

for after a second she dashes out of the front door in pursuit of BOB. She pulls the door to but does not latch it.

The stage is empty for a second. Silence. Both doorbells ring. A pause. They ring again.

WILLIAM peers round the double doors upstage left. MARY peers around front door upstage right. A few moments then WILLIAM and MARY enter, both in their thirties. He carries a hat and wears a soaking wet mac and enters through FIONA's front door. She, although in a coat, is bone dry. She enters through TERESA's door.

WILLIAM (*calling*) Hallo...

MARY (*calling*) Hallo...

WILLIAM and MARY move cautiously and cross downstage meeting upstage centre. They look at each other.

WILLIAM Nobody here.

MARY Funny.

WILLIAM Very odd.

MARY (*anxiously*) We're not early are we?

WILLIAM Of course we're not.

MARY (*calling off one way*) Hallo!

WILLIAM No, don't do that. Don't do that.

MARY Let them know we're here.

WILLIAM Well, we can just wait quietly. Don't have to shout about. They'll be here when they're ready, I expect...

MARY Table's laid.

WILLIAM Oh yes?

MARY (*nervously laughing*) We're expected, anyway.

WILLIAM Yes, well we would be.

MARY (*wandering right and back to right of WILLIAM, nibbling her nails*) Oh—I feel awful just, walking into their house. I—

WILLIAM Now don't start to get nervous. There's nothing at all to get nervous about. Just keep calm. (*He takes her hand from her mouth and smacks it like he would a child's*) Sit down if you want to.

MARY No, I won't sit down—I...

WILLIAM Did you take your tablets?

MARY Yes...

WILLIAM *puts his arm round MARY and then crosses to downstage left of FIONA's table.*

WILLIAM Good. Now you just have to be natural. No need to put on any act. No need at all. Just be yourself.

MARY Yes. It's just I—never—seem to be able to say anything.

WILLIAM You don't have to if you don't want to. Nobody's asking you to say anything unless you feel you want to.

MARY But if I don't I feel so—so...

FIONA enters from the kitchen right.

FIONA Darling, I...

MARY hides behind WILLIAM. WILLIAM steps forward.

(*crossing downstage to WILLIAM*) Oh, Good Lord. You're here. Hallo.

WILLIAM Hallo. Sorry to surprise you, but we rang a couple of times—didn't get a reply—and the door was off the latch, so we...

FIONA Oh, well. Good heavens, yes, very sensible of you. Frank must have left it open. He's having a go at our drains... Good heavens, let me take your coat. You're soaked.

MARY (*stepping in and stepping back again*) Hallo.

BOB Come in. Do come in.

MARY Thank you. (*She enters and crosses downstage of the step*)

BOB *slams the door.*

(*jumping*) Is er... (*She peers round*)

BOB (*crossing close to MARY on her left*) A little chillier this morning, don't you think? Though it might brighten later. Don't like the look of those clouds though, do you. Could have a little rain, don't you agree? Or even snow. You know what they say—red sky in the morning, shepherds warning. Red sky at night your roof is alight. What can I do for you?

MARY I...

BOB (*courteously*) Sit down.

MARY (*crossing and sitting on the right end of the sofa*) Thank you.

BOB *also re-seats himself downstage left.*

BOB Can I—do anything for you?

MARY No. I just wanted a word with Terry, you see.

BOB She's not here.

MARY No. Will she be back?

BOB It's unlikely.

MARY Oh, I see.

BOB All the signs seem to indicate that she's gone for good.

MARY Oh.

BOB She's walked out before, you see, but I've been making a quick inventory and this time she seems to have taken quite a comprehensive collection of essential items with her. One nightie, one toothbrush, at least two sets of underwear, a

long playing record of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* and the baby.

MARY But what made her go?

BOB I don't know. She may have eloped with the editor of *The Guardian*.

MARY Who's he?

BOB Yes. Failing that, I repeat, what can I do for you?

MARY It's just—if we could help in any way?

BOB Help?

MARY Well, last night—that soup and things—I just thought that if there was anything that William and I could do to help...?

BOB No. That's all cleaned up, thank you.

MARY I didn't mean that.

BOB Didn't you?

MARY I meant—help. You know.

BOB That's very nice of you.

MARY (*warming*) I mean, I thought if you and William were going to be working together, we ought—

BOB We ought to be able to get together. Quite.

MARY Yes.

BOB Where is he?

MARY Mmm?

BOB Why hasn't he come with you?

MARY *does not reply.*

He knows you're here, doesn't he?

MARY Well, I...

BOB Oh. He doesn't feel as strongly as you, the urge to help?
Is that it?

MARY Well, we talked about it last night—only he felt we shouldn't interfere.

BOB Ah.

MARY This was my idea. William always says I'm too—retiring. That I must get interested, talk to people, you see. Because it's important to talk to people, isn't it? Making social contact is essential. If you're going to have people coming round and drinking sherry and things you must be able to converse with them. And then I thought, well, perhaps the first thing to do is to get to know you and Terry. Perhaps talk over problems. That sort of thing. Just generally sort of help. I mean, that's what we're on this earth for, isn't it?

BOB Good point.

MARY Thank you.

BOB Yes. *(He rises and crosses to upstage of the armchair centre)*
You're right. Now, there's a broom in the kitchen cupboard and I think you'll find the mop right next to it.

MARY What?

BOB No, I'll tell you what. *(He crosses to upstage of the sofa and leans over the back of the sofa)* Let's not take advantage of friendship. Twenty-five pence an hour, how's that? Thirty-five when you're using the vacuum cleaner because that's pretty heavy. *(He crosses towards the kitchen left)*

MARY *(rising)* I may come back.

BOB Sit down.

MARY No, I really must be—

BOB *(fiercely)* Sit down.

MARY *does so. Startled.*

MARY Don't think you can talk to me the way you talk to Terry.

BOB I wouldn't dream of it. *(He crosses to right of the sofa)* Mind you, I'd hate you to go away feeling that I'm ungrateful. I'm not. I'll tell you what, cheer up. *(He sits right of MARY)* I'll go and put a shirt on, you go and make us some coffee and then we'll both sit down here and I'll tell you all about our marriage. How would that suit you?

MARY No.

BOB No pleasing you, is there? All right, you tell me about your problems.

MARY I haven't got any problems.

BOB Never mind, we'll soon invent some. *(He pats MARY on the knee, rises and crosses to the kitchen doorway left)* This could be fun.

MARY *(rising)* I ought to go.

BOB Make the coffee—you may even find a cup on the draining board if you dig deep enough.

He exits into the bedroom left.

FRANK *enters with the timer, screwdriver and a coffee from the kitchen right, crosses to left of the double doors, takes a chair and moves it to upstage of the table left and sits.*

MARY *(sitting)* But I...

FRANK *drops the timer into his coffee and attempts to fish it out with the screwdriver. The doorbell rings.*

FRANK *rises and exits upstage left.*

MARY *rises and crosses towards the front door upstage right.*

BOB *appears in the bedroom doorway left.*

FRANK Me?

FIONA You realize that man is in a totally unbalanced state. The mood he's in at the moment, he could shoot someone.

FRANK With a monkey wrench? Do you think that's possible? *(He crosses to the phone and starts to dial)* I think I'd better call Bob Phillips and warn him.

FIONA *(crossing downstage, picking up the chair left of the armchair and placing it left of the double doors)* They were perfectly happy until you started on them.

FRANK Me?

FIONA Yes.

FRANK Now look here, I don't think you can really keep on blaming me for this.

FIONA I'm going to change. *(She crosses to the doors upstage left)* I'm going to get out of this monstrosity.

The PHILLIPS' phone rings.

FIONA exits upstage left.

MARY enters from the kitchen left and crosses to the front door upstage right.

FRANK crosses downstage of the armchair with the phone.

MARY crosses and answers the phone.

MARY Hallo.

FRANK Hallo.

MARY Hallo. Oh hallo, that's Mr Carrycot, isn't it?

FRANK No. Is that you Mary, now—

MARY I'm sorry, Mr Carrycot, Mr Phillips is in the bedroom at the moment.

FRANK Mary—

MARY His wife is with him, so I didn't like to disturb them—

FRANK Mary listen to me. This is Foster, do you hear? Foster...

MARY Who?

FRANK Frank Foster.

MARY Oh, I thought you were Mr—

FRANK Yes, yes quite. But I'm not. I'm me. Now listen, Mary. This is urgent. You must replace that receiver and leave that house immediately, do you understand?

MARY Yes. But—

FRANK Don't argue. Just do as you're told. But before you leave you must go upstairs and tell Phillips to lock himself in that bedroom and stay there.

MARY But I can't go in, he's with his wife.

FRANK This is a matter of life and death, woman. Now, Mary, when you've done that. Leave the house. But on no account go to your home. Come straight round here. And run, run, all the way, do you hear? It's vital you do this.

MARY But Mr Foster, I've to get William's dinner. He gets very cross—

FRANK William is more than cross just at the moment, Mary, he's—

WILLIAM *bursts through the front door upstage right.*

WILLIAM Mary!

MARY (*looking off to the door*) Oh, talk of the devil, Mr Foster. Here he is.

FRANK Take cover! Take cover! (*He kneels downstage of the armchair centre*) Get down on the floor...

MARY Beg your pardon?

WILLIAM Mary! (*He crosses to upstage of the sofa*)

MARY His wife is with him, so I didn't like to disturb them—

FRANK Mary listen to me. This is Foster, do you hear? Foster...

MARY Who?

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MARY Beg your pardon?

WILLIAM Mary! *(He crosses to upstage of the sofa)*