

#1 - Mr. and Mrs. Mannigham

Act I opening scene: As they are about to sit down for their tea, Bella is delighted because Jack is behaving sweetly toward her and even promised a night out at a play. Toying with her, Jack has just pondered that he once thought he might have been an actor himself, and recited the "To be, or not to be" speech from Hamlet.

Presently, Jack's tone changes and the scene takes a different turn

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*After NANCY exits.*] You see how fine your voice is? Oh—you've made a great mistake.

MR. MANNINGHAM. [*Crosses to Right of table. Lightly.*] I wonder.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Then if you had been a famous actor, I should have had a free seat to come and watch you every night of my life. And then called for you at the stage door afterwards. Wouldn't that have been paradise?

MR. MANNINGHAM. [*As he sits Right of table.*] A paradise of which you would soon tire, my dear. I have no doubt that after a few nights you would be staying at home again, just as you do now.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Oh, no, I wouldn't. I should have

to keep my eye on you for all the hussies that would be after you.

MR. MANNINGHAM. There would be hussies after me, would there? That is an added inducement, then.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Yes—I know it, you wretch. But you wouldn't escape me. [*Lifting cover of muffin dish.*] They look delicious. Aren't you glad I thought of them? [*Passes the salt.*] Here's some salt. You want heaps of it. Oh, Jack dear, you must forgive me chattering on like this, but I'm feeling so happy.

MR. MANNINGHAM. I can see that, my dear.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. I'm being taken to the play, you see. Here you are. I used to adore these as a child, didn't you? [*Offers muffin to MR. MANNINGHAM.*] I wonder how long it is since we had them? [*MR. MANNINGHAM looks up Center at wall.*] We haven't had them since we've been married anyway. Or have we? Have we?

MR. MANNINGHAM. I don't know, I'm sure. [*Suddenly rising, looking at the wall upstage and speaking in a calm, yet menacing way.*] I don't know—Bella—

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*After pause, dropping her voice almost to a whisper.*] What is it? What's the matter? What is it now?

MR. MANNINGHAM. [*Walking over to fireplace in front of settee, and speaking with his back to her.*] I have no desire to upset you, Bella, but I have just observed something very much amiss. Will you please rectify it at once, while I am not looking, and we will assume that it has not happened.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Amiss? What's amiss? For God's

sake don't turn your back on me. What has happened?

MR. MANNINGHAM. You know perfectly well what has happened, Bella, and if you will rectify it at once I will say no more about it.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. I don't know. I don't know. You have left your tea. Tell me what it is. Tell me.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Are you trying to make a fool of me, Bella? What I refer to is on the wall behind you. If you will put it back, I will say no more about it.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. The wall behind me? What? [*Turns.*] Oh—yes— The picture has been taken down — Yes— The picture— Who has taken it down? Why has it been taken down?

MR. MANNINGHAM. Yes. Why has it been taken down? Why, indeed. You alone can answer that, Bella. Why was it taken down before? Will you please take it from wherever you have hidden it, and put it back on the wall again?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. But I haven't hidden it, Jack. [*Rises.*] I didn't do it. Oh, for God's sake look at me. I didn't do it. I don't know where it is. Someone else must have done it.

MR. MANNINGHAM. Someone else? [*Turning to her.*] Are you suggesting perhaps that I should play such a fantastic and wicked trick?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. No, dear, no! But someone else. [*Going to him.*] Before God, I didn't do it! Someone else, dear, someone else.

MR. MANNINGHAM. [*Shaking her off.*] Will you please

leave go of me. [*Walking over to bell.*] We will see about "someone else."

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Crossing to front of settee.*] Oh, Jack—don't ring the bell. Don't ring it. Don't call the servants to witness my shame. It's not my shame for I haven't done it—but *don't* call the servants! Tell them not to come. [*He has rung the bell. She goes to him.*] Let's talk of this between ourselves! Don't call that girl in. Please!