

## Nancy and Mr. Manningham

Beginning of Act III: Jack, who has just returned home after his evening out, encounters Nancy, the nineteen-year-old maid, who has just done the same. The flirtation that was evident in Act I. and had likely been brewing for sometime before, comes to a boil.

(We will not do the kisses at audition; instead, pause briefly and react as if they had occurred.)

MR. MANNINGHAM. Will you be so good as to come closer, Nancy, where I can see you. [NANCY comes down stage a step. They look at each other in a rather strange way.] Have you any idea of the time of the day, or rather night, Nancy?

NANCY. Yes, sir. It's a little after eleven, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Are you aware that you came in half a minute, or even less, before myself?

NANCY. Yes, sir. I thought I saw you, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Oh—you thought you saw me. Well, I certainly saw you.

NANCY. [*Looking away.*] Did you, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM. Have you ever reflected, Nancy, that you are given a great deal of latitude in this house?

NANCY. I don't know, sir. I don't know what latitude means.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Latitude, Nancy, means considerable liberty—liberty to the extent of two nights off a week.

NANCY. [*Pause.*] Yes, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Well, that's all very well. It is not so well, however, when you return as late as the master of the house. We ought to keep up some pretences, you know.

NANCY. Yes, sir. We must. [*She makes to go.*]

MR. MANNINGHAM. Nancy.

NANCY. [*Stops.*] Yes, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM. [*In a more human tone.*] Where the devil have you been tonight, anyway?

NANCY. [*Pause—turns to him.*] Only with some friends, sir.

MR. MANNINGHAM. You know, Nancy, when you say friends, I have an extraordinary idea that you mean gentlemen friends.

NANCY. [*Looking at him.*] Well, sir, possibly I might.

MR. MANNINGHAM. You know, gentlemen friends have been known to take decided liberties with young ladies like yourself. Are you alive to such a possibility?

NANCY. Oh, no, sir. Not with me. I can look after myself.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Are you always so anxious to look after yourself?

NANCY. No, sir, not always, perhaps.

MR. MANNINGHAM. You know, Nancy, pretty as your bonnet is, it is not anything near so pretty as your hair beneath it. Won't you take it off and let me see it?

NANCY. [*As she removes hat and crosses to Right of chair Right of table.*] Very good, sir. It comes off easy enough. There— Is there anything more you want, sir?

MR. MANNINGHAM. Yes. Possibly. Come here, will you, Nancy?

NANCY. [*Pause.*] Yes, sir— [*Drops hat on chair Right of table. Coming to him.*] Is there anything you want, sir?— [*Changing tone as he puts his arms on her shoulders.*] What do you want?—eh— What do you want?

[MANNINGHAM *kisses* NANCY *in a violent and prolonged manner. There is a pause in which she looks at him, and then she kisses him as violently.*] There! Can she do that for you? Can she do that?

MR. MANNINGHAM. Who can you be talking about, Nancy?

NANCY. You know who I mean all right.

MR. MANNINGHAM. You know, Nancy, you are a very remarkable girl in many respects. I believe you are jealous of your mistress.

NANCY. She? She's a poor thing. There's no need to be jealous of her. You want to kiss me again, don't you? Don't you want to kiss me? [MR. MANNINGHAM *kisses* NANCY.] There! That's better than a sick headache—ain't it—a sick headache and a pale face all the day.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Why yes, Nancy, I believe it is. I think, however, don't you, that it would be better if you and I met one evening in different surroundings.

NANCY. Yes. Where? I'll meet you when you like. You're mine now—ain't you—'cos you want me. You want me—don't you?

MR. MANNINGHAM. And what of you, Nancy. Do you want me?

NANCY. Oh, yes! I always wanted you, ever since I first clapped eyes on you. I wanted you more than all of them.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Oh—there are plenty of others?

NANCY. Oh, yes—there's plenty of others.

MR. MANNINGHAM. So I rather imagined. And only nineteen.