

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.*