

ELEANOR My flowers—again!

ELEANOR and FRANCES go to retrieve the flowers. During the ensuing dialogue FRANCES fetches a cloth to wipe up any surplus water.

BRIAN Oh, dear, I'm most terribly sorry... Please, let me. (*He gathers up several flowers and in his confusion and trying to hide the newspaper, puts them in the vase upside down*)

ELEANOR That's the wrong way up!

BRIAN Oh, dear, what am I doing?

ELEANOR Idiot! (*She goes into the kitchen*)

BROMHEAD Runnicles. What the dickens do you mean stampeding in here like an escaped bullock.

BRIAN Ah—well—yes—er—beg pardon?

BROMHEAD I said...

PETER (*hastily*) Ah, well, it was all my fault, Mr Bromhead...

BRIAN Yes, it was all his fault, Mr Bromhead...

PETER You see, he's got a key to the side door...

BRIAN (*pathetically*) Key to the side door.

PETER For use in emergencies.

BRIAN In emergencies.

BROMHEAD Emergencies? There isn't an emergency now, is there?

PETER Oh, no, no, no—there isn't an emergency, now, sir.

BRIAN Emergency.

BROMHEAD Then what the hell were you playing at, Runnicles?

BRIAN (*still a pathetic echo*) Playing at, Runnicles?

PETER (*founding*) Ah, well, he was playing at—er—playing at...

FRANCES (*coming back*) The town hall.

PETER The town hall? Yes, the town hall. He's playing at the town hall next month.

FRANCES He's taken up amateur dramatics, you know.

BROMHEAD Really? In addition to the youth club football refereeing and the Round Table committee. It's a wonder you have time to come to the bank at all, Runnicles.

BRIAN I try my hardest, sir.

BROMHEAD And, anyway, I don't see what amateur dramatics have got to do with your extraordinary method of entry just now.

PETER Ah, well, it is to do with the Method, sir—that's just what it is to do with—the Method school of acting. You're having trouble with your first entrance, aren't you, Brian?

BRIAN Yes, I'm having trouble with my entrance.

FRANCES So he's following Stanislavsky.

BROMHEAD Then I sincerely hope, for all our sakes, you catch up with him before long. (*BRIAN starts to go and falls over FRANCES who is mopping up water behind him.*) And what classical piece is to be blessed with your electrifying Thespian talent?

BRIAN (*blankly*) Beg pardon?

BROMHEAD What play are you doing?

BRIAN Oh—what play am I doing? What play am I doing?

FRANCES *George and Margaret*—he's playing in *George and Margaret*.

BROMHEAD That's Savory, isn't it?

BRIAN I suppose it's a bit *risqué*, yes.

BROMHEAD *Risqué? George and Margaret? By Gerald Savory?*

BRIAN Gerald Savory? Oh, yes—I mean no.

BROMHEAD You don't seem to know much about it do you.
What part are you playing?

PETER He's playing the lead, sir.

BRIAN Yes, I'm playing George.

BROMHEAD George? But it's George and Margaret who are coming to dinner?

BRIAN They are? Oh, dear. Perhaps I'd better go. I don't want to be in the way.

BROMHEAD No, no, you damned fool. George and Margaret are coming to dinner in the play but they never come on to the stage. That's the whole point.

FRANCES Ah, but it's different in the amateur version. They do come on—right at the very end. They like to give everyone a chance, you know.

ELEANOR (*sweeping forward with her restored vase of flowers*)
I must say I'm fascinated, Mr Runnicles. Presumably you're not calling on us just to rehearse your entrance in *George and Margaret!*

BRIAN Oh, no, no, no—no. As a matter of fact I wanted—er—some advice on—er—a personal—very personal problem, sir.

BROMHEAD Really? (*Putting his arm round BRIAN in a fatherly manner*) Well, I'm sure we can use another room for a few minutes. Ah yes, the study. Come on in, old chap, and tell me all about it.

BROMHEAD *is starting to steer BRIAN towards the study, when the latter suddenly realizes what is happening.*

BRIAN No, no, not in there with you, sir. I meant Peter—Mr Hunter. I want my advice from him.