

GEORGE 1

GEORGE. I could have had that part. It was mine for the taking. Now they'll give it to some no-talent has-been like... John Gielgud....I could play it better than both of them with my legs tied behind my back. Legs, legs? Legs! Of course! I almost forgot! I should write Ronald Colman a get-well card! Must do it. *(He finds a pen and a piece of paper and starts writing.)* Dear Ronnie. How are the old pins? Heh? *(He laughs; then:)* "What? Is Brutus sick? And will he steal out of his wholesome bed to dare the vile contagion of the night?" Ah, Shakespeare! Dear Ronnie. Did *you* ever play Hamlet, huh? Or Henry Five? Or Falstaff?! "If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked. If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host I know is damned." That is writing, Ronnie. That is glory on the tongue, gold on the canvas. It is not the movies, it is not television, it is the theatre! The theatre!

GEORGE 2

GEORGE. Think, woman! Think for a minute! Use your brain! Think of all the fun we have together. Rambling from town to town like minor royalty. Signing autographs and doing interviews. My God, you'll be laughing about my entrance as Cyrano for months! And think of the joy you give to thousands of people every week. As Amanda and Roxane. Lady Bracknell and Eliza Doolittle. You're an actress, Charlotte. It's in your veins. If you were caught in the spotlight of a runaway train, you'd break into a time step. It's a gift to be that reckless and insane. There are people out there in the darkness who are living through you. Dreaming of what they can be through your voice. Are you really going to turn your back on them because you lost a measly role in a film?

GEORGE & CHARLOTTE 1

CHARLOTTE. I'll give you one minute, George.

GEORGE. Charlotte, I know how disappointed you are about the movie. And so am I. But is it really that important?

(CHARLOTTE looks at her watch.)

CHARLOTTE. Forty-five seconds.

GEORGE. Oh, stop it. You can't just leave. And you certainly can't go off with Richard. You would die prematurely. He would bore you to death.

CHARLOTTE. At least he's stable. Mentally.

GEORGE. What good is that if you're bored, for God's sake!

CHARLOTTE. Fifteen seconds.

GEORGE. Would you stop that!

CHARLOTTE. George, I'm sorry, but I have to go...

GEORGE. Think, woman! Think for a minute! Use your brain! Think of all the fun we have together. Rambling from town to town like minor royalty. Signing autographs and doing interviews. My God, you'll be laughing about my entrance as Cyrano for months! And think of the joy you give to thousands of people every week. As Amanda and Roxane. Lady Bracknell and Eliza Doolittle. You're an actress, Charlotte. It's in your veins. If you were caught in the spotlight of a runaway train, you'd break into a time step. It's a gift to be that reckless and insane. There are people out there in the darkness who are living through you. Dreaming of what they can be through your voice. Are you really going to turn your back on them because you lost a measly role in a film?

CHARLOTTE. You give me a pain, George.

GEORGE. I know I do. I'm sorry. I can't help it. But I do love you, Charlotte. I haven't the faintest idea why. But the thought of living without you terrifies me.

(Long pause. CHARLOTTE just looks at him. Then her face crinkles up and she starts to cry. She looks and sounds like a sweet little girl who is crying because she can't have all the candy in the window. This is the real CHARLOTTE breaking through at last.)

CHARLOTTE. I wanted to be a movie star!

(CHARLOTTE sobs on GEORGE 's shoulder.)

GEORGE. *(Comforting her.)* I know you did.

CHARLOTTE. I wanted to be rich and famous. I wanted everybody to admire me!

GEORGE. I admire you.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, we were so close! We almost made it. After all these years.!

GEORGE. There will be other movies.

CHARLOTTE. No there won't. That was our last chance and you know it. Oh crap!

GEORGE. Perhaps we're not meant to be movie stars. Isn't it nice to know our limitations?

CHARLOTTE. No. I hate it.

GEORGE. I find it rather comforting, now that I think about it.

CHARLOTTE. I don't. I despise it. And I hate getting older. I'm starting to look like Ed Sullivan.

GEORGE. You're as beautiful now as the day we met. No. I take it back. You're more beautiful.

CHARLOTTE. You have glaucoma.

GEORGE. *(Shakes his head.)* Cataracts.

GEORGE & CHARLOTTE 2

GEORGE. Do you know what I like most about the author of *Cyrano*? He's dead, so he can't argue with me.

(**CHARLOTTE** *laughs.*) Now listen, I have a new idea for tomorrow. When the carriage arrives, during the battle, and you step out, I want you to pause, curtsy to the soldiers-and I'm going to put a spotlight on your face to suggest that you have descended like an angel from heaven.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, let's try it! Now!

GEORGE. All right.

CHARLOTTE. Clip clop clip clop clip clop. Na-a-a-y. (*A whinny.*)

GEORGE. "Halt, who goes there?!"

CHARLOTTE. "It's a coach!"

GEORGE. "What? In the camp?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Look! 'Tis Roxane!"

GEORGE. "Thank God."

CHARLOTTE. (*Weakly.*) "Yay." (*Stepping elegantly down the last two steps of the stairway.*) And I float down, out of the carriage, like an angel from heaven... "

GEORGE. Spotlight!

CHARLOTTE. (*As ROXANE.*) "Good morning, gentlemen."

GEORGE. "Roxane, on the King's service?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Yes. In the service of my own king: Love."

GEORGE. That's it! It'll make the scene!

CHARLOTTE. "Cyrano. My best friend. I need your help."

GEORGE. (*As CYRANO, kneeling, taking her hand.*) "I am at your disposal, madam, now and forever."

(*GEORGE kisses her hand and lays his cheek upon it.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Moved.*) When you do that, George, center stage, in front of a thousand people holding their breath, I wet myself, I can't help it.

GEORGE. Thank you, my darling.

CHARLOTTE. Kiss me. Now. Before the moment passes.

GEORGE & CHARLOTTE 3

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!!

CHARLOTTE. *(Skeptically.)* Really?

GEORGE. Oh, it's killing you about the film, isn't it.

CHARLOTTE. Don't be silly, that has nothing to do with it.

GEORGE. Scarlet Pimpernel, Scarlet Pimpernel.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, stop it.

GEORGE. Greer Garson!

CHARLOTTE. Don't be an idiot!

GEORGE. I'm sure it's slaying you to be stuck out here in Siberia while Miss Garson swans around the set in Hollywood like the Queen of Sheba.

CHARLOTTE. George-

GEORGE. I'm sure you had fantastical visions of being slobbered over by a legion of toadies, having your ears powdered.

CHARLOTTE. All right, George, I'm sorry!

GEORGE. *(The injured husband.)* Well it's too late now, isn't it?! You have hurt my feelings!

(GEORGE turns away and sits down, rolling his eyes, thinking that she can't see him.)

GEORGE & PAUL

GEORGE. *(With great bitterness.)* I'm a hack. I was always a hack and now I'm a bigger hack. I have sunk to new depths of hackdom.

PAUL. George, come on. You can't give up. What about all your fans?

GEORGE. My fans? *(He laughs.)* Fine. I'll call one, you call the other.

PAUL. George, you made a mistake. Everybody makes mistakes. Let me talk to her. She'll listen to me.

GEORGE. It's too late, Horatio. Just cancel the performance for this afternoon. In fact, cancel the whole tour.

PAUL. You can't do that. You'll get sued.

GEORGE. Let the bastards sue me! Let them nail me to a cross! God knows I've suffered enough.

(The phone rings, and PAUL grabs it.)

PAUL. Hello?! *(Covering the receiver, to GEORGE.)* It's your agent, from New York.

GEORGE. I'm not here.

PAUL. *(Into the phone.)* He's right here. *(To GEORGE.)* Would you talk to him!

(GEORGE snatches the phone.)

GEORGE. Hello, Henry. How's the blood-sucking business? ... Well it must be important. It's almost noon and you're up for the day... All right, I'm listening! ... Well of course I know they started filming yesterday. I have a little Ronald Colman doll that I'm sticking pins into... What? ... You're joking. *(The tone of the conversation changes completely now; something incredibly wonderful has happened and GEORGE becomes increasingly euphoric.)* ... What? ... Henry, if this is a joke, I'll kill you Oh, my God! I don't believe it!

PAUL. What happened?

GEORGE. *(To PAUL.)* Shh. *(Into the phone.)* ... Oh, my God, that's wonderful! Henry, I love you!

PAUL. George, what happened-?

GEORGE. Would you shut up! *(Into the phone.)* ... Today? ... Yes, of course I'll be here... Right. I'll call you.

(GEORGE hangs up.)

PAUL. Well?

GEORGE. *(Beside himself with excitement.)* We're back in business. *(Calling through the door.)* Charlotte, get in here!

PAUL. What did he say?

GEORGE. You are looking at a star, my boy. Gaze your fill and disregard the radiance. Squint if necessary. (*To off stage*) Charlotte!

PAUL. 'What happened?!!

GEORGE. Yesterday, on the set of *The Twilight of The Scarlet Pimpernel* Ronald Colman made his first entrance ... and fell down a flight of stairs and broke his legs.

PAUL. Oh my God...

GEORGE. As a consequence, the director of the film, Frank Capra, winner of two thousand Academy Awards, Mr. Hollywood himself, is flying here to watch the matinee.

PAUL. Frank Capra... ?

GEORGE. Ha haaaa!

GEORGE & EILEEN

(EILEEN enters down the stairs. She's clearly been crying and is still on the verge of tears, but she tries very hard to smile through it.)

EILEEN. Hi, George.

GEORGE. Eileen!

EILEEN. I guess Paul told you.

GEORGE. He did. Yes. Eileen. What can I say? What can I do?

EILEEN. I think you did it already, George.

GEORGE. Eileen, I'm so sorry. We got carried away.

EILEEN. I was such a fool!

GEORGE. We were both fools.

EILEEN. *(Breaking down.)* And now we're having a little fool! Oh, George...

GEORGE. *(Comforting her-but also afraid of discovery.)* Eileen... Shh...

EILEEN. I hope he looks just like you!

GEORGE. Oh, my God!

EILEEN. I can't do the matinee today. I'm sorry.

GEORGE. But you don't have an understudy.

EILEEN. Well I can't do it! I'd still be at the doctor's anyway.

GEORGE. The doctor's. For a test... *(She nods.)* To confirm that you are ...

EILEEN. That's right.

GEORGE. So then you might not actually be ...

EILEEN. I'm pregnant, George. Believe me. I'm two weeks late, and I've been tossing my guts up every morning for three days. What do you think it is?

GEORGE. Bad oyster?

EILEEN. I'll see you later. *(EILEEN starts to leave.)*

GEORGE. Eileen. You, uh, didn't tell Charlotte, did you?

EILEEN. I haven't seen her-

GEORGE. Good!

(GEORGE walks away...)

EILEEN. So I left her a note.

(And GEORGE trips.)

GEORGE. What?!

EILEEN. Well she has to know some time! I mean, she's gonna figure it out when I start waddling around here like a duck! "Romeo, Romeo, Quack, quack, quack, quack." Anyway, I scribbled it down on something. I think it was her copy of Variety.

GEORGE. Variety?

EILEEN. I've got to go now, George.

(EILEEN exits.)

GEORGE. Holy Mother of God.

RICHARD & CHARLOTTE

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 laughs.)

PAUL & ROZ

PAUL. *(Opening the script.)* Two adjoining balconies. Posh hotel. South of France.

ROZ. I know the play!

PAUL. The lights come up.

ROZ. For the record, I hate this. I swore I'd never set foot on a stage again. I'm breaking a vow here.

PAUL. The lights come up.

(ROZ glances at the script, then delivers her lines totally deadpan, straight out front, with an English accent:)

ROZ. "Elli Elli dear do come out it's so lovely."

PAUL. 'Just a minute.' Elyot comes out. Your father plays Elyot.

ROZ. No kidding. He always plays Elyot. He's been playing Elyot since I was five years old.

PAUL. He looks at the view. "Not so bad."

ROZ. *(Deadpan.)* "It's heavenly look at the lights of that yacht reflected in the water oh dear I'm so happy."

PAUL. "Are you?"

ROZ. "Aren't you?"

PAUL. "Of course I am. Tremendously happy."

ROZ. 'Just to think here we are you and I married.'

PAUL. "Yes, things have come to a pretty pass."

(PAUL laughs as Elyot.)

ROZ. "Don't laugh at me, you mustn't be blasé about honeymoons just because this is your second."

PAUL. "That's silly."

ROZ. "Have I annoyed you by saying that?"

PAUL. ".Just a little."

ROZ. "Oh darling I'm so sorry kiss me."

(Beat. PAUL looks at the script-a sort of double take-to make sure the kiss is really in there. It is. He kisses her-a peck, to get it over with.)

PAUL. "There."

ROZ. "Ummm, not so very enthusiastic. Again."

(Beat PAUL kisses her again.)

PAUL. "That better?"

ROZ. "Three times, please, I'm superstitious."

(Pause. PAUL leans into ROZ and they kiss with conviction. Then with passion. They really get involved. In /act, they're both getting hotter by the second. He starts kissing her neck and her ears. She's panting for breath.)

ROZ. *(Hardly able to talk.)* This isn't in the script...

PAUL. I know. I'm ad-libbing.

(PAUL and ROZ go at it again. The following lines come in gasps, between kisses.)

ETHEL & ROZ

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!

HOWARD & ROZ

(HOWARD enters. He's in his late 20's, very good natured and quite good-looking. At the moment, he's rather frightened.)

HOWARD. Sweetheart?

ROZ. Hi, honey. Come on in. *(They kiss.)*

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? *(Roz indicates the room.)*

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. *(He laughs; then sighs with anxiety.)*

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.

ROZ. Now listen to me. I want you to be very, very nice to them. Tell them how much you admire their work.

HOWARD. Well I do! I mean, my God, when I was a kid, they were on the cover of Life magazine.

"Shakespeare on Broadway-"

ROZ. "Look Out Barrymores, Here Come the Hays." They had it reproduced on their china.

HOWARD. Wow.