitchen table)*. It would be a nice change to have veal, Mrs Bott ... if you would be kind enough to buy it and cook it. Leila? Shall we walk through the pines?

(They exit.)

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. It might be better if we had music.

(Afternoon. The Pines.)

LEILA. I've seen her a few times, your wife, when she's been leaving the house.

EDWIN. Ah, yes?

LEILA. And you wave to her.

EDWIN. Yes, of course.

LEILA. And I've seen her nightdresses too. I've worn one, remember, the biggest one, the stretchy one.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. My little transistor's here somewhere. I know it's here, somewhere here. *(She rummages through the furs.)*

(Afternoon. The Pines.)

LEILA. It was such a pretty nightgown. When I had it on, though I know it didn't really fit, I pretended I was her.

EDWIN *(Amused)*. Oh? And why did you do that?

LEILA. Because - oh! I can't tell you.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA (*Finding the transistor*). Some music at last. This might put us in the right mood. Let me see, AM or FM?

(Afternoon. The Pines.)

(EDWIN and LEILA walk side by side.)

EDWIN. Come on! of course you can tell me. You surely aren't shy with me.

LEILA. It's because of, in the nightgown, because she would have worn it next to you so ...

EDWIN. Yes? Go on. Yes and so?

LEILA. So if I'm wearing it...

EDWIN. You are very sweet.

LEILA. Am I?

EDWIN. Yes, yes, you are. You must always be as you are. Never try to be like anyone else.

DAPHNE (*Jogging towards them*). How absolutely jolly! Fancy seeing you, two, here! I'm running rather late. I've been to the vet and Prince had been cooped up in the most, for him, evil of waiting rooms - mainly in the company of cats - so he had to have a walk before going home. He hated going to the vet, but he ate a whole bush of French lavender this morning and then he was sick. The whole bush Teddy. He brought up the lot, it's practically complete, it might even grow ...

EDWIN. Oh Daphne, don't please.

DAPHNE. He's perfectly all right the vet says. The vet says he's going to have puppies. The condition seems to have given him a craving.

(She jogs off.)

EDWIN. You'll have to call him "Princess."

(As EDWIN and LEILA walk together his hand brushes against LEILA's or did her hand brush against his? LEILA suddenly takes hold of EDWIN's hand. Very lightly she squeezes his fingers, a tiny gentle squeeze.)

(The Cottage.)

(CECILIA manages to tune into a station. The music is poignant but a surprise and very loud ... possibly Shostakovich "Tahiti Trot".)

(Blackout)

Interval

ACT TWO

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. I know, let's dance!

(Night. Erica's Dinner Party.)

(EDWIN and DAPHNE stand conspicuously alone with glasses of wine.)

EDWIN. Daphne, I must tell you something ... It's about Leila ...

DAPHNE. She's no more than a child you know Teddy ... Remind me to tell you about Hearnsted.

EDWIN. A very well developed child. Daphne. I must tell you I have been holding Leila in my arms all night and every night for some nights now.

(Pause.)

DAPHNE. Don't be silly, Teddy.

EDWIN. Of course girls are nubile now at a much younger age. Take Fiorella for example.

DAPHNE. There is no possible comparison to be made.

EDWIN. It's all the fast foods, the hamburger steaks, they eat. The meat, I've read about it somewhere, the meat's full of hormones. Quite little girls, only eight years old, start menstruating.

DAPHNE. Edwin?

LEILA'S MOTHER (*From a position in The Doctors' House*). No children! That is a great shame.

EDWIN. Daphne, Leila's baby would be mine, my baby, mine, wouldn't it? My baby?

DAPHNE. But Teddy, I'm keeping an eye on you, remember?

EDWIN. Yes I know Daph. That's why I'm telling you. I want you to know...

DAPHNE. You would qualify as grandfather for any child of Leila's.

EDWIN. Yes. But a child would be mine. I would be the father of the child.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Leila will carry, if I put it to her, Leila'll carry for you.

DAPHNE. Teddy. You know Erica's only giving this dinner party so that you wouldn't feel ... or lonely. Get me another drink.

LEILA'S MOTHER. You'd have no trouble with Leila.

EDWIN. The baby would be mine and ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. I'm saying Leila would oblige with carrying for you and Dr Sissilly. It's being done all over the place now.

EDWIN. ... Mine and Cecilia's, that's part of the arrangement.

LEILA'S MOTHER. A sugar mother. It's quite the thing these days.

DAPHNE. Does Cecilia know?

EDWIN. It's to be a surprise.

LEILA'S MOTHER. There's different ways, but I favour Nature's way myself. It's like home baking, as I always say, you know what's in it.

EDWIN. And we don't know yet, of course, if Leila has conceived.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Take it slowly, and never you worry, Dr Page. Make sure. Make sure she turns and lies on her face. I'll tell her, but you remind her afterwards. Tell her to lie face down, that way she's sure to fall.

DAPHNE. Fall?
 EDWIN. Fall!
 LEILA'S MOTHER. Fall pregnant, it never fails.
 DAPHNE. Just how old is Leila? She could be anything between sixteen and thirty-five. How old did you say she actually was?
 EDWIN. You know how she looks.
 DAPHNE. Well let's hope she's over sixteen, or is it being done with a test tube?
 EDWIN. It's all right Daph, she's twenty-two.
 DAPHNE. She seems so very young. I believe that conception is not at all difficult for human beings. It's camels that have difficulties. Did you know Teddy camels actually have to be helped to mate. I read it somewhere.
 EDWIN. You seem to be reading a great deal lately Daph.
 DAPHNE. That reminds me, Teddy. I do love her dearly, Miss Hearnsted, but I have come to the conclusion that she is out to get me, Teddy. Always spying and ...
 EDWIN. She's jealous of you Daph. Hearnsted's jealous because the girls all like you and your plays are a success. On Parent's Day, I could see her jealousy bristling all round her when the parents were so eager to talk to you. Your family history musical was so ... imaginative.
 DAPHNE. No, it's simply because I'm tall, taller than average and she's very short. She wants to be a goddess and everyone knows there's no such thing as a short-legged goddess. I'm not implying that I think of myself as a goddess, not at all, though I do happen to have rather long legs ...
 EDWIN. Daphne ... ?
 DAPHNE. Though I must say to attempt something, a production, utterly psychiatric in this day and age, with young girls, at a very vulnerable stage of their development, is ambitious to say the least. She's waiting to pick holes ...
 EDWIN. Daphne!
 DAPHNE. Leila does give the impression of being young, very young with a kind of innocence. My girls at school have far more savoir faire, are more sophisticated. I doubt if any of them would do anything like this. *(Pause.)* She does seem so very young. You can hardly visit Leila in the Mary and Joseph. What on earth would they think?
 EDWIN. Who? Mary and Joseph? They are hardly in a position to be critical.
 DAPHNE. Seriously Teddy. The Hospital. Leila couldn't go there. Cecilia works at the Mary and Joseph. And what will you tell people?
 EDWIN. Ultimately the truth of course. There's a special name for it, the sugar mother. Leila's mother and Leila have agreed on a fee.
 LEILA'S MOTHER. There's nothing to pay till conception and then we'll go from there.
 EDWIN. We are arranging it privately between ourselves. At a certain stage I will hand over part of the fee, the rest is payable on delivery. Quite simple!
 DAPHNE. Sounds like a box of groceries.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA *(Tuning into a radio station)*. Listen there's a dancing teacher too. What a scream!
 THE VOICE *(Irish)*. Now for the stylized step. Starting position, beat one step up beat two step together beat three step back beat four step together up together back together and up together and back together arms loose relax and smile.
 CECILIA *(Laughing)*. Come on!
 YOUNG MAN. I don't dance. Really, I don't dance.
 CECILIA. Oh come on!
 YOUNG MAN. Not on beds. I don't dance on beds. It's too dangerous and you'll fall. You'll fall, I tell you.

(Night. Erica's Dinner Party.)

DAPHNE. But Teddy what if this woman, Leila's mother, is pulling a fast one on you, pulling the wool over your eyes - about to cheat you out of several thousands of dollars. I presume it goes into thousands and I suppose they will go on living in your house with you?
 EDWIN. Yes. Yes. Leila's mother is very good at the business side of it. She says it is usual to have a passing over of money when conception is confirmed, nothing is paid till then. She seems very understanding and open about it and feels, as I do, that a natural conception is more satisfactory than the more scientific method. The final payment is only made when the child is actually handed over.
 LEILA'S MOTHER. The money will come in handy, Dr Page. What with my Myra sick and all.
 EDWIN. She wants to go back to England with her older sister Myra, who is unfortunately very ill.
 LEILA'S MOTHER. We should really take her back home to England. And of course I'll shall have to take Leila with me.
 EDWIN. She's already written. She needs the fares for the three of them to get back home, she says. Apparently a misunderstanding in Mr Bott's life has brought them into financial difficulties. Of course I wouldn't dream of asking and she did not, at that stage, offer explanations. I understand they have only been here a few months. Migrants either make it or they don't.
 DAPHNE. Are you and Cecilia going to split up?
 EDWIN. Of course not Daph.
 DAPHNE. I don't know what I would do if I didn't have you two. I need you both dreadfully. I know this sounds awful and selfish but I do need you. I haven't got anyone, really.
 EDWIN. Yes. Yes, of course Daph and we need you. The whole idea is that we'll be more together. Cecilia will be at home more. We'll be more of a - well, more of a family, more together. *(Puts his arm around her.)*
 DAPHNE. Oh Teddy. Sorry. Sorry to howl like this at a party but I can't help it. One of the really awful things about being friends with a couple is

when they split up. Suddenly they're gone. If a couple split, do you see, the person who is not part of a couple and, let's face it, we live in a world of couples, the person who is not part of a couple is alone. I never feel with you like that dreadful phrase, an awful phrase that people use, I never felt or feel, you know, like the fifth wheel. I know there's Miss Hearnsted but I mean, well you know what I mean.

EDWIN. I'm sorry Daphne. I'm sorry.

DAPHNE (*Blowing her nose*). I must look a perfect fright.

EDWIN. You look all right Daph. (*He pats her arm*).

DAPHNE. I shall have to go Teddy. Do put you thinking cap on. And Teddy, don't talk about it to other people you know, people, Erica or Paulette. Not yet anyway. Some people don't have any standards or conscience and gossip would reach Cecilia and hurt her dreadfully. It's one thing to hear gossip and not know whether to believe it and another to be told something straight out by the person concerned. Don't you see Teddy how awkward it's going to be? I'm not at all sure about Cecilia. It seems to me that Cecilia would have had a baby herself, more than one, if she had wanted to.

(*The Cottage.*)

CECILIA (*Laughing and breathless she reaches out and turns the volume up more*).
Dearest Daphne!

THE VOICE. Now the basic camel walk and step and kick and camel walk. Beat one stub left beat two stub right beat three stub left beat four stub right beat five stub left beat six kick left beat seven stub right beat eight and kick and kick that's just fine you'll make it in time beat one stub left beat two stub right think happy and relax beat three stub left beat four stub right that's great you're great the greatest.

CECILIA. Teddy!

(*Evening. The Doctors' House.*)

EDWIN (*Switching on his desk lamp*). Pregnancy, the doctor - a doctor who did not know Cecilia - was very clear: reduced the whole thing to forty weeks. Nine months. Thirteen weeks in three months. Thirty nine weeks is nine months plus one week more. The twenty eighth week would be Christmas. The approximate date of birth, March the fourteenth. The baby, Leila's baby, my baby, will be about three months old when Cecilia comes home. Eleven weeks old to be exact. Cecilia will come home to be mother to an eleven weeks old child.

EDWIN (*Entering the kitchen. Privately to LEILA*). How would you like to have your bath now and I'll come in in a little while.
(*LEILA smiles at him, scrambles to her feet and leaves. LEILA'S*

MOTHER is folding clothes. We hear the bath water. He takes his cheque book and his narrow silver pen.)

EDWIN. I think that tonight I make my first payment.

LEILA'S MOTHER. If it's convenient. There's no hurry, no particular hurry. Any time tomorrow or the next day.

EDWIN. Cash, is it?

LEILA'S MOTHER. Thank you. I'll give you a receipt.

EDWIN. That's not necessary.

(*LEILA'S MOTHER takes the cheque, blowing on it to dry the ink.*)

EDWIN. Leila's looking well. I do hope that you and Leila will consider my suggestion that you continue to stay here ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. Thank you, we're ever so pleased to stay. I hope you find everything to your satisfaction.

EDWIN. Oh yes, very -

LEILA'S MOTHER. Perhaps I should mention, Leila's had her little cry, just now she came in here to have her little weep.

EDWIN. Why on earth? Is anything wrong with the baby? She has fallen, hasn't she? She is pregnant?

LEILA'S MOTHER. Nothing wrong with the ickle one.

EDWIN. Would she prefer you to keep the other house?

LEILA'S MOTHER. It's not that at all. It's just that she likes spending her time with you but I've told her you've got your work to do. "The doctor's got his writing and studying to do", I told her.

EDWIN. The lecture ... yes.

I should take you for idleness itself.

LEILA'S MOTHER. "We've got to get busy and get things ready for the baby", I said to her. "The doctor's a busy man", I said. A man knows what he should do and he knows what he wants to do and, if I know anything about men, they usually do what they want.

EDWIN. What do you think I should do?

LEILA'S MOTHER. If you're asking me, I think as head of your own house and you being a gentleman you should do as you think best. I think that's Leila now coming out of the bath. (*Pause.*) Or is she just going in. I'm sure I can't tell from here. We do think your bathroom is in a very good position in this house. We often wondered where the bathroom might be in this house.

(*The Cottage.*)

THE VOICE. And now the Latin Hustle. Touch and one and two and step back three and four forward five and six repeat touch and one and two and step and one and two and one.

(*CECILIA falls off the bed with a crash.*)

YOUNG MAN. There. You see. I knew you'd fall. Are you ok?

CECILIA. Don't be silly. I've done all this before. Don't just stand there. Let's do it again!

(*CECILIA knocks over the lamp and throws the whole room into darkness.*)

YOUNG MAN. Now you've done it! (*He falls over a piece of furniture.*)

(*Evening. The Doctors' House.*)

DAPHNE (*In EDWIN's kitchen*). How splendid to see pearl barley again. (*Gazing into the large saucepan.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER. This soup takes three days.

DAPHNE. Good heavens!

(*They sit down to take tea.*)

Sometimes I look through my old school poetry book where I once wrote, just lightly in pencil, the names of the girls who read the poems aloud.

And when I look at the names now I actually seem to hear their voice.

LEILA'S MOTHER. That's nice. That's very nice.

DAPHNE. I'm glad I kept my old school books and carried them across the world.

One of the poems in particular that I like to look at is called "Dedication".

My new-cut ashlar takes the light - Kipling -

LEILA'S MOTHER. Isn't that nice now!

DAPHNE. Cecilia read that one. Of course, I keep forgetting that you don't know Cecilia.

DAPHNE. I do rather miss her.

LEILA'S MOTHER. The time soon goes. Before you know it, she'll be back.

DAPHNE. Yes. Cecilia read in a very clear voice. I remember especially the lines:

*The depth and dream of my desire,
The bitter paths wherein I stray,
Thou knowest who hast made the Fire,
Thou knowest who hast made the clay.*

I worry about Edwin. Cecilia thinks he can't look after himself.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Most men can't.

DAPHNE. I suppose that's true. Absolutely right that Cecilia should have been asked to read "Dedication". All her life, you know, she has been dedicated to her work and absolutely to Edwin.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Isn't that just lovely! So you were at school in England?

DAPHNE. Yes. Father was in New Guinea for a good deal of the time and because of the climate he sent me to boarding school in England and, of course, that's where I met Cecilia. Cecilia has a soprano voice, I'm a contralto, we sang duets you know from *Orpheus* and *Fidelio*.

LEILA'S MOTHER. That's nice. Very nice.

DAPHNE. Cecilia's mother's a dear. She's a widow now. She's a very clever woman. She contributed a great deal in her own field. She had two wasps named after her.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Fancy that.

DAPHNE. Species you understand. (*Pause.*) Cecilia and I, have been friends for years. I do miss her!

LEILA'S MOTHER. Aw! It would be a shame if you didn't.

DAPHNE. That's true. Later I went to England several times to stay with Cecilia. After she married Edwin I only visited them once and then to my utter surprise they both, at the same time, got awfully good appointments over here - so here we all are.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Well, if that isn't nice, very nice. It's a small world when all's said and done.

DAPHNE. Cecilia's father was a doctor too.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Women's troubles?

DAPHNE. Yes.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Well we can't say they're not needed.

(*DAPHNE collects her bag and a few books.*)

Don't go. There's no need for you to hurry is there? Dr Page and Leila will be back directly. Will I lay another place?

DAPHNE. Oh, what fun! But no. Thank you. I've been at school all day and Prince is putting on so much weight. I thought that Edwin might have been in on his own, I thought ...

LEILA'S MOTHER. Dr Page has asked us to stay on.

DAPHNE. Oh I see.

(*The Cottage.*)

YOUNG MAN (*Still in the dark*). Where are you?

CECILIA (*Singing*). Over here!

YOUNG MAN. Got any matches?

CECILIA. Yoo hoo! Here I am. (*Playfully running around the room*) I'm over here.

(*Both are breathing heavily, gasping even, furniture falls as if something was rocking the cottage. CECILIA is laughing and laughing, pleased and excited.*)

CECILIA. Oh go on. Don't stop! Don't stop! Don't stop! Don't stop!

THE VOICE. Repeat these movements till you feel comfortable and confident in your performance. Follow the beat sequence and turn and turn repeat and turn and repeat.

(*Night. The Doctors' House.*)

DAPHNE (*Entering*). Teddy, darling?

EDWIN. What's an episiotomy.

DAPHNE. Lord knows! Most awfully sorry to drop in at this unearthly hour, but we're on our way home. I'm worried about Cecilia. I'm sorry I can't help with episiotomy whatever it is. Is it something to do with dogs? I've got an awfully good dog book. (*A car horn bips impatiently in the street outside.*) Must rush. Hearnsted's in one of her anxious moods. Look, to put it plainly, Teddy, it's getting awkward for me. Sorry to sound so selfish. Teddy! You'll have to tell Cecilia something. You haven't cancelled Paulette's evening have you? How will you manage? I know Leila and her mother went to Mary Poppins, sorry, the Sound of Music, the re run, last time, but what will you do about the next one. Remember, it's at Paulette's place. I'll try and be there, though, you know Teddy, it's awkward for me having to be careful what I say. It's pretty drastic, Teddy,

I feel I'm losing you and Cecilia and I don't want to.
EDWIN. It will be all right.
DAPHNE. Oh, you are a Dear!
EDWIN. Nighty-night!
DAPHNE. What? Oh yes, goodnight.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)
(LEILA enters from the bathroom. She is very pregnant.)
LEILA'S MOTHER. Doesn't time fly!
(EDWIN enters from his study.)
I think the little dressing room would be best for the nursery. I don't want to disagree with you Dr Page, but there was no need to use Dr Sissilly's own beautiful bedroom. Babies, have only two things in their heads, feeding and sleeping, and they can do that anywhere. The small room between Dr Sissilly's room and the study has a nice window and would be entirely suitable.
EDWIN. Should it be painted.
LEILA'S MOTHER. That's up to you.
EDWIN. What do you think, Leila?
LEILA'S MOTHER. One thing's clear, Dr Page, she's carrying that baby in her face and shoulders.
(LEILA leaves the table.)
LEILA/YOUNG MAN. I'm going outside. I have to go outside.
CECILIA. Yes, yes of course.
LEILA'S MOTHER. Go and lie down, Leila-pet. I'll fix you some juice and some nice bread and butter later. Being sick like she is, having the morning sickness as bad as she's got it means she's keeping the baby. She'll not lose it. Throwing up like that, it's a sign. (She pours herself a cup of tea.) Just don't you worry yourself Dr Page.

(The Cottage.)
CECILIA. Just through the yard and up the back you can't miss.
YOUNG MAN. Thanks. (The door slams.) Sorry!
CECILIA. Trouble with his water works, that young man ... the blushing capillaries are a sure sign.
THE VOICE. You'll make it in time. Try once more beat one stub left beat two stub right.

(Morning. The Doctors' House.)
LEILA'S MOTHER. It's only the morning sickness. She'll be over it directly and in a week or two she'll forget she ever had it. We'll go shopping, get a few things, put a deposit on a pram and a cot and get the nappies, that'll take her mind off.

(EDWIN takes out his wallet and begins counting notes. LEILA'S MOTHER keeps her eyes on the money.)
She'll need three dozen Turkish toweling and a dozen of the muslin and three dozen disposable for taking into the hospital. Babies' bottoms cost a fortune. Just don't you worry Dr Page. Just you get on with your work and when Leila's better we'll be off out to the shops. She's looking forward to the shopping. She'll be as right as rain. She knows what she wants. (She picks up the money.) I shan't need all this. (She folds the notes and puts them in her purse.)
EDWIN. Leila might see something she likes ... needs.
LEILA'S MOTHER. She might too.

(The Cottage.)
(Music continues. CECILIA gets back into bed and recovers her composure. Laughs and turns off the transistor. Softly, breathlessly). Now, back to work. (In the soft light she makes herself comfortable with three pillows at her back. She begins to type rapidly.)

(Afternoon. The Doctors' House.)
(LEILA'S MOTHER and LEILA enter the kitchen with piles of shopping.)
LEILA'S MOTHER. Three dozen nappies and these two soft white baby towels. I'll sew the cot sheets myself and we want your opinion on the mattress for the cot. Hair, flock or foam?
EDWIN (To LEILA). What do you think?
LEILA'S MOTHER. Hair's best, but a lot go for foam. That's for the cot mattress, that's for later. You'll need a bassinet to start off with, of course.
EDWIN. Of course.
LEILA'S MOTHER. We haven't nearly finished the shopping yet. There's other things to get and Leila's needing some clothes, she's getting big. (EDWIN takes out his wallet and gives her money.) She'll need some good nursing bras and I'll run up some little cottons for her.
EDWIN. Of yes, yes of course. She has blown up ... very quickly. Hasn't she?
LEILA'S MOTHER. A healthy girl, Dr Page. It's the Bott womb, if I do say so myself. Strong as an ox. Now, as I see it there's a bit of a problem with the dressing room, using it as a nursery, I mean. It's all cupboards, it's more like a walk in robe. I don't know but it'll inconvenience Dr Sissilly having junior and all his caboodle in there. I was having a little look-see, I wondered if some of the cupboards could be cleared but they're packed! Dr Sissilly, Dr Sissilly's got a hundred and fifty pairs of shoes in there.
EDWIN. Good Lord! How many pairs?
LEILA'S MOTHER. Not to worry, we can move his Lordship around to start off with, it's all one to a baby where he sleeps as long as he's near the pantry.

The spare room would make a lovely nursery, would be lovely for a kiddy specially if you had a little bathroom, nothing fancy, built on.

EDWIN. Oh yes, I suppose it would.

LEILA'S MOTHER. And while you were about it, an en sooit for Dr Sissilly's room would be very nice.

EDWIN. It would indeed.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Most go in for the en sooit these days. Leila'd better have a nice lay down when she's had her tea. Drink up Leila-pet, there's a good girl. It's getting too tired as brings on the sickness. *(She exits.)*

EDWIN. Oh yes, of course. *(Catching LEILA alone.)* Tell mother that you are sleeping in the study with me again tonight. I'll try and get away from work early. I'll not be late home.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Look at the time. My story just needs a bit of action.

(A gun shot sounds close by.)

Splendid! Now I know what happens next. He'd better do it at once. But not in Cairo. He'd better get on a plane quickly. *(She types)* Oh well to save time he can do it at the airport. *(She reads her work)* "Quietly he took the jeweled pistol from its silky case and held it to his pale crooked forehead. His eyes were full of tears ..." That's a nice touch, the crooked forehead, what exquisite writing. I've never written so well before. "Closing his eyes, he pulled the trigger ..." *(A second gunshot is heard much closer.)*

(Afternoon. The Doctors' House.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Myra's dead, that's it!

EDWIN. I'm so sorry to hear about your sister.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Don't give it another thought Dr Page.

EDWIN *(Giving her a bunch of flowers)*. I just picked these up on my way out of the University.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Merci Buttercups! It was for the best. I doubt if the house we was thinking about is still there. Myra would never have stood the journey. Migrant invalids, especially those who are bewildered can be a terrible strain. Traveling home to London without her will be much simpler. We'll bury her here first of course. Before we go.

EDWIN. And Leila? How is she?

LEILA'S MOTHER. It's normal to have a good cry. If crying was bad for an unborn baby everyone would be born ill or deformed. Women were meant to weep while they were carrying. It was all part of nature.

(The Cottage.)

(YOUNG MAN comes in. He hiccups.)

CECILIA. You're still here?

YOUNG MAN. Missed both times.

CECILIA. What a nuisance.

YOUNG MAN. Of course I'm still here. Where should I be?

CECILIA. But the shots. I thought -

YOUNG MAN. That! I tired to get a rabbit but it was too quick. I've never pointed a gun at anything before.

CECILIA. This just wont do. *(She pulls the page from the typewriter and crumples it in her hand.)* It's a disaster.

(Evening. The Doctors' House.)

(LEILA is lying in EDWIN's bed. She is very pregnant.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Little sugar mother, here you are. Look here. *(Unwrapping a large fold of white tissue paper.)* These are the christening gown and the shawl.

LEILA. Mummy, look, they're so pretty. I'll wait up and show Dr Page when he comes home.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Dr Page won't be home until very late, dear.

LEILA. When did you make them? I never saw you making them.

LEILA'S MOTHER. I've enjoyed it, enjoyed every minute of it all, the sewing and everything. It's been a pleasure to keep house and home for a gentleman like Dr Page. It's not often that you get paid to enjoy yourself.

LEILA. I like those little yellowy shawls babies have. Little stiff yellowy shawls, we haven't got one of them have we? I like them best.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Just you wait. Those little yellowy shawls as you call them is what a shawl like this one gets like after all the washings. *(Realizing.)* Oh! *(LEILA cries suddenly.)*

(Evening. At Paulette's Dinner Party.)

(EDWIN and DAPHNE with glasses of wine.)

DAPHNE. Oh! Teddy I am so glad to see you, really glad. Fiorella's here too somewhere. She is at present a bosom friend of one of Paulette's siblings. There they all are, aren't they charming! *(They wave.)* Paulette's daughters seem to manage to look like something out of Jane Austen. It's that white spotted muslin and those little shawls. Lovely! Everything looks clumsy in comparison. Paulette's prepared a buffet, such a barbaric way to feed. However can we talk, manage knife and fork, hold plates and actually eat the food. But it's all part of it I suppose. In any case, I don't think I can sit down in this dress.

(Evening. *The Doctors' House.*)

LEILA (Still lying on EDWIN's bed). Mummy, I'm hungry. I'd like some bread and butter ... and a hard-boiled egg. (She groans. Her contractions have started. She begins to breath heavily.)

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Useless, absolutely useless. You've muffed the whole thing. You muffed it. Can't you do anything properly.

(Evening. At Paulette's Dinner Party.)

EDWIN (Summoning up the chivalry to praise the long emerald green tube that DAPHNE is wearing). Your dress is very nice, very becoming.

DAPHNE. It's completely out of date, Teddy. It used to be called a sheath. I feel like some sort of chrysalis. Can you imagine Teddy, darling, how difficult it is to do up the zip on a thing like this? The contortions were frightful. I still feel as if my spine and both arms are dislocated. One of the disadvantages of living alone. But I haven't told you. Prince has dropped the litter. Mother and babies doing well. Still blind. Hearnstead was there, of course, pacing, but Cecilia would have been proud of me all the same! Fiorella!

(Evening. *The Doctors' House.*)

LEILA. Mummy! What's happening? It feels wet. Mummy! I've weed myself!

LEILA'S MOTHER (Entering with fur coats and hospital bags. She puts a damp washer to LEILA's forehead). There, there Leila pet. Mummy's here! The baby's coming, Leila pet. That's all. The baby's coming.

LEILA. Dr Page.

LEILA'S MOTHER. He's got enough to think about with all of Dr Sissilly's friends. The tea leaves were out by a day. We'll just get along by ourselves ... Let's show Dr Page what a good girl you are, Leila pet. Let's surprise Dr Page.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Can't you do anything on your own?

YOUNG MAN (Tearfully). I don't know. I've never had the chance.

CECILIA. I suppose you've never tried for long enough.

YOUNG MAN. I would be able to if I stayed here. I ... I've had a look out there. It's just beginning to get light out there, I could see all the things that need doing. I'll fix the fence posts and paint the sheds. I think I know what's up with the tractor, I'll be able to get it going. There's all the things I'd like to do out there ... on the way up here in the car you said I

could stay and work the farm, you said you needed someone like me.

CECILIA. You never stay anywhere long enough, you said so yourself. (Puts fresh paper in the typewriter.)

YOUNG MAN. Well it's not my fault. I've got no control over what happens to me.

CECILIA. What am I going to do now.

(Evening. At Paulette's Dinner Party.)

DAPHNE. Teddy! Its Fiorella. What am I going to do. I've promised her ... We're doing *As You Like It* for our next production. "One of the Great Bard's lighter masterpieces," as describe in the Parents' Night Programme.

(LEILA's contractions are heard throughout.)

And I've allowed Fiorella, who is utterly unable to learn anything - let alone by heart - to be Rosalind. It's done now. I'll have to prompt her madly. Naturally Fiorella's mother is delighted and is cutting out and sewing an enormous costume for Rosalind. (She hiccups.) Sorry Teddy. (She hiccups again).

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Oh never mind! I suppose you're, how do they describe it ... rebirthing.

YOUNG MAN. I need to start again.

CECILIA. ... rebirthing.

(Evening. *The Doctors' House.*)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Come on dear. We're packed. Just pop your coat on, I've telephoned for a taxi and I'll leave a note for Dr Page.

(LEILA continues her contractions at more regular intervals until her exit.)

(The Cottage.)

YOUNG MAN. Out there. I saw it all out there waiting to be done, there's a lot of jobs to do out there. I'll fix everything, you'll see.

CECILIA. We like it as it is.

(Evening. At Paulette's Dinner Party.)

DAPHNE. You know Teddy, Paulette and Erica are on the job already. I managed - with great personal discomfort - to stop both of them from paying you a surprise visit, lunchtime last Thursday. They'd been having their hair done and the place where they usually have tea was crowded. They thought they'd drop in on you with a box of cakes. "You know it'll

only upset him," I told them "he might be in the bathroom" I said.

EDWIN. You managed to put them off then.

DAPHNE. Yes I did. I had to invite them back for tea to ask their advice about this hideous dress. No advice, of course, could do anything to it but they made me put it on while they drank tea and ate all my bread which I was obliged to toast.

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(The Cottage.)

YOUNG MAN. There's even a turkey yard. You'd like some turkeys wouldn't you, the yard only needs a bit of new wire netting. I'd have some fowls too.

CECILIA. You don't appear to understand. I only come here to get away from the pressure of work ... to get away from all that childbirth, to write. I like the place as it is. It's a retreat, I like it like this.

YOUNG MAN *(Ignoring her)*. I'll measure up how much wire. I'll need a bit of paper and a pencil. I'll work out how much paint.

CECILIA. I've got to find another way to dispose of him. What can you do?

YOUNG MAN. What d'you mean?

•

(Evening. The Doctors' House.)

(LEILA'S MOTHER puts one of the coats over LEILA'S shoulders, picks up the hospital bags and they exit via the front door.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Off we go then dear.

•

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. London, Calais, Cairo. What does it matter where I send him, New York, Bombay, Paris, Rome, it's all the same wherever he is. What does it matter where he pulls the trigger. First, I'll get him somewhere alone and then I'll kill him off.

YOUNG MAN. What's that? What did you say?

CECILIA *(Fussing)*. Oh nothing. I think it's really quite light outside now.

There's a bus down at the crossroads about ten to six. It should get you back to town around eight o'clock.

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(Evening. At Paulette's Dinner Party.)

DAPHNE. Look at the time. Before I go, Teddy, remember that the next dinner is at your place. What do you intend to do? What will you do about Leila and her mother?

EDWIN. They've seen *Death on the Nile* twice now, and a re run of *Mary Poppins* but *Hamlet's* back and Leila's mother says she has always admired Shakespeare. "A good mystery writer," she says "full of suspense". And

it is a very long film. She seems to be, in her own way, quite an educated woman. Everything is arranged!

DAPHNE. It certainly is, he is a haven where I shall find safe mooring ... Leila's mother is on to a good thing. Perhaps I shouldn't say this, Teddy, please don't be annoyed but you've got to open your eyes! You've given Leila's mother a kind of insurance policy. She'll get from you all she'll ever need for future sanctuary.

EDWIN. That's a bit steep Daph. *(Draining his glass.)* Everything is under perfect control.

DAPHNE. It's ludicrous, Teddy. This - this thing you are doing. I know your life is your own affair but Teddy, without wanting to be, I'm in it too. I can't deceive Cecilia, I really can't. She's my friend.

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(Late Afternoon. The Doctors' House.)

(LEILA enters. She has delivered the child. She is dressed in the same dress as when we first saw her.)

(LEILA'S MOTHER enters and places a bassinet in the living room. She goes back to the spare bedroom to retrieve suitcases leaving LEILA standing alone with the baby.)

LEILA'S MOTHER *(Entering)*. Leila dear, we'll be running out of knickers.

Remind me dear, to do some washing as soon as we get to London. Now, have we got everything? Got the tickets? Yes? The passports. *(At the front door.)* It looks like rain. Righty-oh? We'll wait by the gate for our taxi. He should be here any minute. *(Comforting LEILA and effecting her removal from the room.)* Dr Page is a fine-looking man, very handsome Leila, not young but handsome all the same, well bred I should say and well groomed, always a good sign, dear. He and Dr Sissilly will look after the ickle one. He should have children of his own. That was the arrangement. She's be back soon, there's no doubt about that. Is that our cab?

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(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. I want you to know I feel really bad about the whole thing. I mean about bringing you all the way to the cottage like this. Because of wasting your time like this, and I do feel bad about it, I'm going to give you this poem I've written. You can keep it. I have other copies. It's a poem about life ...

YOUNG MAN. Thank you. Thank you very much.

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(Late Afternoon. The Doctors' House.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. Wave Leila, dear, wave your scarf. It's all right the driver's seen us, he's coming back. I shall miss Dr Page. This house has such a well placed bathroom.
(They exit.)

(Late Afternoon. The University.)

EDWIN (In university gown, addressing a lecture hall of students). ... Ultimately *Antony and Cleopatra* is the only one of the great tragic poems to be a love-tragedy; in that it casts the mind back to Romeo and Juliet, though neither Antony nor Cleopatra has the excuse of those young and immature lovers. Antony, in fact has grey hair, and Cleopatra - who had had a child years before by Julius Caesar - is past her youth. In this play Antony suffers from the illusion of love. The play does not have the dramatic intensity of the other high tragedies: its action is more dispersed and various, and its interest is almost as much political as it is amorous. It is not until the end that the action speeds into the grand finale; or, rather, there are two of them, Antony's downfall and defeat - his death is postponed for a last meeting with Cleopatra - and then her unique and unparalleled way to death. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Do reread the text before next week's session where I'll spent much time on the splendid passages of poetry and in doing so attempt to focus on the extraordinarily oblique and often elliptical language.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. Fourteen stanzas. Fourteen stanzas all with fourteen lines and every one all about my best friend's adorable black poodle, Prince.
YOUNG MAN. What'll I do when I get to the empty town at eight?

(Late Afternoon. The Doctors' House.)

DAPHNE (Entering. Jogging with a walkman). I think I have found your Mozart Piano concerto. The concerto you asked me about, remember? It was some months ago. The one in which you thought the pianist seems to start and then makes a mistake, he pauses and goes back and then forward as if to put right the mistake.
EDWIN. Oh yes.
DAPHNE. It's number eight. Number eight in C major, the third movement, but it's not as you said. It's not putting right, not a fresh start - only something going on in the way it has been going. It's the actual music, in the actual music, I should say, it was the way it was written - it's even more inevitable that way. (She walks across to the bassinet.) He's still asleep.

EDWIN. Ought we pick him up? He's sleeping long after he should have been fed. Before they left, Leila's mother always said if you looked at a sleeping baby it would wake up.

(They stare.)

DAPHNE. Doesn't work.

EDWIN. She also said that he should have only little sleeps during the day to give him the idea of the long sleep during the night.

DAPHNE. Good idea.

EDWIN. Leila you know, Leila used to pick him up and play with him. She's left all these instructions. (He sifts through a little sheaf of pink and blue pages. His eyes filling with tears.) I'm going to sneeze. It's awfully good of you Daph to come and give a hand like this.

DAPHNE. What else could I do. Simply a baby needs more than one person, except when he's asleep. And you can't leave him alone in the house while you go to the University. You can't let Cecilia arrive without any sort of preparation. I don't want to keep on about this, Teddy, but heaven knows how you are going to manage to tell Cecilia.

EDWIN. I don't know. I really don't know. The sugar mother family.

DAPHNE. Everything looks wonderfully clean and neat. I suppose the whole house is absolutely apple-pie order.

EDWIN. Yes, yes, all in order. I vacuumed ... All in order. Leila and her mother were up very late, all packed, sheets washed, beds made, everything cleared away except for ...

DAPHNE. Except for - (Pointing in the direction of the bassinet.) and his things.

EDWIN. Exactly.

DAPHNE. The kitchen's perfect. We must keep it that way for the next few hours.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA. There's a little refrain in the middle of every stanza.

YOUNG MAN. What'll I do when I get to the empty town at eight? I mean where will I go? What can I do there? I mean where will I go when I get there? Where will I go? What's there to do in the empty town at eight? You know, there's something good about putting new paint on with a new brush. I can just see it out there.

CECILIA. When I wrote the poem I knew it was good. I was really pleased with it. It's a good poem. I love my poem.

YOUNG MAN. Where will I go in the empty town? I'll have nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep. Can't I stay and paint the shed? Please?

CECILIA. I want everyone to be pleased with the poem.

YOUNG MAN (Shouting). Eight's early to reach town if you've no reason.

CECILIA. There! I've just thought of a wonderful line for a new poem. I must get it down because I forget everything I think up if I don't get it down.
(She begins to type, makes a mistake, pulls the spoiled page out and starts a fresh page)

(The YOUNG MAN pouts and begins to get dressed.)

YOUNG MAN. These clothes are still damp.

(Evening. The Doctors' House.)

EDWIN *(Responding to a scraping wailing noise from another room)*. What on earth's that noise?

DAPHNE *(Entering with baby's milk)*. Oh Teddy. I hope you don't mind. It's Fiorella. Remember Fiorella? The enormous Rosalind? She's in the bathroom practicing. The violin. It's Bach, JS. It's the school orchestra. They're not all here, of course not. Only Fiorella. She's simply got to practice and I thought ... Oh Teddy, he's awake! What a darling little nose and face - also, I must confess I did feel a bit nervous about being here alone with the baby - I've never done anything like this before in my life ... couldn't even manage to look after Prince's puppies. Fiorella, d'you see, is the eldest of eight and is awfully experienced at this type of thing. *(The violin starts again laboriously.)* Sing! *(She calls.)* Sing Fiorella, with the violin and make the violin sing! Teddy, he doesn't seem to be getting any of this milk. He's been sucking valiantly at this but it hasn't gone down at all. It's as full as it was.

EDWIN. Must be blocked. I wish he would smile at me.

DAPHNE. He will later.

EDWIN. Have you noticed that he doesn't look anything like me. Look the earlobes are not mine, the toes - they're a dead give away. Not even the nose. Can you see any resemblance to Cecilia?

DAPHNE. I can't tell; but there wouldn't be, would there? Not to Cecilia. He's ever so big ... legs like hockey sticks.

EDWIN. Remember the tea leaves, Daphne? Leila's mother said a bassinet ...

DAPHNE. A cradle.

EDWIN. ... and a boy's bicycle.

DAPHNE. And something about "a great deal of money" as I recall. Look his chin's quivering. Didn't I warn you Teddy about Mrs Bott? Isn't he cute. I'm sorry I'm too slow and awkward.

EDWIN. You're doing fine. Mrs Bott said he might be a bit difficult at first ... being born premature - six weeks. Mrs Bott said that there was no history of premature births in her family: "The Bott womb is as reliable as Big Ben," she said.

DAPHNE. Well he looks healthy enough. And very heavy. I can just manage Prince, but he doesn't have to be dressed. What are you going to call him Teddy? I can't keep on calling it "him".

EDWIN. I thought I'd wait and leave that up to Cecilia. You know, so that she at least has some contribution.

DAPHNE. He'd prefer his mother to feed him, I suppose. He'd prefer to be breast fed. We'll just have to keep trying.

(Fiorella plays a wrong note. The baby cries.)

Wrong note! Sing! Sing with the violin.

(The baby cries.)

(The Cottage.)

YOUNG MAN *(Slamming the door)*. I mean where will I go when I get there?

What's there in town for me to do?

(Evening. The Doctors' House.)

DAPHNE. I didn't know they cried tears. *(She begins to cry.)*

EDWIN. Don't Daph, it's all right. Don't cry.

DAPHNE. I'm sorry Teddy. I'll fetch us some tea.

(The Cottage.)

CECILIA *(Yawning)*. I never realized before that my young man is an absolute Bore!

YOUNG MAN *(Going to the door and opens it)*. Well, I'd better go then. *(He goes out carefully closing the door behind him)*

CECILIA. Rid of him at last. Bravo!

(Night. The Doctors' House.)

(The doorbell rings. EDWIN hears, through the crying, a small commotion in the hall and a moment later LEILA rushes into the room. LEILA'S MOTHER carries the fur coats, follows and Daphne comes in last. LEILA without a word or even a look, drops her ugly handbag and takes the crying child from EDWIN. She sits down on the sofa and unbuttoning her blouse holds the child close, her arms folded round him as if to keep everything and every person away. She rocks to and fro on the cushions. There is no sound in the room except the little gulping murmurs of swallowing.)

LEILA'S MOTHER. She's cried and cried, cried herself silly, cried till she threw up all over the place. All afternoon she's cried and cried, cried herself sick. Couldn't keep her lovely meal down.

(EDWIN, because he does not know what to do, continues to stand, uncertain and half smiling, in the middle of the room. LEILA'S MOTHER leans back in her chair.)

There was nothing I could do. She's cried and cried. That girl wasn't going home to London or any place leaving her baby behind. No way! There was nothing anyone could do. There was nothing I could do.

EDWIN. No, no of course not.

(The Cottage.)

(CECILIA pulls the sheet of paper from the typewriter with a flourish and reads her work. She smiles, satisfied.)

(Night. The Doctors' House.)

DAPHNE. Cecilia's coming home! It seems to me that a decision must be made.

We must decide and act quickly.

LEILA'S MOTHER. He's a beautiful child. (*Studying the tealeaves.*) Not a thing in any of these.

DAPHNE. Perhaps you could rent the house next door? It's empty again, I think.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Yes, it's been empty a while, we've noticed it was empty, about three weeks isn't it Leila-pet?
(*LEILA and the baby are asleep.*)

DAPHNE. Well, if you rented the house and if the ... if the Leila family all moved in there you could decide when Cecilia's here, and when she's rested after the drive and everything, which house, Teddy, you'll live in, either here with Cecilia or next door with the Leila family.

EDWIN. It's awfully late.

LEILA'S MOTHER. We can't break in, it's burglar-proof, we know! We'll never get in there. Remember?

EDWIN. Perhaps an hotel.

DAPHNE. It's never too late for people like agents, and since they're packed it should not take long to move. Everything, absolutely everything should be moved out of this house now. You must get it all in order here. You'll need to move the surprises. Both of them. You'd better phone the agent.

LEILA'S MOTHER. Wait on! (*Rummages in her large handbag.*) I've got his after hours somewhere in here. Yes, here's his card.
(*EDWIN takes the card and reaches for the phone.*)
Wait on! (*She pulls out a bunch of keys.*) My! Is my face red! Here's the spares. Remember the night we locked ourselves out. Well, I never ever thought to give this set back.

DAPHNE. You've actually had the keys then.

EDWIN (*To himself*). Not a wedding or a friendship ring! In the tea leaves. It was a key ring!

DAPHNE. All this time, then!
(*The phone rings.*)
I'll get it. Hello! (*Covering the mouth piece.*) It's Cecilia, she'll be home in the morning, not sure what time. She wanted to stop off in town first. You'd better speak, Teddy. How absolutely ghastly!
(*EDWIN moves towards the phone but doesn't pick up the receiver.*)

EDWIN/CECILIA (*In unison with selective emphasis*).

EDWIN. I know your surprise.

CECILIA. Miss Hearnsted saw you ...

BOTH. walking with her along by the university - holding hands.

CECILIA. Miss Hearnsted told me she was passing in a taxi. She hardly ever takes a taxi and that day she did and she saw you.

EDWIN. You were holding hands ...

BOTH. with a mere schoolgirl ...

CECILIA. Miss Hearnsted said and not at all the quality of the girls at St Monica's. Miss Hearnsted said that you would say you were not holding hands but the whole thing is, she says, even if you said you were not holding hands -

BOTH. you would have been wanting to hold hands ...

EDWIN. - which is the same thing isn't it.

CECILIA. Of course that's the annoying part of it and I daresay it's also annoying that you ...

BOTH. didn't know that the others knew.

EDWIN. It would have saved you all the trouble of keeping secret and you would have been able to enjoy yourself without all that worry. Everything would have been so much easier if Miss Hearnsted had told you about her seeing you.

CECILIA. Miss Heller saw you too, once when Daphne was driving her to the bank. She -

BOTH. Miss Heller -

CECILIA. said the girl was obviously pregnant.

EDWIN. What did she get? I should say, I suppose -

CECILIA. what did you get? Also -

EDWIN. they never answered the door.

CECILIA. Once ...

BOTH. when Paulette and Erica called ...

CECILIA. even though you told them you ...

BOTH. didn't want visitors -

CECILIA. they called.

EDWIN. And they knew someone was in ...

BOTH. because the TV was on and they heard it quite plainly ...

EDWIN. and because they know you never watch TV in the afternoons ...

BOTH. they peeked in ...

EDWIN. and when they peeked in -

CECILIA. I know peek isn't a word I usually use but it suits here -

EDWIN. when they peeked in the dining room window they could see them as plain as anything they'd got themselves squeezed in under the dining room table, hiding the two of them hiding.

CECILIA. Yes, I said hiding and what's more the table had a cloth on it, a fringed cloth and you know how I hate tablecloths especially ones with fringes.

CECILIA. And another thing, Evelyn Tranby saw you ...

BOTH. getting flowers, whole armfuls of them, from the university flower shop.

CECILIA. You spent the earth, she said she saw you ...

EDWIN. choose an armful, positively every flower they had and then you ...

CECILIA. bolted straight out of the door -

BOTH. "Put them on the account!"

CECILIA. Evelyn Tranby heard you say that. Since when have you had an account there?

BOTH. Romeo?

EDWIN. Who has accounts at flower shops!

CECILIA. I don't suppose you saw Evelyn Tranby but she saw you all right, you and your flowers. I suppose they were for Her and Her mother. And then we come to Mr Taylor at the bank.

EDWIN. What's all this about inheritance and making arrangements to have your will put in order.

BOTH. Just who are these people who must be provided for?

CECILIA. I'm to get used, am I, to the idea of not being the one and only.

BOTH. That's rich.
 CECILIA. Me being reduced to being ...
 BOTH. one of four beneficiaries.
 EDWIN. Mr Taylor, the bank manager, I'd like to remind you is ...
 BOTH. our bank manager.
 EDWIN. You seem to forget that ...
 BOTH. we're double income and always have been ...
 EDWIN. and without being vulgar, you seem to forget, with regard to your
 apparent wealth and possessions ...
 BOTH. the pronoun is plural.
 EDWIN. Evelyn Tranby says you're hardly ever in the department these days.
 You still ...
 BOTH. perving around the children's playground?
 CECILIA. Everyone in the department, they all know that you ...
 BOTH. leave early and ...
 EDWIN. hang around the park.
 BOTH. Perv, perv ...
 CECILIA. Perv ...
 EDWIN (*Picking up the phone*). Hullo, hullo! Teddy here. Cecilia? Cecilia, is that
 you? Are you there? It's hard to hear. Cecilia? Yes, Cecilia. Good to hear
 you voice too. Everything's fine. No, Daphne has been marvelous. She's
 had puppies. Yes, right. See you in the morning. Drive slowly!
 DAPHNE. All right now Teddy?
 EDWIN. She's just packing. She said the weather has cleared so it should be an
 easy drive.
 DAPHNE. We'd better move everything out of here and into the other house. And
 then, we'd better try and clean up. She hasn't left yet, you say? But she'll
 be here just after breakfast.
 EDWIN (*He gets up quickly*). He steadies himself against the arm of the chair.
 What would you like me to do first?
 DAPHNE. You ... well perhaps if you take the crib, I'll get the bags ... and you Mrs
 Bott can take the baggage! (*Exits.*)
 EDWIN. Of course.
 LEILA'S MOTHER. Upsy-daisy, Leila pet.
 LEILA'S MOTHER. I hope there are no rats.
 DAPHNE (*Returning*). Electricity's on. Teddy darling, do hurry and get the other
 things. Leila and her mother do need to get to bed. Bring some tea bags
 and the milk, put them in the cradle - you know just a few essentials.
 EDWIN. Oh yes. Yes, of course.
 LEILA'S MOTHER. I'll come with you, gentlemen often forget things.
 EDWIN. That is too kind Mrs Bott, but no. You stay here and look after the ... the
 children.
 LEILA'S MOTHER (*Leaving, ushering out LEILA with her child*). Remind me
 Leila-pet to have another look at the tea leaves at breakfast.
 DAPHNE. Of course, they can contact the agent in the morning.
 EDWIN. Why on earth do you think they came back?
 DAPHNE (*A awkward silence*). Pour us a drink and then we can talk about it,
 Teddy. Is there any of the macaroni cheese left over?

EDWIN. Yes, yes, of course. I didn't eat a mouthful. You know how sensitive I am
 to dairy products. Oh God! Cecilia! What will Cecilia think now.
 DAPHNE. A drink, Teddy!
 EDWIN. But she's on her way home.
 DAPHNE. A drink, Teddy!
 EDWIN (*Leaning forward holding his head with both hands*). You know, Daphne
 ... I've never had a head for numbers, but the maths are wrong. Why
 didn't I think of it before.
 DAPHNE. Champagne, Teddy! (*She goes to the kitchen.*)
 EDWIN (*Distracted*). You know, Daphne, I have just begun to explore the fact that
 this baby ... my baby ... Leila's and my baby ... was in fact someone's baby
 ... not my baby, someone else's baby. All I ever wanted ...
 DAPHNE (*Returning with Champagne and two glasses*). What was that, Teddy
 darling?
 EDWIN. The morning sickness came on very early, you know. I read about it in
 Cecilia's text books. Leila's breasts were "full and tender" almost as soon
 as ...
 DAPHNE. Do stop babbling Teddy, I can't understand you. You remind me of
 Fiorella desperately attempting Rosalind. The Bard simply evades her.
 Do be a darling and open this for me. The cork is a real tease.
 EDWIN. The radishes. Leila in the garden next door eating radishes. "Craved"
 was the word Leila's mother used when she spoke of it. A craving. She
 said that "Leila had not been able to keep them down". But my head is
 full of the noise of a baby crying.

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CECILIA. I actually began to have a foolish little fantasy about a baby, a little
 princess, starting her life on the edge of the Nile. You know, the Nile,
 great father of waters, thou that rollest thy floods through eighty nations
 ... I know there is no child there but I thought, I imagined, what it would
 be like to cherish and nurture a child who has played on the grass and
 sands along the banks of that great river.
 EDWIN. And know not one house that is not haunted by some fury that destroys
 its quiet.

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DAPHNE. Come on, Teddy! You're going to have to make some decisions; you'd
 better start now.
 EDWIN. Do you hear anything. Outside I mean.
 DAPHNE. Yes. It's that old woody hibiscus and broom you've got out here;
 they're scraping against the house and your window. You need to do some
 judicious pruning, otherwise there won't be any way through. The path's
 almost disappeared.
 EDWIN. There it is again.
 DAPHNE. Yes, it's all those branches; a lot of dead wood to be cut out.
 Champagne! This is the last bottle. Lucky! Let's share that.

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CECILIA (*Typing*). Edwin takes the champagne and pours Daphne a glass.

DAPHNE. Just perfect!

CECILIA. Daphne said, draining her glass and holding it out to be refilled.

DAPHNE. What d'you bed ... oops! ... bet ...

CECILIA. She continues thumping the cushions of the chair.

DAPHNE. What d'you bet that they ...

CECILIA. She nods her head towards the house next door -

DAPHNE. The Bott family ... I bet that they won't be there in the morning.

CECILIA. She gulped, apparently without noticing, the rest of her drink.

DAPHNE. It makes me mad. It makes me mad to think of all the money they've saved on rent.

(DAPHNE falls asleep.)

EDWIN. Oh Daphne, don't leave me here like this. Wake up, please.

(DAPHNE snores. EDWIN gets a blanket from his bed and covers her.)

My salad days,

When I was green in judgement, cold in blood,

To say as I said then.

My Sugar Mother!

CECILIA (*From her bedroom*). Edwin! (*Shouts.*) Edwin!

EDWIN. Yes dear.

CECILIA. Is Daphne still here? Tell her it's very late. After midnight.

EDWIN. Yes dear. She's asleep on the lounge.

CECILIA. Tell her to go home. Tell her to go and walk Prince. Tell her you should be working? I thought you had a lecture to prepare for Monday. She'll understand.

EDWIN. *But come, away,*

Get me ink and paper.

CECILIA. Page. Edwin Page. My husband Edwin, open brackets, Teddy, close brackets, Page. Associate Professor of Elizabethan Studies. My husband.

(Singing.)

I love my little lampshade

So frilly and so warm

If I wear my silky lampshade

I'll come to no harm.

(She removes the lampshade.)

(Blackout.)