

### SCENE #1: George and Charlotte

GEORGE. Ow! God, my neck! Am I getting old, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. No, dear, you're just falling apart.

GEORGE. (Bitterly.) No wonder they didn't want me for the Pimpernel movie.

CHARLOTTE. Us, dear, they didn't want us.

GEORGE. It would have put us right back on top. George and Charlotte Hay in the new Frank Capra production, *The Twilight of The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

CHARLOTTE. There will be other movies.

GEORGE. We were this close, Charlotte. I could taste it! No wonder Hollywood is such a cesspool. I mean, please. Frank Capra directs *The Twilight of The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

CHARLOTTE. I didn't even get to meet him.

GEORGE. Nor did I. Nor do I care to, may he rot in hell.

CHARLOTTE. I can see it now. "Mr. Pimpernel Goes to Washington."

GEORGE. Exactly! Ow! My neck ...!

CHARLOTTE. Get down, George. I'll work on it.

(During the following, GEORGE sits next to the chaise and CHARLOTTE massages his neck and shoulders.)

GEORGE. You do realize they started filming yesterday. At this very moment, the cameras are rolling and Ronald Colman is wearing my tights.

CHARLOTTE. (Calmly, as the massage continues.) Oh, George, let them have their Ronald Colman and their Greer Garson. Who gives a damn.

GEORGE. You're right.

CHARLOTTE. I'm sure that Miss Garson will do a perfectly adequate job.

GEORGE. You're right.

CHARLOTTE. If that's what they want.

GEORGE. I agree entirely.

CHARLOTTE. Stupid little witch. I met her once. Did you know that? She was filming *Pride and Prejudice* and I was next door filming *Apache Woman*. (With increasing bitterness.) She was cutting the crusts off little tea sandwiches, and I was boiling a pig in a teepee.

**SCENE #2: Charlotte, Paul and Roz**

CHARLOTTE. Hello, Paul.

PAUL. What's with Eileen? She walked right past me. I think she was crying.

CHARLOTTE. Well, she was born in Buffalo. Maybe she suddenly realized she's still here.

PAUL. Actually, she loves it here. She started out here in the theatre, but what she really wants to do is television.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, please.

PAUL. She could do all right on TV. She's pretty. Wholesome.

CHARLOTTE. Wholesome isn't the word. She could give milk.

PAUL. Charlotte. Have you talked to Roz lately?

CHARLOTTE. Last Sunday. I brought up your name and she started screaming.

PAUL. Oh great.

CHARLOTTE. I never understood why you two broke up.

PAUL. Oh, she wanted me to give up the theatre so she could lead a "normal life." (He shakes his head and laughs.) Can you imagine anyone in your family being normal?!

(CHARLOTTE starts to laugh ... then stops and gives him a look. At which moment, ROZ enters from the street.)

ROZ. Hi, Mother.

CHARLOTTE. Pumpkin! Sweetie! (They hug.) When did you get here?!

ROZ. A few minutes ago.

CHARLOTTE. We were just talking about you. This second!

(The following exchange is rapid and monotone, anger overlaid with social intercourse)

ROZ. Hello Paul.

PAUL. Hi Roz.

ROZ. How's show biz?

PAUL. Great I've never been happier.

ROZ. Well good for you I'm thrilled.

PAUL. Thanks.

ROZ. You're welcome.

CHARLOTTE. This is going well.

ROZ. I thought you were in New York.

PAUL. I came back to work for your parents.

ROZ. How nice.

PAUL. I'll check on Eileen. (PAUL exits.)

### **SCENE #3: Howard and Roz**

HOWARD. Sweetheart?

ROZ. Hi, honey. Come on in.

HOWARD. Are your parents here?

ROZ. I don't think so.

HOWARD. (Relieved.) Oh, good.

ROZ. Howard ...

HOWARD. Well I'm sorry. You know how I feel about this. "Meeting the in-laws." It makes me nervous.

ROZ. You have nothing to worry about.

HOWARD. I'd be all right if they weren't such ... big stars. The glamorous life ...

ROZ. Howard, does this look glamorous?

HOWARD. (Looking around.) ... Well, yeah. It does.

ROZ. This is Buffalo, New York. It's like ... Scranton without the charm.

HOWARD. I was born here, actually.

ROZ. Oh.

HOWARD. I like Scranton, too.

ROZ. Howard, the point is, it's not Broadway. And they're doing rep!

HOWARD. Right. ... What's "rep" again?

ROZ. More than one play. In repertory. They alternate. Right now, it's Private Lives, by Noel Coward, and Cyrano de Bergerac. Only they've cut down Cyrano for a small company. They do it with five actors.

HOWARD. Aha. The sort of ... one-nostril version.

ROZ. It's sort of sweet that you're nervous about meeting them.

HOWARD. Nervous? Look at me, I'm a wreck! Do they know that I'm in show business, too?

ROZ. Howard, you're not exactly in show business. I mean, they wouldn't think of it as show business.

HOWARD. Oh. (Beat.) I am on television.

ROZ. You're a weatherman.

HOWARD. Right I mean, it's kind of acting, like your parents.

ROZ. Howard, they do Shakespeare. And Chekhov. You do precipitation.

HOWARD. (Glum.) Yeah, I know ...

ROZ. Howard, I'm very proud of you. It's a wonderful job. We can settle down and have children-

HOWARD. I love children. I want to have six, at least.

ROZ. Let's start with one.

HOWARD. Okay.



**SCENE #4: Charlotte and George**

CHARLOTTE. George?

GEORGE. Hm?

CHARLOTTE. Can I ask you a question?

GEORGE. Mm.

CHARLOTTE. Did you sleep with Eileen?

GEORGE. (Sitting up with a start.) Charlotte! How can you say such a thing?!

CHARLOTTE. I've seen how you look at her.

GEORGE. She's a pretty girl. I'm not dead.

CHARLOTTE. Not yet. I know exactly when it happened, George. We were in the middle of that terrible fight.

GEORGE. And whose fault was that?

CHARLOTTE. It was your fault, dear. You called me the world's oldest living ingenue.

GEORGE. I merely mentioned that a woman in her fifties should not try to play Saint Joan. It's like watching Eleanor Roosevelt play Peter Pan.

CHARLOTTE. I happen to admire Eleanor Roosevelt.

GEORGE. So do I, but I don't want to watch her fly out the window.

CHARLOTTE. You're changing the subject.

GEORGE. For heaven's sake, Eileen barely knows I exist.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, please. When you walk into the room she starts to glow. I could use her for a reading lamp.

GEORGE. You are off your rocker. It's extraordinary. It is unkind.

CHARLOTTE. George, I don't mind as long as you tell me the truth! Did you sleep with her or didn't you?! Yes or no?!

GEORGE. No!!! All right?! The answer is no!!

## **SCENE #5: Ethel and Roz**

At the top of the scene ETHEL is quoting a scene from Cyrano de Bergerac.

(ROSALIND enters from the street door, carrying a suitcase. She's bright and attractive, in her 20s. She sees ETHEL and smiles with affection. ETHEL is facing the other way and can't see ROSALIND. Also, as we'll soon realize, ETHEL is quite deaf and is never aware of very much unless it's in front of her and shouting.)

ETHEL. "Eat a toad for breakfast every morning? Wear out my belly groveling in the dust? No, I thank you, and again I thank you no! But, to sing, to laugh, to dream, to walk in my own way and be alone, free, with an eye to see things as they are."

ROZ. Grandma.

ETHEL. "To travel any road under the sun,"

ROZ. Grandma!

ETHEL. "Nor doubt if fame or fortune-"

ROZ. GRANDMA!!

ETHEL. (Startled, then overjoyed.) Oh! ... Rosalind! Dearest girl! What a surprise! You're getting more beautiful every day. (A big hug.) You look adorable!

ROZ. So do you.

ETHEL. What?

ROZ. (Louder.) So do you! You look great!

ETHEL. I'm afraid you'll have to speak up, dear.

ROZ. Grandma, can I get you your hearing aid?!

ETHEL. (Fondly.) No thank you, dear, I'm not in the mood for lemonade. Oh, I miss you terribly. It isn't the same here without you.

ROZ. I miss you too, Grandma. Hey! How is the tour going? Do you like Buffalo?

ETHEL. No. I don't. It stinks. If it wasn't named for an animal, it would have nothing going for it. I don't mind so much for myself, really, but it's quite a come-down for your mother. She played Broadway, you know, in the forties. Then your father dragged her down to his level.

ROZ. Grandma-!

ETHEL. Revivals of tired old plays. B-movies. You should have heard him doing Cyrano just now at the dress rehearsal. The man is a walking ham. They should stick cloves in him and serve him with pineapple.

ROZ. Grandma, listen! I have a surprise. I'm getting married.

(It takes a moment to sink in ... then ROZ and ETHEL squeal with delight, like schoolgirls, jump up and down and hug each other.)

ETHEL. Oh, Rosalind, how wonderful! I've always said that you and Paul were made for each other.

ROZ. It isn't Paul.

ETHEL. The boy has spunk-

ROZ. Grandma, it's not Paul! Paul and I broke up!

ETHEL. It isn't Paul?

ROZ. NO!

ETHEL. Well that's a mistake.

(ROZ sighs; here it comes.)

You look ravishing on the stage together. You could do all the great couples-

ROZ. Grandma, I'm not an actress anymore! I'm in advertising.

ETHEL. Yes, I know, and it's revolting.

ROZ. Don't you remember the talk we had at Christmas!

ETHEL. No.

ROZ. (Holding ETHEL's hand and really pouring her heart out.) Grandma, this is your life. And Mother and Dad's. And that's fine. I'm very proud of you. But I grew up with it. I want something different. Something that doesn't drive me crazy all the time. Does that make any sense?

ETHEL. (Fondly.) Rosalind, dearest, can I tell you something?

ROZ. Sure.

ETHEL. I haven't heard a single word you've said.

ROZ. Grandma, can I please get you your hearing aid?!

ETHEL. All right. Fine. One glass .... Now listen to me, young lady. The theatre may be dying. The glamorous invalid may be crawling through the desert with but a single lung in its feeble chest, but it is still breathing and it is all we've got. It is our lifeline to humanity. Without it, we would all be Republicans. I'm very tired now, dear, and I'm going to lie down. (At the door.) It's wonderful having you back.

(ETHEL exits. ROZ runs to the door and shouts.)

ROZ. GRANDMA! I LOVE YOU!



### **SCENE #6: Charlotte and Richard**

CHARLOTTE. Richard, what are you doing here?

RICHARD. Well, I was sitting in my office this morning, making a great deal of money, and I suddenly realized that I was terribly bored. So, I thought, what can I do to cheer myself up. Well, I considered raising my billing rate, that usually works, but then I thought no, I would much rather take Charlotte to lunch.

CHARLOTTE. So you flew here all the way from New York City?

RICHARD. (Nods.) I was in a plane, of course.

CHARLOTTE. (Hugging him.) Oh, Richard, you're such a darling. I accept. In fact, I could use some cheering up myself.

RICHARD. What has the brute done this time?

CHARLOTTE. I'm not sure. Maybe it's nothing. Maybe I'm just tired.

RICHARD. Well of course you're tired! It's inhuman the way he drags you around from one city to another.

CHARLOTTE. On top of everything else, I just found out that we're not meeting our payroll.

RICHARD. Oh, I know that.

CHARLOTTE. You do?

RICHARD. It's quite serious. I've told George for months to start cutting down expenses.

CHARLOTTE. Is there anything I can do?

RICHARD. Well, you could do a movie. Or better yet, some television.

CHARLOTTE. We could try a different play. Pygmalion always makes money ...

RICHARD. Charlotte. Halloo in there. It's 1953. The road is dead. The only stars left touring anymore, besides you two, are Cornell and the Lunts, and they have a combined age of one thousand four hundred and sixty-two.

CHARLOTTE. Well what am I supposed to do?!

RICHARD. Well, for starters, you can marry me. I've got tons of money and no one to spend it on. Except a cat with a thyroid problem. He's getting very large. I had some friends in last night, they thought I'd bought a new sofa.

CHARLOTTE. Would you be serious.

RICHARD. I'm being serious. I'll have to move out soon.

CHARLOTTE. Richard!

RICHARD. (Suddenly very serious.) Charlotte, listen to me. I'm not very good at this. I cannot lie the way most men do and tell you that your cheeks remind me of damask. I don't know what the hell damask is. But you really do deserve better than this. Let me pamper you a little. We can take a cruise together. Anywhere you want in the entire world. Rochester. Schenectady ...

CHARLOTTE. Oh, Richard, you make me very happy.

RICHARD. Good. You deserve it. And frankly, so do I. I'm tired of living alone.

CHARLOTTE. What about George?

RICHARD. No. I don't want to live with him.