

A SOLDIER'S SONG

Translated and adapted by  
Geoffrey Levett  
from  
Les Fausses Confidences  
by Marivaux

Email:  
Website:

[geoffreylevett@me.com](mailto:geoffreylevett@me.com)  
[alondonjournal.net](http://alondonjournal.net)

**1 ACT 1: SCENE 1: HECTOR, CLARKE**

We are in the reception room of a large house. There is a piano, desk, furniture, telephone and calendar showing the date March 1st 1919. On the piano are photographs of HARRIET SMITHSON, MADAME DUBOIS and LORD CHILTON. There is a music hall poster featuring HARRIET displayed in the room.

CLARKE  
(Introducing HECTOR) Do take a seat, sir, Miss Rose won't be long.

HECTOR  
Much obliged. (He sits)

CLARKE  
Want some company?

HECTOR  
No, I'm fine. (CLARKE sits) Really, I can keep my own company for a while.

CLARKE  
As you like. (She leaves)

**2 ACT 1: SCENE 2: HECTOR, HOBBS**

(Hobbs enters)

HECTOR  
(Sees HOBBS) Ah! Here you are!  
(They embrace) How's my old batman?  
At ease, we're not at the front now.

HOBBS  
It's good to see you sir.  
Everything's arranged and going to plan.

HECTOR  
Good ... I thought I was never going to get rid of that wretched woman. Tell me, has Uncle Charles arrived?

HOBBS  
He'll be here soon. (He looks around) But do keep it down, walls have ears you know.

HECTOR  
Hush hush, yes of course.

HOBBS

You haven't told your uncle about our plan?

HECTOR

Not a word. He does some legal work for Mrs Smithson and he put in a word for me to run her affairs. He doesn't know anything about our connection. He told me to come here this morning to be interviewed and that if he wasn't here I should ask for Miss Rose.

HOBBS

She's here, I saw her after breakfast.

HECTOR

This scheme ... It all seems rather high risk. (He thinks) You served me well at the front Hobbs, I was sorry I couldn't keep you on once the show was over.

HOBBS

Don't worry about that. You need to get on in civvy street and I'm here to help.

HECTOR

I'm terribly grateful old man.

HOBBS

You're like a brother to me, it's the least I could do.

HECTOR

But how can I reward you? If I become rich we'll both be rich. Just don't expect it too soon, if anyone discovers what we're up to I'll be dismissed before the day's out.

HOBBS

I guarantee we'll succeed.

HECTOR

Don't you think she's beyond me Hobbs? She's wealthy, she has this house on Park Lane with a staff of dozens and she has the sweetest voice in England. How could I dare to hope that she would marry me?

(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)  
I've nothing, I am nothing.

HOBBS  
Cheer up sunshine, that's no way to carry on! Let's have a look at you. Come on, you're the most eligible bachelor in London. Your looks will secure your fortune and your good nature will ensure it lasts. Our plan is infallible, absolutely infallible. I can already see you in her bedroom.

HECTOR  
What a thought!

HOBBS  
I'll help you picture it. There you are dressing for dinner and your kit, what there is of it, is being delivered. Your maid is turning down the bed and your new wife, Harriet Smithson, is gazing lovingly at you as she sits at the dressing table.

HECTOR  
She has £50,000 a year, Hobbs.

HOBBS  
Soon you'll have sixty at least.

HECTOR  
And she's looking for a husband?

HOBBS  
Naturally, she has a very loving nature and it's a year since her old man bought it. She's still young, no children, why wouldn't she be looking for a new sweetheart? Tell me, do you love her?

HECTOR  
You know I do, I love her with a passion. But I'm worried I'll lose my nerve.

HOBBS  
Captain Woolley lose his nerve? Have faith in yourself and with my help you'll succeed. I want it, I've planned it. We're organised and everything is in place. I know how she ticks and I know how you do too, I know your talents and I'll  
(MORE)

HOBBS (CONT'D)  
lead you to her.

HECTOR  
You make it sound so easy.

HOBBS  
You love her... When love speaks it  
rules. Wait, I can hear someone.  
We've gone over the top sir, let's  
keep on to the objective. (He goes  
a few steps then comes back)  
Another thing, make sure to get  
along with Rose, Mrs Smithson  
listens to her, she's only a  
housekeeper but they're as thick as  
thieves. Love, with a little help  
from me, will do the rest. (He  
leaves)

**3 ACT 1: SCENE 3: UNCLE CHARLES, HECTOR**

UNCLE CHARLES  
(Entering) Hello nephew, how  
charming to see you. Miss Rose is  
on her way, have you met?

HECTOR  
No, why do you ask?

UNCLE CHARLES  
Oh nothing ... I was thinking about  
something. You know she's very  
pretty.

HECTOR  
I'm sure she is.

UNCLE CHARLES  
And she's from a good family, I  
took care of her father's affairs  
when he passed away. He was a very  
good friend of your father but you  
know what he was like. Champagne  
and chorus girls proved more  
enticing than the family home, so  
like you, she wasn't well provided  
for.

HECTOR  
Oh yes?

UNCLE CHARLES  
And now she works for Harriet, who  
treats her more like a friend than  
an employee ... So you'll be  
(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLES (CONT'D)  
working together. You told me you  
wanted to settle down and start a  
family. I think you should marry  
her, what do you think?

HECTOR  
What?! I've never even seen her!

UNCLE CHARLES  
Think about it. You possess  
nothing, you need to get on in the  
world ... I can't keep paying your  
bills forever. Whatever did you  
spend your pay on?! Was it women or  
drink? I rarely see you in the  
company of either. Your father lost  
all his to both - don't go  
following in his footsteps.

HECTOR  
Really uncle, my needs are very  
modest.

UNCLE CHARLES  
True, and you are my sole successor  
but I'm healthy enough and I've no  
intention of dying any time soon.  
Who knows, I might get married  
myself.

HECTOR  
Married Uncle?

UNCLE CHARLES  
And why not? I'm accustomed to the  
bachelor's life but the notion  
might come to me all of a sudden,  
young girls can be so pretty. With  
a wife come children of course and  
in that case one must look after  
them. So, take care and you'll  
inherit my modest estate but  
remember, you need to stand on your  
own two feet for now.

HECTOR  
You're right, it's just what I'm  
working on.

UNCLE CHARLES  
I'm glad to hear it. Here's Miss  
Rose, leave us a minute so I can  
ask her what she thinks of you.  
(HECTOR retires to the RECEPTION  
ROOM and leafs through a magazine)

4 ACT 1: SCENE 4: ROSE, UNCLE CHARLES

ROSE  
(Entering) I'm sorry to keep you waiting, I had some business with Mrs Smithson.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Don't worry, I only just arrived. What do you think of this handsome young man?

ROSE  
(She looks through the door) Why do you ask?

UNCLE CHARLES  
He's my nephew.

ROSE  
Oh really!?! (She looks again) Hmm, he wouldn't ruin the family album.

UNCLE CHARLES  
He's here to take up the secretary's position - you'll be working together. He saw you once when you were at my house, do you remember?

ROSE  
No, I don't remember at all. (She looks again) He's not the kind of man you forget.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Memory's a fickle thing. Do you know what he said to me the first time he saw you? 'Isn't that a smashing girl?' (ROSE smiles) Hector, join us. Your fathers were great friends, why shouldn't their children be too? You couldn't ask for a better colleague, he's a stout-hearted fellow.

HECTOR  
(Embarrassed) Uncle ...

ROSE  
I'm sure you are.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Of course he is! I don't see why you shouldn't become more than  
(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLES (CONT'D)  
friends, eh my boy?

ROSE  
(Laughing) That's fast work!

HECTOR  
Don't embarrass her.

ROSE  
(Laughing) I'm not so easily  
embarrassed. Go on, tell me more.

UNCLE CHARLES  
(Happy) How charming! I can see  
that you've taken to each other.  
(He takes their hands) Your  
marriage would make me the happiest  
man in London. I'll let you talk  
about your future together. Goodbye  
my niece.

ROSE  
Yes, goodbye then, uncle. (He  
leaves)

**5 ACT 1: SCENE 5: ROSE, HECTOR**

ROSE  
Is this a dream?! How fast your  
uncle works! This love of yours  
seems rather sudden, can it last?

HECTOR  
Such love, if sincerely felt, is as  
lasting as any other.

ROSE  
He left too soon, here comes Mrs  
Smithson. Step outside so that I  
can put in a good word for you with  
her majesty. (HECTOR leaves)

**6 ACT 1: SCENE 6: HARRIET, ROSE**

HARRIET  
(Entering) Rose, who is that  
charming young man? Is he here to  
see you?

ROSE  
No, Madame, he's here to see you.

HARRIET

Oh really? Well, let's have him in.

ROSE

He wanted to let us talk first.  
He's the nephew of Mr Woolley, the  
one he put forward as your  
secretary.

HARRIET

Oh! He looks very capable.

ROSE

He has a good reputation.

HARRIET

I don't doubt it. What do you know  
about him? What do people say?

ROSE

Nothing but good things.

HARRIET

He's rather handsome for a  
secretary.

ROSE

Should we only employ ugly  
secretaries?

HARRIET

Tell him to come back. Since he  
came at Mr Woolley's recommendation  
that's good enough for me.

ROSE

(As if going) You couldn't make a  
better choice. (Then coming back)  
Have you talked about a salary? Mr  
Woolley asked me specifically to  
talk to you about it. He's worth  
much more than the last one.

HARRIET

I'll offer him enough.

ROSE

(Hesitating to go) Are we going to  
give him the rooms that look out on  
the garden? They'd be very cosy,  
not like the old secretary's rooms.

HARRIET

Why not, if he likes them. Go and  
fetch him.

**7 ACT 1: SCENE 7: HECTOR, HARRIET, ROSE**

ROSE

(She calls HECTOR) Captain Woolley, Mrs Smithson is waiting for you.

HARRIET

Come in, I'm grateful to your uncle for having thought of me. A friend spoke to me of another candidate for the job but I think you'll do.

HECTOR

I'll endeavour to justify your trust in me Madame.

ROSE

Shouldn't you talk to his Lordship's man first?

HARRIET

No, Rose, it's settled. (They shake hands.) I can see you've served the King but what business experience do you have? Have you worked elsewhere?

HECTOR

My father was a lawyer and I myself qualified at the Bar. Summer 1914, rather an unfortunate summer.

HARRIET

Then you're overqualified? Wouldn't you prefer to practice law than run my errands.

HECTOR

Not at all, serving you is all I desire, I wouldn't envy the position of the King himself.

HARRIET

I'm sure I'll give you no reason to change your mind, I take good care of my staff.

ROSE

That's true, Mrs Smithson's been very kind to me.

HARRIET

It's painful to see honest young men return from Flanders and struggle to get by when so many wasters spent the war at home dodging their duty. You can't be

(MORE)

HARRIET (CONT'D)  
more than thirty?

HECTOR  
Something like that.

HARRIET  
Then you have plenty of time to  
find happiness.

HECTOR  
I believe I've found it already.

HARRIET  
We'll show you your rooms. If  
they're not to your taste there are  
others. You'll also need an  
assistant, who shall we give him  
Rose?

ROSE  
How about Clarke? Clarke! Mrs  
Smithson wants to talk to you.

**8 ACT 1: SCENE 8: HARRIET, HECTOR, ROSE, CLARKE**

CLARKE  
(Entering) Yes Miss Rose!

HARRIET  
Clarke, see this gentleman? You're  
to work for him now, I'm giving you  
to him.

CLARKE  
What! You're giving me to him?  
Don't I work for you now?

ROSE  
What an idiot!

HARRIET  
What I mean is that rather than  
working for me you'll be working  
for him.

CLARKE  
You're getting rid of me? What have  
I done?

HARRIET

I'm not getting rid of you, I'll still be paying you.

CLARKE

But that wouldn't be fair, I'll be working for him but paid by you. I should be working for you if you're paying my wages, otherwise it's as good as thieving.

HARRIET

I despair, you talk to her.

ROSE

You really are a cretin. When I send you to do such and such a thing don't you do as you're told?

CLARKE

Always.

ROSE

Well then! It's young Captain Woolley who'll be telling you in the same way in the place of Mrs Smithson and by her order.

CLARKE

Ah! That's different. It's Mrs Smithson who will give the order to the Captain and he'll give the order to me.

ROSE

Exactly.

CLARKE

Why didn't you say so in the first place?

The telephone rings and HARRIET picks it up

HARRIET

That's my florist, I'll see her and come straight back. Captain Woolley, I need to talk to you about something, don't go away.  
(She leaves)

CLARKE

So Captain, we're just the same as each another except that you're above me. I'll be the assistant who serves you and you the assistant who serves in turn.

ROSE

Get out of it you joker.

CLARKE

Just a minute. With your permission sir, won't you be paying me anything? Have they told you I'm to assist you for free?

ROSE

Get out with you! Mrs Smithson pays you, isn't that enough?

CLARKE

Pardon me! So I won't cost you anything? That's nice I'm sure.

HECTOR

Clarke's right. Here's a little something in advance. (He gives her a note)

CLARKE

Ah! You're a true gent, no need to hurry with the rest.

HECTOR

You can drink to my health.

CLARKE

(Going) If my drinking makes you healthy you'll be the fittest man in England. (Aside) Things are looking up!

**10 ACT 1: SCENE 10: HECTOR, ROSE, MRS DUBOIS**

ROSE

I can see Harriet's taken a shine to you, that's good for both of us. But here's her mother. (She pulls a face) You wouldn't believe they were related.

MRS DUBOIS

(Brusquely) So Rose, my daughter has a new secretary given to her by this solicitor of hers. I tell you  
(MORE)

MRS DUBOIS (CONT'D)  
I'm not happy. It's hardly fair to his Lordship, who had his own man standing by. At least she could have seen them both. What's so special about this one? What kind of man is he?

ROSE  
See for yourself Madame.

MRS DUBOIS  
Oh! It's that one! I wondered who he was. (She peers at him) He's rather young.

ROSE  
At thirty one's ready to be a secretary Madame.

MRS DUBOIS  
That depends. Are you competent?

HECTOR  
Yes, Madame.

MRS DUBOIS  
And who have you worked for?

HECTOR  
For His Majesty as you can see, my sole employer.

MRS DUBOIS  
So you'll be doing your apprenticeship here? You're too young for a secretary and too old for an apprentice.

ROSE  
Not at all. He understands business, he's the son of an extremely able father.

MRS DUBOIS  
It's not his father we're employing. (To ROSE, aside) I don't think much of him. Does he look like a secretary? He doesn't have that look.

ROSE  
(Aside also) Looks mean nothing. I can assure you he's the right man for the job.

MRS DUBOIS

As long as he does what he's told.

HECTOR

(Having overheard them) What would you have me do Madame?

MRS DUBOIS

(Aloud) Do you know Lord Chilton? Such a noble young man! His family came over with the Conquest. My daughter is in a legal dispute with him over some land. We thought that to avoid the trouble of going to court it would be more convenient for them to marry and take joint ownership.

HECTOR

Ahh, money eh?

MRS DUBOIS

My daughter is the widow of a very rich man so it's not a question of money. But Lady Chilton has a certain ring to it. I'm keen that they should be engaged as soon as possible.

HECTOR

They're not yet engaged?

MRS DUBOIS

Very nearly, she only wishes to learn the details of the land and see if she has a greater right to it than his Lordship. My daughter has one fault: she lacks ambition. The title of Lady Chilton doesn't inspire her as much as it should.

HECTOR

Perhaps she wouldn't feel comfortable in such exalted company?

MRS DUBOIS

(With emphasis) It doesn't matter what you think, my daughter's good enough for any man. Keep your opinions to yourself and do as you're told.

HECTOR

What would you like me to do?

MRS DUBOIS

When you read my daughter's papers  
tell her that she has a weak case,  
that if she goes to court she'll  
lose.

HECTOR

Naturally, if her case is weak I  
won't hesitate to inform her.

MRS DUBOIS

(Aside to ROSE) Do they let such  
simpletons lead men into battle?  
(To HECTOR) You've misunderstood,  
that's not what I told you. I'm  
instructing you to tell her that  
whether her case is well-founded or  
not.

HECTOR

And deceive her?

MRS DUBOIS

Do you call me deceitful young  
man?! I'm her mother and I'm  
telling you to do what's good for  
her, do you understand?

HECTOR

You wouldn't ask me to act in bad  
faith?

MRS DUBOIS

(Aside, to ROSE) Who recommended  
this blockhead? (Aloud) Goodbye Mr  
Secretary, who's never conducted  
any business for anybody. (She  
goes)

**11 ACT 1: SCENE 11: HECTOR, ROSE**

HECTOR

What an interesting interview. Are  
you sure they're related?

ROSE

I'm sorry, I didn't have time to  
warn you about her. She's very set  
on this marriage. But does it  
matter what you tell Mrs Smithson?  
Her mother has her best interests  
at heart.

HECTOR

That's a fine way to start a job,  
by taking instruction behind your  
employer's back! I'd rather tell  
(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)  
her the truth.

ROSE  
But the marriage would be good for both of us - his Lordship has promised me a hundred guineas when the contract is signed. That would be a nice little nest egg, eh?

HECTOR  
Really Miss Rose you could be the most lovable girl in the world and I would still think you horribly thoughtless to be tempted by a hundred guineas to act against your friend and benefactor.

ROSE  
On the contrary, it's by thinking about them that they tempt me; the more I think of them the more I like them.

HECTOR  
But what a miserable sum for betraying your closest friend.

ROSE  
You're right (She thinks) I should ask him for more. His Lordship is an honest man, she could do worse these days. Here she comes now, I'll go. Think about the money, you'll find it tastes as sweet as I do. (She leaves)

HECTOR  
She deserves a lesson.

**12 ACT 1: SCENE 12: HARRIET, HECTOR**

HARRIET  
Have you seen my mother?

HECTOR  
Yes Madame, just a minute ago.

HARRIET  
She told me she wants me to take on someone else.

HECTOR  
She was quite unambiguous on the point.

HARRIET

Don't worry, you suit me.

HECTOR

I have no other ambition than to serve you.

HARRIET

I have something to talk to you about, something in confidence.

HECTOR

I'm discretion personified.

HARRIET

I'm sure I can trust you. You know I'm expected to marry Lord Chilton to avoid a court case over some land?

HECTOR

Yes, I discussed it with your mother. She wasn't pleased.

HARRIET

Oh! How so?

HECTOR

Whatever the merits of the case she wanted me to tell you that you would lose so that you would hurry to marry Lord Chilton. I asked her to reconsider her advice.

HARRIET

The snake! But I knew I could trust you. Was she rather disagreeable?

HECTOR

It doesn't matter, she made me all the more determined to look after your interests.

HARRIET

That's why I want to keep you on, I need someone I know is on my side. What on earth is she playing at? She's infuriating! Well then. You'll have no rest! She'll be after you for being honest with me, that'll be fun!

HECTOR

Don't worry, I've faced worse assaults, we can face this one together.

HARRIET

Indeed. (HECTOR starts toying at the piano) Do you play?

HECTOR

A little ... I haven't had much practice lately.

HARRIET

Play me something then.

HECTOR

(He picks up a piece of music from the stand and reads the title) 'Nuits d'Eté' ... Berlioz is a bit beyond me I'm afraid.

HARRIET

Play something new then.

HECTOR plays a popular song of 1918 and HARRIET begins to sing. As they make music together HOBBS enters. He observes them unseen for a short time.

**13 ACT 1: SCENE 13: HECTOR, HARRIET, HOBBS**

HOBBS

(Pretending to see HECTOR with surprise) Sorry to interrupt Madame. (HECTOR pretends to turn his face to hide from HOBBS)

HARRIET

Oh, we were just playing.

HOBBS

(Still looking at HECTOR) I've a message for you.

HARRIET

Yes, what is it?

HOBBS

I was told to tell you alone, it's a private message.

HARRIET

(To HECTOR) I'm not finished with you yet. Leave us for a moment but don't go too far, I've still some business to discuss. (He goes into the LIBRARY)

14 ACT 1: SCENE 14: HARRIET, HOBBS

HARRIET

Hobbs, what's this strange air you had when you saw Captain Woolley? Why were you staring at him?

HOBBS

It's nothing really Madame ... Only if he's staying I must ask for my notice.

HARRIET

(Surprised) What! Just from seeing him here?

HOBBS

Do you know who he is?

HARRIET

My lawyer's nephew.

HOBBS

But how do you know him? Why is he here?

HARRIET

Mr Woolley sent him here to be my secretary.

HOBBS

Him, your secretary! And it's Mr Woolley who sent him. He didn't know what he was doing. He's a devil this boy.

HARRIET

What are you talking about? Do you know him?

HOBBS

Do I know him! Do I know him! Indeed I do, and he knows me too. Didn't you see how he turned away when he saw me?

HARRIET

It was a bit odd but what has he got to hide? Isn't he an honest man?

HOBBS

There's no better man on earth.  
He's a marvel of honesty.

HARRIET

So what's the matter?

HOBBS

(He touches his head) He's wrong in  
the head.

HARRIET

In the head?

HOBBS

Yes, he's touched.

HARRIET

So many of them are! But he seemed  
sound enough to me. I don't believe  
you, what proof do you have?

HOBBS

What proof? He lost his mind nine  
months ago when we were on leave in  
London. He fell in love. He became  
as one lost. I should know because  
I was with him, I served him, and  
eventually I had to leave him. And  
so I must leave again. Take away  
his obsession and he is an  
incomparable man.

HARRIET

(A little sulkily) Oh well! If he's  
mad over some girl I'll let him go,  
there's no peace with men like  
that. Their dream girls rarely  
survive a meeting with reality and  
then they become even more  
insufferable.

HOBBS

Ah! But his madness is in good  
taste.

HARRIET

It doesn't matter, I'll drop him.  
Do you know who she is?

HOBBS

I have the honour of seeing her  
every day ... It's you Madame.

HARRIET

Me?!

HOBBS

He adores you. For six months he's hardly lived for anything else, he would give his life to have the pleasure of seeing you just for an instant. You must have seen the spellbound air he has when he talks to you.

HARRIET

There was a little something that struck me as unusual. The poor boy, what should I do?

HOBBS

You wouldn't believe how far his madness has gone. He's ruined by it. He could make his fortune just from his looks there's that many women throwing themselves at him. There's one in France who followed him all the way to London. I've seen her sniffing around outside today.

HARRIET

(With nonchalance) Really?

HOBBS

Yes, really. A tall brunette, a real femme fatale. He refuses everyone. 'I'd be betraying them' he'd tell me, 'I can't love them. I love only one.' That's what he'd say, sometimes with a tear in his eye.

HARRIET

How shocking! But where has he seen me before Hobbs?

HOBBS

He saw you singing at the theatre. It was a Friday I remember. Yes, a Friday. And afterwards he waited backstage, so he told me, but didn't dare talk to you. I found him in a state of ecstasy.

HARRIET

What a story!

HOBBS

I tried to wake him up but his mind was gone. In the end he came to himself with a distracted air. I put him in a cab and sent him back  
(MORE)

HOBBS (CONT'D)

to his uncle's house. I hoped it would pass over because I loved him like a little brother. No use, he was finished. This good sense, this blithe spirit, this charming boyish joie de vivre, you blew it all away. He dreamed of you and loved you from afar. We followed you from morning to night wherever you went.

HARRIET

But this is stunning beyond belief?!

HOBBS

And each evening we'd go to see you, him in the stalls and me up in the gods. Every night! He spent his whole back pay so that he could see you sing.

HARRIET

Is it possible?

HOBBS

Yes! In the end we had to return to the front but even over there he couldn't forget you, in fact he was worse.

HARRIET

I had no idea. He's deceived me, he didn't tell me about any of this. Haven't I enough wolves circling me without another joining the pack?

HOBBS

Well, if you want some sort of revenge you can have it in spades. Every look you throw him will be like torture for him. The more he sees you the more he kills himself.

HARRIET

I'll dismiss him. (She thinks) But what will I say to his uncle ... it's all too embarrassing, how can I explain it? I don't know how I can honestly get rid of him.

HOBBS

But if you keep him he'll be inconsolable.

HARRIET

(Lively) Oh! Too bad for him! I have to sack my secretary before  
(MORE)

HARRIET (CONT'D)

he's hardly begun work, what an embarrassment. But maybe I could bring him back to reason ... the routine of seeing me away from the stage might cure him of this ludicrous obsession. Heaven knows running this place is no funfair. I'd be doing him a favour.

HOBBS

Yes, it may be just the remedy. He wouldn't say a word to you. You'll never hear him speak of his love.

HARRIET

Are you sure?

HOBBS

Oh I'm sure, he'd rather die. He respects you, he adores you. Do you think he dreams of being loved? Not at all. He says that no-one in the world is good enough for you. He wants nothing more than to see you, to think about you, to hear your voice. And that's enough. He's told me a thousand times.

HARRIET

(Shrugs) Well, perhaps I should take pity on him. Let's see, I'll give him a few days. But I don't want you to leave me do you understand Hobbs?

HOBBS

I am your humble servant.

HARRIET

Above all keep this secret so that no-one, not even Rose, knows that you've told me.

HOBBS

You can trust me.

HARRIET

He's coming back. Leave us now.  
(HOBBS leaves.)

**15 ACT 1: SCENE 15: HECTOR, HARRIET**

HARRIET

(A moment alone) This is a secret I'd prefer to unhear.

HECTOR  
(Entering) I've followed your orders.

HARRIET  
Yes ... What were they? I've forgotten them.

HECTOR  
About the case with Lord Chilton.

HARRIET  
Oh yes, that. And the marriage.

HECTOR  
You would prefer not to go through with the marriage?

HARRIET  
That's right. But I'm not sure if you should carry on with this work, I'm not sure I want to keep you on.

HECTOR  
What!?

HARRIET  
I promised Lord Chilton that I'd take on his man. It wouldn't be honest to go back on my word. At the very least I should interview him.

HECTOR  
But this is a catastrophe! Sacked before I've begun.

HARRIET  
(Weakening) I didn't say you were sacked. Nothing has been decided.

HECTOR  
Not decided?

HARRIET  
Oh! (She reflects) Yes, I owe it to you to let you stay. I'll make myself keep you.

HECTOR  
So you want me to look into the dispute?

HARRIET  
Wait. If I'm going to marry his Lordship you would have taken the trouble over nothing.

HECTOR

I thought I understood you didn't have feelings for him?

HARRIET

Not any more.

HECTOR

Aren't you happy as you are?

HARRIET

(Aside) I don't have the strength to hurt him! (Aloud) Oh well, yes yes, examine the case, examine it. I have the papers in my office, I'll find them. Give me a minute and you can come and collect them. (As she goes) I daren't look at him!

**16 ACT 1: SCENE 16: HECTOR, HOBBS**

HOBBS

(Entering) Rose is looking for you to show you your rooms, she's taken to you all right. Clarke has gone for a drink, I warned you about her. How did your chat go?

HECTOR

She's wonderful! I'm enchanted by her. How did she take what you told her?

HOBBS

(Shiftily) She said that she'd keep you on out of compassion. She wants to cure you of your madness by letting you keep her company.

HECTOR

Really?

HOBBS

It was touch and go. I'll get back and see how she is.

HECTOR

No, stay, I see Rose. Tell her I'll be working on the legal papers and will look at the rooms another time, I don't want to be left alone with her.

HOBBS

Leave her with me, she needs to be fed a few tales to spread around.  
(HECTOR leaves)

17 ACT 1: SCENE 17: HOBBS, ROSE

ROSE

(Entering) Where's Captain Woolley?  
I thought he was with you?

HOBBS

(Brusquely) He'll be back later.  
Does he have to see these rooms? I don't think he's fussy about his billet.

ROSE

What's it to do with you? I take my orders from Mrs Smithson.

HOBBS

She's the boss. But tell me, don't you think that he's a little too interested in her?

ROSE

Who?

HOBBS

I could be wrong but I think our handsome soldier is a little taken with his new commanding officer.

ROSE

Rubbish!

HOBBS

I have the feeling that he came here specifically to see her up close.

ROSE

(Laughing) What an idea! You've got completely the wrong end of the stick.

HOBBS

(Laughing) Yes, maybe I'm imagining things.

ROSE

(Laughing as she leaves) Where does he get such ideas!

HOBBS

(Alone) Go on, take your time. You'll learn. Everything's falling into place. (He leaves)

HOBBS removes the photograph of HARRIET from the piano. Lights down then up again to begin the second act with HECTOR and HARRIET on stage.

**18 ACT 2: SCENE 1: HARRIET, HECTOR**

HECTOR

No, you risk nothing. You can pursue the case with confidence. I consulted an expert in property law and he agreed with me. And if you would rather not marry Lord Chilton then there's no reason that you should.

HARRIET

He'll be so disappointed, I don't really want to hurt him.

HECTOR

You'd sacrifice your own future to spare his feelings?

HARRIET

Aren't you a little too much against his Lordship?

HECTOR

His affairs are no concern of mine, my job is to act in your interests.

HARRIET

I can't fault your loyalty. If I marry him and he wants to put someone else in your place I'll make sure to find you another position.

HECTOR

(Sadly) I don't want another position, I'd rather re-enlist. Am I dismissed then?

HARRIET

No, I believe I'll pursue the case, I'll need you for that.

HECTOR

In that case I wonder if we could replace Hobbs, I'm not comfortable with him around.

HARRIET

Replace Hobbs! Certainly not, he's a most capable man. Why would I do that? Which reminds me, he told me that he was once your batman?

HECTOR

(Feigning embarrassment) It's true, we were very close. He's loyal but not entirely reliable. The truth is we parted on bad terms. Has he said anything against me?

HARRIET

(Nonchalantly) On the contrary, he had nothing but praise for you. What does Mr Woolley want with me?

**19 ACT 2: SCENE 2: HARRIET, HECTOR, UNCLE CHARLES**

UNCLE CHARLES

(Entering) Mrs Smithson, thank you for taking my advice and employing my nephew.

HARRIET

As you can see, I didn't hesitate.

UNCLE CHARLES

I'm most grateful. Didn't you say there was a rival for the post?

HARRIET

Yes, there was.

UNCLE CHARLES

Even better, because I've come to take this one away.

HECTOR

(With an air of refusal) What! How's that?

UNCLE CHARLES

Patience!

HARRIET

But this is rather sudden. Besides, you're too late, I already sent the other man away.

HECTOR

And I have no intention of leaving.

UNCLE CHARLES

(Brusquely) You don't know what you're talking about. You'll see why when you hear this. There's a lady, 35 years old, attractive, honest and a woman of means. She's a client of mine who has 15 thousand of rent a year at least. She's seen you at my house and knowing that you need help to get on offers to marry you immediately. She wants a quick answer, is that clear? Is there any further discussion to be had? (To HARRIET) What do you think?

HARRIET

Why on earth are you asking me?

UNCLE CHARLES

(To HECTOR) Well, what do you think of it then? Are you coming to meet her?

HECTOR

Certainly not, I have no interest in this mysterious female.

UNCLE CHARLES

What? Don't you understand? She's got 15 thousand a year!

HECTOR

She could have twenty times as much and I wouldn't marry her. Neither of us would be happy. My heart is taken, I love someone else.

UNCLE CHARLES

(Scoffing and dragging at his words) 'I love someone else'! Ridiculous! Such sentimentality, to prefer to remain a lackey in someone else's house when you could be master of your own! Is that your final word, loyal servant?

HECTOR

I won't change my mind.

UNCLE CHARLES

Oh! Your stupid principles! Hector, you are an imbecile, and I would think your loved one a fool if she  
(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLES (CONT'D)  
thought the same as you.

HARRIET  
Please don't argue about it. He  
could be acting unwisely I agree.

UNCLE CHARLES  
(Lively) What! He could be.

HARRIET  
I understand his reasoning. Look,  
Captain Woolley, shouldn't you at  
least meet this woman? Marriages  
work best with sound finances, I  
should know.

HECTOR  
I'm not interested, my love is more  
important to me than mere capital.

UNCLE CHARLES  
(Stunned) You're like a silly shop  
girl. Such an odd boy you've grown  
into.

HARRIET  
I'll leave you to it, it's none of  
my business who he marries. (Aside)  
How can he love me? He touches me  
so much, I must leave. (She goes)

**20 ACT 2: SCENE 3: HECTOR, UNCLE CHARLES, ROSE**

UNCLE CHARLES  
(Looking at his nephew) You realise  
there are saner people than you in  
Bedlam? (ROSE arrives) Hello Miss  
Rose.

ROSE  
Hello 'uncle'.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Tell me something. What do you  
think of someone who has little or  
no money and who refuses to marry  
an honest, attractive woman with 15  
thousand a year income?

ROSE

That's an easy one, this someone is a fool.

UNCLE CHARLES

(Pointing at HECTOR) Here's the fool and as an excuse he says that his heart is taken by another. I beg you to make him see sense. Certainly, you're pretty but you couldn't compete with such a woman could you? No amount of prettiness is worth such a price.

ROSE

What! Is it Captain Woolley you're talking about? He's turned down this rich woman to marry me?

UNCLE CHARLES

So it seems, but you wouldn't stand in his way would you?

ROSE

(With passion) Seriously? I love him. Hector, oh I love you! I wouldn't have believed you could love me so much too.

UNCLE CHARLES

What?! You've known him a whole morning and you're already infatuated! Really, women are beyond me.

ROSE

(Sadly) But is love alone enough to be happy without some financial stability? I should ask Mrs Smithson for her advice. And a pay rise.

HECTOR

No, no! You've misunderstood me, don't get carried away. You owe me nothing, I want no favours from you.

ROSE

Such a sweetheart. There's nothing sweeter you could say to me.

UNCLE CHARLES

I hardly see sweetness in it, I find it obtuse. (To ROSE) Don't expect this one to make your fortune, he's a lovesick fool.

(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLES (CONT'D)  
Enjoy yourselves you silly  
sweethearts and I'll enjoy spending  
your inheritance. (He goes)

ROSE  
He's angry but we'll bring him  
round.

HECTOR  
I hope so, who's that?

ROSE  
It's his Lordship, the one I told  
you is meant to marry Mrs Smithson.

HECTOR  
I'll leave you then, I don't want  
to talk to him about this case.

**21 ACT 2: SCENE 4: LORD CHILTON, ROSE**

LORD CHILTON  
Hello Rose, is she in?

ROSE  
Who My Lord?

LORD CHILTON  
I was told that Harry was in the  
garden, I just learnt something  
rather upsetting. I had a secretary  
ready to start today but she's  
taken someone else. Her mother  
tells me he's hopeless.

ROSE  
He's a very good man, if the mother  
isn't happy it's her loss. She  
didn't like the fact that he's good  
looking.

LORD CHILTON  
Was it that chap I saw on the way  
in?

ROSE  
Yes, that's him, what do you think  
of him My Lord?

LORD CHILTON  
He's handsome enough ... he doesn't  
have the look of a blackguard.

ROSE

Who said he did? He's an honest man.

LORD CHILTON

We need to do something about that. I want Harriet to make her mind up about this case. What about this new chap - if it's just a question of money to get him to act in our interests I can spare some.

ROSE

Oh no! He's not the type to be influenced by money. He's the most principled man in England.

LORD CHILTON

Too bad, chaps with principles are good for nothing.

ROSE

Let me talk to him, a little bonus would be useful.

**22 ACT 2: SCENE 5: LORD CHILTON, CLARKE, ROSE**

CLARKE

(Entering) There's someone here looking for somebody.

ROSE

(Brusquely) What do they want?

CLARKE

How should I know! I thought you could tell me.

ROSE

Let them in.

CLARKE

(Calls to the corridor) Hey! You! Come here and tell us what you want.

**23 ACT 2: SCENE 6: LORD CHILTON, SAM, ROSE, CLARKE**

SAM enters

ROSE

Who are you looking for?

SAM

I'm looking for a man who gave us a painting to be framed. He said he would come and collect it but my old man's going away so he sent me to give it to him. I know who he is but I don't know his name.

ROSE

Isn't it you your Lordship?

LORD CHILTON

Certainly not.

SAM

No, it's not him it's someone else.

ROSE

And at whose place were you told you could find him?

SAM

At a brief's called Woolley but they told me to come here.

LORD CHILTON

Ah! The lawyer ... Show me the painting.

SAM

No, I can't sir, I've been told to give it only to the owner. It's a lady's portrait.

LORD CHILTON

A lady's portrait! What's that? Could it be of Harriet? I'll soon find out what it is. (He goes)

**24 ACT 2: SCENE 7: SAM, ROSE**

ROSE

You shouldn't have talked about this painting in front of His Lordship. I know who you're looking for, it's the nephew of Mr Woolley.

SAM

Could be.

ROSE

A handsome Captain.

SAM  
That rings a bell.

ROSE  
He told me about it, we're good friends. Have you seen the portrait?

SAM  
No, why should I care what it looks like?

ROSE  
Oh well, it's a portrait of me. Captain Woolley isn't here so you can leave it here with me, I'll take care of it. It will be as if you're giving it to him. You can see that I know all about it.

SAM  
Are you sure? (ROSE gives him a tip) Here, take it then and make sure you give it to him when he comes back.

ROSE  
Oh I will.

SAM  
There's money owing but I'll come back later. If he isn't here you'll cover it won't you?

ROSE  
Absolutely (She takes the box). Go. (Aside) Here's Hector. (To SAM) Go, quick. (She leaves)

**25 ACT 2: SCENE 8: ROSE, HECTOR**

ROSE  
(A moment alone, happy) It must be my portrait. Such a charming man! Mr Woolley was right that he's admired me for some time.

HECTOR  
(Entering) Oh hello, Clarke said someone was looking for me?

ROSE  
(Looking at him tenderly) You're so adorable, Hector, how could I resist you? Don't worry, the boy  
(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)  
came, I spoke to him and collected  
the portrait. I have it here.

HECTOR  
What portrait?

ROSE  
Don't worry, I know who it belongs  
to you. I know whose portrait it is  
and I'm not upset. I was going to  
give it to you when I saw you. (She  
looks up) Here comes trouble, it's  
the mother and his Lordship, I  
expect they want to know about the  
portrait too. Let me talk to them,  
I think they're still upset over  
your appointment.

**26 ACT 2: SCENE 9: HARRIET, LORD CHILTON, MRS DUBOIS, ROSE**

HARRIET  
Rose, what's this portrait his  
Lordship's talking about? He says  
it's of me!

ROSE  
(With a dreamy air) It's nothing  
Madame, there's no need to be  
alarmed, it's nothing to do with  
you.

LORD CHILTON  
How do you know? You haven't even  
seen it.

ROSE  
It doesn't matter, it's as if I'd  
seen it. I know whose portrait it  
is.

LORD CHILTON  
I want to know who commissioned it.  
It certainly wasn't me.

ROSE  
I know.

HARRIET  
If you know everything why don't  
you enlighten us all.

MRS DUBOIS  
This has a disagreeable air of  
mystery. But there's no need to be  
upset, His Lordship loves you and a  
(MORE)

MRS DUBOIS (CONT'D)  
little jealousy doesn't spoil a  
romance.

LORD CHILTON  
I'm not jealous of some mysterious  
chap who dares to commission for  
himself a portrait of Harriet. Her  
face is hardly unknown to the  
public.

HARRIET  
(Lively) I'd like to know who  
ordered the thing!

ROSE  
This'll make you laugh. It's of me.

LORD CHILTON  
It's your portrait?

ROSE  
Yes, mine! And why not? Don't be so  
surprised.

MRS DUBOIS  
It seems peculiar.

ROSE  
Why shouldn't it be of me?  
Portraits are painted all the time,  
and of the most hideous people.

HARRIET  
And who would want to have your  
picture painted?

ROSE  
A most wonderful man who loves me,  
who has discretion and taste, who  
wants to marry me ... Captain  
Woolley.

HARRIET  
My secretary?

ROSE  
Himself.

MRS DUBOIS  
The conceited man.

HARRIET  
You're deluded. How has he had the  
time to have you painted since he  
came here?

ROSE

Because he's admired me for a long time.

HARRIET

(Brusquely) Give it to me.

HARRIET opens the box, everyone watches, she shows them the portrait.

LORD CHILTON

Just as I thought, it's you Harriet.

ROSE

But! ... I couldn't have been more wrong. (Aside) Hobbs was right.

HARRIET

(Aside) I see clearly now. (To ROSE) Why on earth did you think it was of you?

ROSE

Anyone else would have been fooled. Mr Woolley told me that his nephew loved me, that he wanted to marry me. The Captain was there and didn't contradict him. Next there's this portrait looking for its owner, so of course I thought he'd ordered it. How could I be so wrong? Curse him, curse all men and their lies. They toy with our feelings and then they humiliate us. Well enough of that, enough.

HARRIET

I see it all now. You pretend it wasn't you who ordered it Chilty but you don't fool me, this portrait belongs to you. A man of unknown name who can be found here, it's you isn't it?

ROSE

(Seriously) I really don't think so.

MRS DUBOIS

Yes, yes, it's his Lordship, why do you deny it? There's no crime in ordering a portrait of your future wife. Come on, admit it.

LORD CHILTON

(Coldly) No, Harriet, on my honour it wasn't me. I don't even know this lawyer. How could they have told him I was here? It's not possible.

MRS DUBOIS

(Pensive) I didn't think of that.

HARRIET

Whoever it is I'm keeping the portrait, no-one shall have it. But what's that noise? See what it is Rose.

**27 ACT 2: SCENE 10: HARRIET, LORD CHILTON, MRS DUBOIS, ROSE, HOBBS, CLARKE**

CLARKE

(Entering with HOBBS) You rotten swine!

ROSE

What's going on?

HOBBS

If I say a word Captain Woolley will be straight out.

CLARKE

A word from you? You'll keep your big trap shut.

HOBBS

Why don't we take this outside?

CLARKE

Let's go then.

HARRIET

What are you arguing about?

MRS DUBOIS

Come on Hobbs, tell us what you have to say about young Woolley.

CLARKE

Out with it.

HARRIET

Let him speak.

HOBBS

She's been insulting me for an hour.

CLARKE

I look after my master's interests, that's what I'm paid for, and I won't let some berk threaten him.

MRS DUBOIS

Let us hear what Hobbs has to say.

CLARKE

I dare him to say one word.

HOBBS

I'll tell you the truth. I was preparing Captain Woolley's room when I noticed a photograph of Mrs Smithson, the one that belongs on the piano. I thought, 'That shouldn't be there', so I was on the point of removing it when this idiot came in and stopped me.

CLARKE

Why remove it? The Captain told me he particularly admired it, I saw him contemplating it with all his heart. What right do you have to take it away?

HOBBS

It wouldn't be appropriate to leave it there.

CLARKE

Nonsense.

MRS DUBOIS

(Acid) It doesn't belong there and it should be removed. The secretary can get by without his contemplations.

HARRIET

(Smiling, joking) Oh, you're right, put it back where it belongs, I'm sure he won't mind. (To CLARKE and HOBBS) Leave us alone, I've got more important things to think about. (CLARKE and HOBBS leave.)

**28 ACT 2: SCENE 11: HARRIET, LORD CHILTON, MRS DUBOIS, ROSE**

LORD CHILTON  
(Scoffing) At least we can be sure  
this secretary has good taste.

HARRIET  
(Ironically) Indeed.

MRS DUBOIS  
I never liked that man, I have a  
good eye and I didn't like him from  
the first. We need to find out what  
else Hobbs knows about him, you  
heard his threat. There's something  
fishy about this secretary, you're  
the only one who doesn't see it.

LORD CHILTON  
They tell me he hasn't even  
exchanged his uniform for a decent  
suit. Isn't that rather vulgar?

HARRIET  
I find it gallant. Remind us what  
you did in the War Chilty, weren't  
you commander of the Camels?

ROSE  
The Camels? I never knew you were  
in Palestine Lord Chilton.

LORD CHILTON  
You're being mischievous Harriet.

ROSE  
You mean you weren't in the Camel  
Corps?

LORD CHILTON  
I was on the board of the London  
Zoological Society, as you know  
Harry. In fact I was responsible  
for the safety of all the  
ungulates, not just the camels.  
They're very sensitive to aerial  
bombardment.

MRS DUBOIS  
(Exasperated) Let's stick to the  
matter at hand, there's something  
fishy about this secretary. You  
Harriet are the only one who  
doesn't see it.

ROSE

(Miserably) He certainly let me down.

HARRIET

What is it that you see and I don't? (Laughing ironically) I don't see why I should let a man go in whom I have all confidence and who is a man of substance. He serves me well, perhaps even too well. That's what hasn't escaped my notice.

MRS DUBOIS

You're blind!

HARRIET

(Smiling) On the contrary, I see exactly what you're up to. I agree that we should listen to Hobbs though, that's good advice. Rose, go and tell him I want to talk to him. If he gives me reasonable evidence that I should sack this man for having looked at a photograph he'll be gone without delay. Otherwise let's give him a chance to prove his worth.

MRS DUBOIS

(Lively) He'll let you down and that's my final word on it.

LORD CHILTON

He's trying to turn you against me. Very well, I'll withdraw from the case, I'd rather lose the land than carry on with this wretched dispute.

MRS DUBOIS

(Decisively) What dispute? The marriage will settle that.

LORD CHILTON

Decide what to do with this secretary Harriet. If you dismiss him it'll be easy to arrange things between ourselves but I won't wait for ever for your decision.

MRS DUBOIS

I'll follow His Lordship, I won't talk of it any more. You accuse me of seeing things ... Your stubbornness will end as

(MORE)

MRS DUBOIS (CONT'D)  
helplessness. I'm sure Hobbs will  
put you in the picture, I'll leave  
you with him. (They leave with  
ROSE)

29 ACT 2: SCENE 12: HOBBS, HARRIET

HOBBS  
I was told you wanted to talk to me  
Madame?

HARRIET  
You're very careless Hobbs, very  
indiscreet. I told you to keep  
quiet about Hector, you knew the  
consequences if you spoke out and  
you promised me you wouldn't. Why  
then have you quarrelled over this  
photograph with that idiot Clarke  
and then come here putting ideas  
into everyone's heads?

HOBBS  
I acted out of nothing but respect  
for you.

HARRIET  
(Lively) Respect! I needed your  
silence to get me out of this mess  
and instead you've made it worse.  
Without you I wouldn't even know  
that this man loved me. I'm walking  
on eggshells every time he's in the  
room.

HOBBS  
I understand I was wrong.

HARRIET  
Well keep quiet from now on, I want  
to forget what you told me.

HOBBS  
I've learnt my lesson.

HARRIET  
I'm supposed to be asking you what  
you know about him. My mother and  
Lord Chilton are expecting you to  
tell me shocking things. What  
report should I give them?

HOBBS

That's easy, just tell them people have told me that he isn't up to the job.

HARRIET

They want me to get rid of him. But I should take care, this excessive passion that you tell me has gripped him and which could explode in his sorrow, why he needs sensitive treatment. Could I heap further despair on him? Who knows what he's already been through? (She calms down) And that story he span Rose, where did that come from?

HOBBS

That's nothing! The Captain never clapped eyes on her, it's the uncle who made that story up with the intention of marrying them off. He told me he didn't dare go back on it for fear of turning the whole household against him. He was quite emotional.

HARRIET

He told you that?

HOBBS

Yes, just now in the garden, he begged me to keep his passion for you secret and to forget the fit of anger he had when I left him. I told him I'd keep quiet but that I could hardly stay in the same house as him and that he would have to go. And he burst into tears. He was sobbing his heart out.

HARRIET

Don't torment yourself about it. Maybe the uncle is right ... A romance with Rose might take his mind off me.

HOBBS

(As if leaving) It's just a story, there's nothing in it.

HARRIET

Wait. What shall I do? I've only your word that he loves me; he hasn't said a word. I don't really have any evidence to sack him. It's  
(MORE)

HARRIET (CONT'D)  
true that it would be insufferable  
if he told me that he loved me but  
he's so self-controlled.

HOBBS  
He isn't good enough for you. If he  
had money, breeding, it would be a  
different matter. But he's only  
rich in talent.

HARRIET  
(With a sad tone) This is the way  
of the world. I don't know what  
I'll do with him. I don't know.  
I'll see.

HOBBS  
If you need a pretext to be rid of  
him, this portrait that Rose  
thought was of her, from what she  
told me ...

HARRIET  
No, I can't accuse him of that.  
It's Lord Chilton who ordered it.

HOBBS  
Nonsense, it's the Captain's own  
work! He'd been working on it for  
two months with his own hand when I  
left him.

HARRIET  
Enough, I've had enough of your  
gossip. Here he is, I've a mind to  
set him a trap.

HOBBS  
Yes, make him speak his mind and  
then you can command him to leave.

HARRIET  
Leave us alone.

**30 ACT 2: SCENE 13: HECTOR, HARRIET, HOBBS**

HOBBS  
(Leaving, passing HECTOR closely  
and quickly) Things couldn't be  
going better.

HECTOR  
I came to ask for your decision  
Madame. I'm still not sure of my  
position and it seems like everyone  
(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)  
schemes to get rid of me. I'm worried that you'll give in to your mother and I'll end up with nothing.

HARRIET  
(Softly) Be calm, all her plots mean nothing. I'm the mistress of this house, your fate isn't in the hands of those who pursue you.

HECTOR  
(Worried) All I have is your support, without it I'm lost.

HARRIET  
I won't let you down but I advise you of one thing - show confidence. Give them a reason to believe in your ability. You refused to persuade me to take their side in the case. Bend a little, tell them you've changed your mind. That will convince them that you're useful. After thinking things through I've decided to marry Lord Chilton.

HECTOR  
(Emotional) You've decided?

HARRIET  
Yes, I've made my decision. Lord Chilton will think you've persuaded me, I'll tell him so myself and I promise that you'll keep your job. It's the best outcome for all concerned. (Aside) He looks quite pale.

HECTOR  
And what would happen to me?

HARRIET  
(Deliberately) Nothing, you'll be working for me and my husband, there'll be more than enough work for you. Find a pen, I want you to take a letter.

HECTOR  
Eh! Who is it to?

HARRIET  
To his Lordship. I'm going to give him a nice surprise with this little note I want you to take down. (HECTOR stares into space and  
(MORE)

HARRIET (CONT'D)  
doesn't even go to the desk) Well?  
Sit down! What are you dreaming  
about?

HECTOR  
(Still distracted) Yes, yes of  
course.

HARRIET  
(Aside, while he finds his place)  
He doesn't know what he's doing.  
Look how he's going on.

HECTOR  
(Aside, looking for paper) Ah!  
Hobbs was lying to me.

HARRIET  
Are you ready?

HECTOR  
I can't find any paper.

HARRIET  
(Going herself) No paper! It's  
there in front of you.

HECTOR  
Oh yes.

HARRIET  
Write, 'Come quickly, my Lord, your  
marriage is certain.' Have you  
written that?

HECTOR  
What?

HARRIET  
Aren't you listening? 'Your  
marriage is certain. Stop. Mrs  
Smithson wished me to write to  
you.' Stop (Aside) He's suffering  
but he doesn't say anything. Won't  
he speak? (Dictating) 'This has  
nothing to do with any fears over  
the result of the doubtful legal  
case.' Stop

HECTOR  
I told you that you would win it.  
Doubtful! Out of the question.

HARRIET  
It doesn't matter. Carry on. Next  
paragraph 'I'm asked to assure you  
that the only just outcome possible  
(MORE)

HARRIET (CONT'D)  
is that which you require.' Stop.

HECTOR  
(Aside) Heavens! I'm lost. But, but  
I thought you didn't have feelings  
for him?

HARRIET  
Let's finish this, '... The only  
outcome ... You require.' Is your  
hand shaking, you seem odd. What's  
wrong? Are you unwell?

HECTOR  
I don't feel quite right.

HARRIET  
What! So suddenly! That's all. Fold  
the letter and write, 'Lord  
Chilton, Ebury Square' You can get  
Clarke to take it by hand. (Aside)  
My heart's beating. (To HECTOR) But  
what have you written there! I can  
hardly read the address. (Aside)  
That's enough to convince him.

HECTOR  
(Aside) Why do I have to suffer  
like this? Hobbs didn't warn me of  
anything.

**31 ACT 2: SCENE 14: HARRIET, HECTOR, ROSE**

ROSE  
(Entering) So you're here Captain  
Woolley. Good, you can confirm  
everything that I'm about to say.  
Mrs Smithson, you've offered to  
find someone for me over the years  
but I've never taken you up on it.  
Today someone came to ask me for my  
hand, at least that's what he led  
me to believe. He even turned down  
a rich woman to marry me, he made a  
promise to me in front of a  
witness, his uncle. But since the  
death of my parents you've acted as  
my guardian so I wanted to consult  
you first. Captain Woolley, all you  
have to do is to talk to Mrs  
Smithson, if she is happy for me to  
marry you I'm yours. (She leaves)

32 ACT 2: SCENE 15: HARRIET, HECTOR

HARRIET

(Aside, emotional) Is she mad!  
(Aloud) How charming, you've made  
an excellent choice there, she's a  
lovely girl.

HECTOR

(With a beaten air) But she's  
mistaken.

HARRIET

Mistaken! She told me that you've  
had your eye on her for some time.  
You can see that she loves you.

HECTOR

(Sadly) It's all a mistake. My  
uncle made up the whole story. It's  
the same with this rich woman that  
they talk about. I had nothing to  
do with it. I'm in no state to give  
my heart to anyone, I've lost it  
for ever and the greatest fortune  
wouldn't tempt me.

HARRIET

In that case you must tell Rose.

HECTOR

I have in so many words but she  
takes everything the wrong way.  
It's so difficult. I wouldn't want  
her to make trouble for me here.

HARRIET

Why are you so set on working here?

HECTOR

It's the perfect place for me.

HARRIET

But it's absurd! One place is as  
good as another. And the woman you  
love, will you still see her if  
you're working and living here?

HECTOR

(Still beaten) Not as often as I'd  
like, if I saw her every second of  
the day I wouldn't think it often  
enough.

HARRIET

(Aside) He's so sweet! (Aloud) Is she young? Has she been married?

HECTOR

She's a widow.

HARRIET

Then why shouldn't you marry her? No doubt she loves you.

HECTOR

She doesn't even know that I worship her.

HARRIET

It's ludicrous! She doesn't know that you love her? And yet you would sacrifice your future for her? How, if you love her so much, have you been able to keep quiet about it? At least you should tell her? It seems to me that you should try to make her love you as well, that would be natural and reasonable.

HECTOR

I have no hope of gaining her love. No, she's too good for me, I would rather die than make her unhappy by telling her I loved her.

HARRIET

There's no woman on earth who could live up to such passion! Tell me more about her, who is she?

HECTOR

Please don't make me describe her. No-one is as beautiful or as lovable as her.

HARRIET

(Lowers her eyes and continues) But you're absurd. What do you expect of this love for a person who will never know that you love her? It's too bizarre. What is it that you want?

HECTOR

The pleasure of seeing her, and of being with her is enough for me.

HARRIET

But how can you do that if you live and work here?

HECTOR

I have her portrait to remind me of her.

HARRIET

Her portrait? Have you had one made?

HECTOR

No, but to amuse myself in Flanders I learned to paint. And I painted it myself.

HARRIET

(Aside) I should push him a little.  
(Aloud) Show me this portrait.

HECTOR

Oh no, I'd rather not. Since my love is without hope I'd rather keep secret the object of my love.

HARRIET

This portrait ... (Showing the box)  
Is it in here?

HECTOR

It can't be.

HARRIET

(Opening the box) It would be extraordinary. But have a look.

HECTOR

(He goes on his knees) How can you forgive me?

HARRIET

Hector, I'm not at all upset. I know you've been through a lot over there. (She caresses his face) Get up, please, I forgive you.

ROSE

(Arrives, then leaves) Ah! (HECTOR gets up)

HARRIET

Oh heavens! It's Rose, she saw you.

HECTOR

(Pretending to be disconcerted) I don't think so.

HARRIET  
She saw you I tell you. Leave me,  
go away, you're insufferable. Give  
me the letter. (When he has gone) I  
must get rid of this man!

**33 ACT 2: SCENE 16: HARRIET, HOBBS**

HOBBS  
(Entering) Did he speak to you?

HARRIET  
No, he said nothing to me, we'll  
have no further discussion of the  
subject. (She goes)

HOBBS  
Now we're at the heart of the  
matter!

**34 ACT 2: SCENE 17: HOBBS, HECTOR**

HECTOR  
Ah! Hobbs.

HOBBS  
Get away.

HECTOR  
I don't know how to describe the  
conversation I just had with her.

HOBBS  
What are you thinking of? She's not  
two steps away. Do you want to lose  
everything?

HECTOR  
You need to explain to me.

HOBBS  
Go into the garden.

HECTOR  
One thing ...

HOBBS  
In the garden, I'll be there soon.

HECTOR  
But ...

HOBBS  
I'm not listening to you any more.

HECTOR  
This is a catastrophe.

**35 ACT 3: SCENE 1: HOBBS, HECTOR**

HOBBS  
No I tell you, don't lose time. Is the letter ready?

HECTOR  
(Showing it to him) Yes, here, and I've addressed it to Chelsea Barracks.

HOBBS  
Are you sure that Clarke doesn't know that part of town?

HECTOR  
She doesn't know her way past the nearest pub.

HOBBS  
Did you tell her to talk to me or Rose to find where it is?

HECTOR  
Of course.

HOBBS  
Go and give it to her then, I'll take care of Rose.

HECTOR  
I'm in two minds, aren't we going too fast with Harriet? She's in such a state.

HOBBS  
Oh! No quarter, we must strike while she's weak. Can't you see that she tried to trick me, that she pretended that you've said nothing to her? I'll teach her to try to trick a trickster.

HECTOR  
You knew she wanted me to say something about my feelings for her, why didn't you tell me?

HOBBS

Oh that would have been a good idea! It's your sincerity that will win her heart - don't you see the effect you had on her? She must marry you.

HECTOR

She's going to get rid of me.

HOBBS

I doubt it, it's too late. That moment has passed. She must marry you.

HECTOR

Her mother, you'll see, her mother will have her way.

HOBBS

I count on her making a nuisance of herself, it helps us all the more.

HECTOR

She's worried that Rose saw us together.

HOBBS

That's good, she needs to worry more. We must force her hand. When I saw the way the conversation was going I made Rose come back a second time. This love of yours must be known through the whole house.

HECTOR

But Harriet told me that she couldn't stand me any longer.

HOBBS

All to the good. Would you rather she didn't care? Seize her heart and she won't resist! Come on, that's enough chat, we must act.

HECTOR

I love her Hobbs, if our plan fails I'll be in despair.

HOBBS

I know you love her, that's why I don't listen to you. You're in no state to judge anything. Look, Rose is coming, make yourself scarce. I've got a little job for her while you deal with Clarke. (HECTOR

(MORE)

HOBBS (CONT'D)  
leaves)

**36 ACT 3: SCENE 2: HOBBS, ROSE**

ROSE  
(Sadly) I was looking for you.

HOBBS  
What is it?

ROSE  
You were right.

HOBBS  
About what?

ROSE  
The Captain has designs on Mrs  
Smithson.

HOBBS  
Oh! Of course.

ROSE  
We must tell her, it's time to get  
rid of that man.

HOBBS  
What! I'll have no part in that, I  
told the mother that he wasn't  
suited to business, that's enough.

ROSE  
But is that all you know about him?  
Don't hide anything from us, you'll  
be well rewarded.

HOBBS  
I only know him not to be  
experienced in business, as I said.

ROSE  
Don't lie.

HOBBS  
Me? A liar?!

ROSE  
It's certain that he loves her.

HOBBS  
No question. I told her about that.

ROSE  
And what did she say?

HOBBS  
That I was an idiot who should mind his own business.

ROSE  
She's very touchy, I don't want to upset her any more.

HOBBS  
There is something more though.

ROSE  
Yes?

HOBBS  
I know that he's asked Clarke to deliver a letter. What do you think that could be about?

ROSE  
A letter? Yes ... I'll go and find Clarke.

HOBBS  
You won't have to go far, she's here.

**37 ACT 3: SCENE 3: HOBBS, ROSE, CLARKE**

CLARKE  
(Seeing HOBBS) Oh, it's you.

HOBBS  
Who were you expecting, Charlie Chaplin?

ROSE  
What do you want?

CLARKE  
Do you know the way to Chelsea Barracks?

ROSE  
Yes, of course.

CLARKE  
It's just that Captain Woolley, who I serve, asked me to take a note there and to ask this clown the way.

HOBBS

(To ROSE, aside) You must see what's in this letter. (Aloud) No, no, Miss Rose don't tell him anything. Let her go and work out the way for herself. Call yourself a Londoner?

CLARKE

Just shut your trap before I shut it for you.

ROSE

(Artlessly) Don't interfere Hobbs, I'll deal with this. Would you like me to take the letter? I could do with some fresh air.

CLARKE

Very kind of you.

HOBBS

Very kind of you to take the job off this idler.

CLARKE

Why don't you sling your hook?

HOBBS

I will. (HOBBS leaves)

ROSE

(Alone with CLARKE) Don't bother with him, give me the letter.

CLARKE

Take it then, you're doing me a favour. If you need me for something any time I'll be happy to oblige. (ROSE pulls a face). Be sure to see that it goes to the right place, nothing's too good for the Captain, he's a gent.

ROSE

(Aside) Cheeky bugger.

CLARKE

(Leaving) I am forever your servant.

ROSE

Cheerio.

CLARKE

(Coming back) If you see him don't tell him that I passed the job to  
(MORE)

CLARKE (CONT'D)  
you, he gave me ten bob for my  
trouble. (She goes)

**38 ACT 3: SCENE 4: MRS DUBOIS, LORD CHILTON, ROSE**

ROSE  
(Alone for a moment) I'll say  
nothing until I see what this  
letter is about.

MRS DUBOIS  
(Entering with LORD CHILTON) So  
Rose what did Hobbs tell you?

ROSE  
Nothing that you didn't already  
know.

MRS DUBOIS  
Hobbs is a rascal, he's deceiving  
us.

LORD CHILTON  
Surely he knows something else.

MRS DUBOIS  
I've sent for the uncle. If he  
doesn't take this soldier back  
where he came from I'll tell  
Harriet that this nobody from  
nowhere dares to love her and she's  
bound to show him the door. I've  
already asked his Lordship's man to  
come here. He's waiting to start  
work.

ROSE  
I may have more information but I  
don't have the time to tell you  
about it now. I'm going to find the  
truth in this, I'll take care of  
his dismissal myself. (She makes to  
go.)

**39 ACT 3: SCENE 5: UNCLE CHARLES, MRS DUBOIS, LORD CHILTON, ROSE**

UNCLE CHARLES  
(To Rose as she leaves) Hello my  
niece. Do you know why they called  
(MORE)

UNCLE CHARLES (CONT'D)  
me?

ROSE  
(Brusquely) Go and find your niece  
somewhere else, I don't like liars.  
(She leaves)

UNCLE CHARLES  
What a rude girl. (To MRS DUBOIS)  
You called me Madame, what's the  
matter?

MRS DUBOIS  
(Surly) Ah it's you, the solicitor.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Yes Madame, I promise you it's me.

MRS DUBOIS  
And what gave you the notion, I  
pray, of inflicting this nephew on  
us in this fashion?

UNCLE CHARLES  
Don't you like him?

MRS DUBOIS  
He's a disgrace.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Really Madame! If he's not to your  
taste you are difficult to please.

MRS DUBOIS  
It would be a great pleasure to all  
of us if he were to disappear.

UNCLE CHARLES  
Does he work for you?

MRS DUBOIS  
No, but he displeases me and his  
Lordship here, who is due to marry  
my daughter.

UNCLE CHARLES  
This is news! But, Madame, since he  
isn't your employee it's hardly  
essential that he pleases you. He  
pleases Mrs Smithson so everybody  
should be happy, too bad for those  
who aren't.

MRS DUBOIS  
(Infuriated) Stop talking cobblers  
you old ponce.

UNCLE CHARLES

What! If you want to talk the language of the gutter two can play at that game. Why don't you shut your big trap you jumped up tart.

LORD CHILTON

Softly, softly, let's be gentlemen.

UNCLE CHARLES

As you wish my Lord, as you wish but it's nothing to do with you either. Since I haven't the honour of your acquaintance, I hardly expect to take your advice on etiquette.

LORD CHILTON

Whether you know me or not you shouldn't say that your nephew's conduct mustn't please us. We're hardly uninterested in the business.

UNCLE CHARLES

You're all perfect strangers to this business. What's more Hector is a man of honour, which is more than I can say for certain other people around here. She insults a man who served this country for four years.

MRS DUBOIS

Your nephew is a gold-digger.

UNCLE CHARLES

What! You take that back you old bag.

MRS DUBOIS

Take it back? Who is this little solicitor talking to Lord Chilton? Aren't you going to shut him up?

UNCLE CHARLES

And how would he do that? Silence me? I've been a lawyer for forty years, nothing shuts me up!

MRS DUBOIS

Only forty!

40 ACT 3: SCENE 6: HARRIET, MRS DUBOIS, UNCLE CHARLES, LORD CHILTON

HARRIET

(Entering) What's all this noise?

UNCLE CHARLES

You came at just the right time.  
It's about Hector, have you any  
complaints about him?

HARRIET

Not at all.

UNCLE CHARLES

Has he acted dishonestly?

HARRIET

Certainly not.

UNCLE CHARLES

Yet according to your mother he is  
an unscrupulous gold-digger who  
must be removed from your service.  
And because I defend him they  
accuse me of being as bad as him.

HARRIET

(Coldly) They're talking rot,  
you've been a constant source of  
sound advice. As for Captain  
Woolley, the fact that I've  
employed him speaks for itself, I  
have the utmost confidence in him.  
But I came to talk to you Lord  
Chilton - they tell me there's a  
man below that you've brought for  
me. Surely they must be mistaken?

LORD CHILTON

Madame, it's true that he came with  
me but it's your mother ...

MRS DUBOIS

I'll explain, my child. Yes, I  
asked the man here to replace that  
soldier. I've said as much to your  
solicitor but he doesn't listen.

UNCLE CHARLES

Madame! I ...

MRS DUBOIS

(Lively) Peace! You've spoken  
enough! (To HARRIET) I hardly said  
the nephew was a gold-digger. But I  
don't exclude the possibility.

UNCLE CHARLES

Actionable slander.

MRS DUBOIS

Oh, he's an honest man, so be it. At least we haven't any proof to the contrary. As to him being a scoundrel, that's undeniable. You say that you'll keep him, you'll do no such thing.

HARRIET

I assure you he's staying.

MRS DUBOIS

You can't do it. Could you employ a secretary who is interested in you?

UNCLE CHARLES

Who would you like him to be interested in? An old trout like you?

HARRIET

Would you prefer that my secretary was uninterested in my affairs?

MRS DUBOIS

No, it's not that. When I say that he's interested in you I mean that he's in love with you. That he is what is commonly called mad about you, that he sighs for you, that you are the secret object of his affections.

UNCLE CHARLES

My Hector?

HARRIET

(Laughing) 'The secret object of his affections'! Oh yes, very secret I think. I don't believe it. But since you know everyone's secrets what about my other people? Maybe they all love me? Mr Woolley, aren't you in love with me?

UNCLE CHARLES

If I was of an age where it was appropriate I assure you I would be.

MRS DUBOIS

It's not about this old fool ... Talk seriously. Your people don't have portraits made of you, your

(MORE)

MRS DUBOIS (CONT'D)  
people don't spend their time  
contemplating your photograph, your  
people don't swoon over you like a  
love-sick puppy.

UNCLE CHARLES  
(To HARRIET) I ignored her calling  
me an old fool out of politeness to  
you but her tone is something  
shocking.

HARRIET  
It would be childish of me to  
believe such talk. He's in love  
with me you say? I didn't notice.  
Why should I get upset over  
something he hasn't done. Besides,  
who wouldn't be flattered by  
attention from such a gallant man.

**41 ACT 3: SCENE 7: HARRIET, MRS DUBOIS, UNCLE CHARLES, LORD  
CHILTON, HECTOR**

HECTOR  
(Entering) I'm sorry to interrupt  
you Madame but I've had enough of  
rumours ... I have reason to  
understand that my services are no  
longer agreeable. I've come to find  
out what my destiny is to be.

MRS DUBOIS  
(Ironically) His destiny. The  
destiny of a secretary, how poetic.

UNCLE CHARLES  
And why shouldn't he have a  
destiny?

HARRIET  
(Lively to her mother) Keep your  
sniping to yourself. (To HECTOR)  
What rumours? Why are you so  
worried?

HECTOR  
There's a man here who seeks to  
take my place.

HARRIET  
I didn't ask him here.

HECTOR  
Everything points to my dismissal.  
Rose came to tell me that within an  
hour I would be out of the door.

HARRIET

Rose has told you a lot of rubbish.  
Just for a change.

MRS DUBOIS

He's already been here too long, he  
should be out immediately.

HARRIET

Don't worry Captain Woolley, If you  
were the least agreeable man on  
earth I'd still keep you on. I've  
had enough of plotting - the other  
man can get packing, let his  
sponsors pay him off.

**42 ACT 3: SCENE 8: ROSE, HARRIET, MRS DUBOIS, UNCLE CHARLES,  
LORD CHILTON, HECTOR**

ROSE

(Coldly on entering) Don't be in a  
hurry to send Lord Chilton's man  
away. Here's a letter of  
recommendation for him and it's  
Captain Woolley who's written it  
himself.

HARRIET

What do you mean?

ROSE

(Giving the letter to LORD CHILTON)  
This deserves to be read aloud,  
it's been written by the Captain to  
his commanding officer.

LORD CHILTON

Very well, let's see. (Reading  
aloud) 'I'm writing to inform you  
that I plan to return to the  
regiment as I think I'm to be  
dismissed from my current position.  
The lady who employed me can no  
longer ignore the unfortunate  
passion I have for her and from  
which I can never be cured.'

MRS DUBOIS

'Passion!' Do you hear that my  
child?

LORD CHILTON

(Reading) 'By error a portrait of  
her which I painted for my own  
pleasure was delivered to her  
(MORE)

LORD CHILTON (CONT'D)  
house.'

MRS DUBOIS  
Oh, he's an artist now!

LORD CHILTON  
(Reading) 'I was away and he left  
it with a girl of the house.'

MRS DUBOIS  
(To ROSE) A girl of the house.  
That's you.

LORD CHILTON  
(Reading) 'They suspected the  
portrait belonged to me so I think  
everything will be discovered. I'll  
be dismissed and will no longer see  
the woman that I love.'

MRS DUBOIS  
'That I love!' Ah! 'That I love!'

LORD CHILTON  
(Reading) 'I would become despised  
by her.'

MRS DUBOIS  
I think he's not wrong there.

LORD CHILTON  
(Reading) 'Not because of my lack  
of wealth, which is the kind of  
contempt of which I don't believe  
she is capable.'

MRS DUBOIS  
Eh! Why not?

LORD CHILTON  
(Reading) 'But only because of the  
lack of worth I have compared to  
her despite the esteem in which I'm  
held by so many good people.'

MRS DUBOIS  
And what reason do these people  
have to esteem him?

LORD CHILTON  
(Reading) 'Such being the case I  
have nothing to do in London. You  
are on the eve of returning  
overseas and I am determined to  
follow you. Yours in service,  
Captain Hector Woolley'

MRS DUBOIS

Bon voyage to the gallant young soldier.

UNCLE CHARLES

Such a romantic reason for re-enlisting!

MRS DUBOIS

So, now you may dismiss him with a clean conscience.

LORD CHILTON

Everything seems to be clear to me.

HARRIET

(To HECTOR) What! This letter is genuine? You wrote this?

HECTOR

Madame ...

HARRIET

Get out. (HECTOR leaves)

UNCLE CHARLES

Well! What? He's in love. It's not always the case that handsome men fall in love. And you see he hasn't taken any of the offers made to him. His love has cost him 15 thousand a year without thinking of the dangers he's returning to. There's the rub. If he'd been rich he would have been worth as much as any other man. (Confronting MRS DUBOIS) And you'd be more than happy with him. Well you can sort it out amongst yourselves. I am your servant Madame. (He bows to HARRIET and goes)

ROSE

Shall I show up the man his Lordship brought Madame?

HARRIET

Did I hear someone speak? Get gone, you're wasting your time talking to me. (ROSE leaves)

MRS DUBOIS

But she's right, Lord Chilton is a good judge of character, just take his recommendation.

HARRIET

I don't want to.

LORD CHILTON

Is it because he's my man Harry?

HARRIET

(Ironically) How perceptive you are Lord Chilton.

LORD CHILTON

You say that with a rather surprising air of vivacity.

MRS DUBOIS

But really I don't recognise you. What's wrong?

HARRIET

Everything. Everything is wrong. Everyone has been twisting me and deceiving me to their own ends.

MRS DUBOIS

(Stunned) I really don't understand.

LORD CHILTON

I assure you I had no part in any of this. I'll return when you've calmed down.

MRS DUBOIS

I'll come with you. Come and find us when you're ready. You're not thinking straight Harriet, think about your future. (They leave)

**43 ACT 3: SCENE 9: HARRIET, HOBBS**

HOBBS

(Entering) Madame, you're free at last. He's leaving, I just met him, more dead than alive. Everyone in the house has seen his madness. He was going back to his rooms to pack. His sighing was almost comic but I pitied him. He seemed lost ... so pale, so sad. I'm afraid he may do something desperate.

HARRIET

(Who hasn't looked at him to now and who is still dreaming says aloud) Is someone with him? Won't  
(MORE)

HARRIET (CONT'D)  
you help him? Must he be killed  
this man?

HOBBS  
I told Clarke to keep an eye on  
him, I don't think anything will  
happen. But I think that he'll ask  
to talk to you and I would advise  
you not to see him again. It  
wouldn't help either of you.

HARRIET  
(Dryly) Don't get above yourself, I  
can run my own affairs.

HOBBS  
The letter sealed it. I thought it  
would be useful to you if it found  
its way to Rose. ... Wasn't I  
right?

HARRIET  
(Coldly) What! You gave that letter  
to Rose? It's your fault that I  
suffered this scene just now?

HOBBS  
(Freely) Yes of course.

HARRIET  
Weasel! Get out of my sight.

HOBBS  
(Stunned) But I thought I did  
right.

HARRIET  
Get out I said! I told you not to  
get involved and now you've wrapped  
me up in the very entanglement I  
wanted to avoid. You spread all the  
rumours. It wasn't out of loyalty  
to me that you told me that he  
loved me, you did it for sport like  
a wanton boy. You've killed him and  
you've betrayed me. I never want to  
see your face again. No argument.

HOBBS  
(Laughing as he leaves) This is  
perfect.

44 ACT 3: SCENE 10: HARRIET, ROSE

ROSE  
(Entering, sadly) I know you're  
you're angry with me Madame. I  
think you'd be happier if I asked  
you to dismiss me.

HARRIET  
(Coldly) As you wish.

ROSE  
Would you like me to go straight  
away?

HARRIET  
Do what you like.

ROSE  
This has been the worst day of my  
life.

HARRIET  
Oh spare me your self-pity.

ROSE  
I'm in despair.

HARRIET  
(With impatience) You don't want to  
leave? Well stay then, but let's  
finish with all this sobbing.

ROSE  
You've been such a good employer,  
and friend. And now I fear that you  
don't trust me any more.

HARRIET  
And why should I? Shall I invent  
some more stories for you to spread  
around?

ROSE  
Then you are dismissing me?

HARRIET  
You asked to go, I won't stop you.

ROSE  
How could it have come to this?  
I've persecuted the most lovable  
man, a man who loves you more than  
any man ever loved.

HARRIET

I know.

ROSE

He told me everything, I was angry with him but not any more. He never saw me at all, it was just a story of his uncle's. I've forgiven him.

HARRIET

How generous of you.

ROSE

How could you let me love this man? He's obviously made for you.

HARRIET

(Softly) So you love him too Rose?

ROSE

What do my feelings matter. Give me back your friendship and I'll be happy.

HARRIET

I give it to you completely.

ROSE

(Embracing her) Thank you, dear friend.

HARRIET

But you're crying!

ROSE

With happiness.

HARRIET

Don't be sad, no man is worth a lost friendship.

**45 ACT 3: SCENE 11: HARRIET, ROSE, CLARKE**

HARRIET

(CLARKE enters) What do you want?

CLARKE

I can hardly tell you, I'm in such a state. Miss Rose, you're an ungrateful traitor!

ROSE

Leave the talk of treachery and tell us what you want.

CLARKE  
Oh! This letter! What criminality.

HARRIET  
What do you want? Speak!

CLARKE  
The Captain wants to return your papers. He's waiting, almost sobbing, at the door.

ROSE  
Tell him to come in.

CLARKE  
Shall I Madame? (To HARRIET) It's up to you.

ROSE  
(Sad and tender) Speak to him, I'll leave you. (She leaves)

CLARKE  
(When she has gone) So Madame?

HARRIET  
Let him in. (CLARKE leaves)

**46 SCENE 3: ACT 12: HECTOR, HARRIET**

HARRIET  
Come here Hector.

HECTOR  
I hardly dared come to see you Madame.

HARRIET  
(Aside) I'm hardly more composed than he is. (Aloud) Why do you want to give me back my papers?

HECTOR  
I ... I have something to say ... I'm ... I can hardly speak.

HARRIET  
(Aside) Ah! I fear how this is going to turn out.

HECTOR  
One of your tenants came earlier.

HARRIET  
One of my tenants? It's possible.

HECTOR  
Yes Madame, he came to the office.

HARRIET  
I don't doubt it.

HECTOR  
And I have a cheque for you.

HARRIET  
Ah! A cheque.

HECTOR  
Would it be convenient, Madame, to give it to you sometime?

HARRIET  
Yes, of course, you can give it to me, I'll take it. (Aside) I don't know what to say to him.

HECTOR  
Would it be convenient this evening or tomorrow Madame?

HARRIET  
Tomorrow? How can you wait until then after what just happened?

HECTOR  
(Plaintively) Just one more day in your company would be precious to me.

HARRIET  
There's no way Hector, you must leave. Everyone knows you love me and more importantly they think I'm indifferent to your love.

HECTOR  
I'll be the most pitiful man on earth.

HARRIET  
Given the state of the world a botched love affair is a triviality.

HECTOR  
I've lost everything! I had your portrait, I lost that.

HARRIET

Does that matter? You can paint another.

HECTOR

I don't have the heart to paint another. I'd like the original to take away with me.

HARRIET

Give you my portrait back! Do you think that would tell you that I love you?

HECTOR

That you love me! What an idea!

HARRIET

(In a lively, naïve tone) I might.

HECTOR

(He turns from her) You're mocking me.

HARRIET

I don't know where I am any more ... stay calm ... come here. (She kisses him)

HECTOR

How did this happen? I don't deserve it, I really don't. (He turns from her) I must tell you something.

HARRIET

(Stunned) What! More secrets!

HECTOR

In everything that has happened nothing has been true except for the portrait that I painted with my own hand and ... And my love for you, which is infinite. Hobbs fixed everything else. He knew I loved you and wanted to bring us together. So, this is what my respect, my love and my honesty couldn't let me conceal from you. I would rather you hated me than continue to deceive the woman I love.

HARRIET

(Looking at him some time without speaking) If I'd been told that by anyone else I would hate you. But the fact that you've told me yourself, at such a time and risking everything ... Your sincerity ... You are the most honest man in the world. I forgive you. I love you. (They kiss)

HECTOR

Oh Harriet ...

HARRIET

They're coming, don't say a word.

**47 ACT 3: SCENE 13: HECTOR, HARRIET, LORD CHILTON, MRS DUBOIS**

MRS DUBOIS

(Seeing HECTOR) What! Is he still here?!

HARRIET

(Coldly) Yes mother. (To LORD CHILTON) Chilty, there was a question of marriage between us. You deserve someone who loves you and the fact is that I don't. Besides, you should find someone who is your equal.

MRS DUBOIS

What's that! The Woods family are more than good enough for anyone! Even this chinless wonder. What does this all mean?

LORD CHILTON

I understand Madame, I'd already thought of withdrawing my proposal. I worked everything out. Captain Woolley only came here because he loves you. You love him and you will make his fortune. That's what you're going to say.

HARRIET

I have nothing to add.

MRS DUBOIS

Our fortune to that man!

LORD CHILTON

(Sadly) There'll be no more discussions between us. Let's settle things as friends. I said I wouldn't pursue the case and I'll keep my word.

HARRIET

You're very kind my Lord, send me someone to arbitrate and that will be enough. (He leaves)

MRS DUBOIS

Oh bravo! Everyone's happy! That wretched secretary! He can be your husband as much as you like, he'll never be my son-in-law.

HARRIET

Let's leave her to calm down and sort things out together.

HOBBS

(Entering with CLARKE, both with beer in hand) Objective accomplished! By rights I should call Mrs Smithson my daughter-in-law.

CLARKE

Here's to the happy couple! (She raises a bottle of beer to the couple) I drink your good health sir, just as I promised to! Now go forth and multiply, this country needs some young blood.