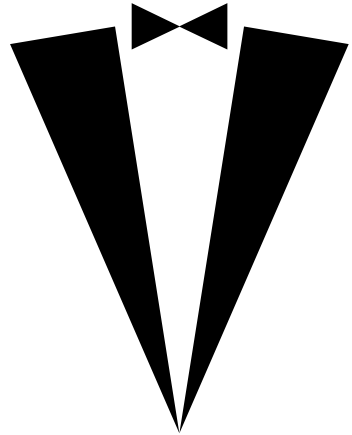


THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON

J. M. Barrie



Stage Two Downham acting edition
For performance 28th November to 1st December 2018.

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Crichton..... Kenny Entwistle
Lord Loam Bob Cleeve
Lady Mary Katie Fry
Lady Agatha..... Jenny Spurrett
Lady Catherine Jen Whiteside
Ernest Woolley Tim Martin
Reverend Treherne..... Trevor Lord
Tweeny..... Annie Wildman
Lord Brocklehurst Robert Crane
Lady Brocklehurst..... Phillipa McFall
Miss Fisher Jacqui Shepherd

ACT I - AT LOAM HOUSE, MAYFAIR

The Hon. ERNEST WOOLLEY enters from the back of the hall, walks to the door beneath the stage right. TOMPSETT, the footman, is waiting by the door, and opens it for him. CRICHTON steps out in greeting.

CRICHTON: Mr Woolley, Lord Loam is expecting you. This way sir.

(ERNEST and CRICHTON enter stage right. CRICHTON remains by the door (down stage) as ERNEST strolls to the centre, then continues looking around the room.)

ERNEST: I perceive, from the tea cups, Crichton, that the great function is to take place here.

CRICHTON: Yes, sir.

ERNEST: (*chuckling heartlessly*) The servants' hall coming up to have tea in the drawing-room! No wonder you look happy, Crichton.

CRICHTON: No, sir.

ERNEST: Do you know, Crichton, I think that with an effort you might look even happier. You don't approve of his lordship's compelling his servants to be his equals--once a month?

CRICHTON: It is not for me, sir, to disapprove of his lordship's radical views.

(ERNEST has reached centre again.)

ERNEST: Certainly not. And, after all, it is only once a month that he is affable to you.

CRICHTON: On all other days of the month, sir, his lordship's treatment of us is everything that could be desired.

(ERNEST moves to stage left.)

ERNEST: Tea cups! Life, Crichton, is like a cup of tea; the more heartily we drink, the sooner we reach the dregs.

CRICHTON: Thank you, sir.

(ERNEST moves back to centre.)

ERNEST: Crichton, in case I should be asked to say a few words to the servants, I have strung together a little speech. I was wondering where I should stand.

(He tries various places and postures, and comes to rest leaning over the sofa, whence, in dumb show, he addresses a gathering. CRICHTON, with the best intentions, gives him a footstool to stand on, and departs stage right, happily unconscious that ERNEST in some dudgeon has kicked the footstool across the room.)

(ERNEST): *(addressing an imaginary audience, and desirous of startling them at once)* Suppose you were all little fishes at the bottom of the sea--

(He is not quite satisfied with his position, though sure that the fault must lie with the chair for being too high, not with him for being too short. CRICHTON'S suggestion was not perhaps a bad one after all. He lifts the stool, but hastily conceals it behind him on the entrance of the LADIES CATHERINE and AGATHA from stage left.)

(ERNEST): And how are my little friends to-day?

(AGATHA moves to centre then to right of the sofa, where she sits. CATHERINE follows.)

AGATHA: Don't be silly, Ernest. If you want to know how we are, we are dead. Even to think of entertaining the servants is so exhausting.

CATHERINE: Besides which, we have had to decide what frocks to take with us on the yacht, and that is such a mental strain.

ERNEST: You poor over-worked things. Rest your weary limbs.

(CATHERINE sits on the sofa.)

CATHERINE: But why have you a footstool in your hand?

AGATHA: Yes?

ERNEST: Why? You see, as the servants are to be the guests I must be butler. I was practising. This is a tray, observe.

(Just here LADY MARY enters from stage left, and he holds out the footstool to her.)

(ERNEST): Tea, my lady?

(LADY MARY sits on the sofa.)

LADY MARY: It is only you, Ernest; I thought there was some one here .

(ERNEST moves to behind the sofa.)

ERNEST: Had a very tiring day also, Mary?

LADY MARY: Dreadfully. Been trying on engagement-rings all the morning.

ERNEST: *(To MARY)* What's that? *(To AGATHA)* Is it Brocklehurst?

(The energetic AGATHA nods.)

(ERNEST): You have given your warm young heart to Brocky? I don't wish to fatigue you, Mary, by insisting on a verbal answer, but if, without straining yourself, you can signify Yes or No, won't you make the effort? *(On his knees, to the left of the sofa. MARY nonchalantly shows him the ring.)* The ring! Then I am too late, too late! *(ERNEST rises and moves left. The LADIES whisper to each other and start to sham sleep.)* May I ask, Mary, does Brocky know? Of course, it was that terrible mother of his who pulled this through. Mother does everything for Brocky. Still, in the eyes of the law you will be, not her wife, but his, and, therefore, I hold that Brocky ought to be informed. Now-- If you girls are shamming sleep in the expectation that I shall awaken you in the manner beloved of ladies, abandon all such hopes.

(ERNEST slumps on a chair down left.)

LADY MARY: *(speaking without looking up)* You impertinent boy.

ERNEST: I knew that was it, though I don't know everything. Agatha, I'm not young enough to know everything.

AGATHA: Young enough?

ERNEST: Don't you see? I'm not young enough to know everything.

AGATHA: I'm sure it's awfully clever, but it's so puzzling.

(CRICHTON ushers in MR TREHERNE stage right. TREHERNE moves to centre. CRICHTON remains by the door.)

CRICHTON: The Rev. Treherne.

CATHERINE: Ernest, say it to Mr. Treherne.

ERNEST: Look here, Treherne, I'm not young enough to know everything.

TREHERNE: How do you mean, Ernest?

ERNEST: I mean what I say.

LADY MARY: Say it again; say it more slowly.

(ERNEST rises and move to TREHERNE.)

ERNEST: I'm--not--young--enough--to--know--everything.

TREHERNE: I see. What you really mean, my boy, is that you are not old enough to know everything.

(ERNEST moves to up left, and sits on a chair.)

ERNEST: No, I don't.

TREHERNE: I assure you that's it.

LADY MARY: Of course it is.

CATHERINE: Yes, Ernest, that's it.

(ERNEST moves to centre)

ERNEST: I am not young enough, Crichton, to know everything.

CRICHTON: Thank you, sir. (He goes)

ERNEST: Ah, if you had that fellow's head, Treherne, you would find something better to do with it than play cricket. I hear you bowl with your head.

(TREHERNE moves to down left and sits.)

TREHERNE: I'm afraid cricket is all I'm good for, Ernest.

CATHERINE: Indeed, it isn't. You are sure to get on, Mr. Treherne.

TREHERNE: Thank you, Lady Catherine.

CATHERINE: But it was the bishop who told me so. He said a clergyman who breaks both ways is sure to get on in England.

TREHERNE: I'm jolly glad.

(LORD LOAM enters from stage right, accompanied by LORD BROCKLEHURST. Both stand behind the sofa.)

LORD LOAM: You are here, Ernest. Feeling fit for the voyage, Treherne?

TREHERNE: Looking forward to it enormously.

LORD LOAM: That's right. Now then, Mary, up and doing, up and doing. Time we had the servants in. They enjoy it so much.

LADY MARY: They hate it.

LORD LOAM: Mary, to your duties. *(And he points severely to the tea-table.)*

ERNEST: *(To LORD BROCKLEHURST)* Congratulations, Brocky.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Thanks.

ERNEST: Mother pleased?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mother is very pleased.

ERNEST: That's good. Do you go on the yacht with us?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Sorry I can't. And look here, Ernest, I will not be called Brocky.

ERNEST: Mother don't like it?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She does not.

(CRICHTON enters.)

LORD LOAM: We are quite ready, Crichton.

LADY MARY: How Crichton enjoys it!

LORD LOAM: He is the only one who doesn't; pitiful creature.

CRICHTON: I can't help being a Conservative, my lord.

LORD LOAM: Be a man, Crichton. You are the same flesh and blood as myself.

CRICHTON: (*Rubbing his hands together as if washing them, as is his habit when agitated.*) Oh, my lord!

LORD LOAM: (*sharply*) Show them in; and, by the way, they were not all here last time.

CRICHTON: All, my lord, except the merest trifles.

LORD LOAM: It must be every one. And remember this, Crichton, for the time being you are my equal. I shall soon show you whether you are not my equal. Do as you are told.

(*CRICHTON departs stage right to obey.*)

(LORD LOAM): And girls, remember, no condescension. The first who condescends recites. By the way, Brocklehurst, can you do anything?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: How do you mean?

LORD LOAM: Can you do anything--with a penny or a handkerchief, make them disappear, for instance?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Good heavens, no.

LORD LOAM: It's a pity. Every one in our position ought to be able to do something. Ernest, I shall probably ask you to say a few words; something bright and sparkling.

ERNEST: But, my dear uncle, I have prepared nothing.

LORD LOAM: Anything impromptu will do.

ERNEST: Oh--well--if anything strikes me on the spur of the moment.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: For heaven's sake, Ernest, don't leave me for a moment; this sort of thing is utterly opposed to all my principles.

(dragging LORD BROCKLEHURST stage left.)

ERNEST: You stick to me, Brocky, and I'll pull you through.

(CRICHTON reappears to announce the guests.)

CRICHTON: Monsieur Fleury.

ERNEST: The chef.

LORD LOAM: Very charmed to see you, Monsieur Fleury.

FLEURY: Thank you very much.

(FLEURY bows to AGATHA, who is not effusive.)

LORD LOAM: Agatha--recitation!

CRICHTON: Mr. Rolleston.

LORD LOAM: How do you do, Rolleston?

CRICHTON: Mr. Tompsett. *(and another)* Miss Fisher.

LORD LOAM: This is a pleasure, Miss Fisher.

ERNEST: If I might venture, Miss Fisher .

CRICHTON: Miss Simmons.

LORD LOAM: You are always welcome, Miss Simmons.

ERNEST: At last we meet. Won't you sit down?

CRICHTON: Mademoiselle Jeanne.

LORD LOAM: Charmed to see you, Mademoiselle Jeanne.

LADY MARY: Mr. Treherne, this is Fisher, my maid.

LORD LOAM: Your what, Mary?

LADY MARY: My friend.

ERNEST: Brocklehurst, this is Tompsett. I think you have already met on the door-step.

CRICHTON: Tweeny.

LORD LOAM: So happy to see you.

FISHER: Mr Tompsett, I saw you talking to Lord Brocklehurst just now; introduce me.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: *(at the same moment to ERNEST)* That's an uncommon pretty girl; if I must feed one of them, Ernest, that's the one.

ERNEST: No you don't, it won't do, Brocky. *(To Miss FISHER.)* You are too pretty, my dear. Mother wouldn't like it. *(Discovering TWEENY.)* Here's something safer. Charming girl, Brocky, dying to know you; let me introduce you. Tweeny, Lord Brocklehurst--Lord Brocklehurst, Tweeny.

LORD LOAM: They are not all here, Crichton.

CRICHTON: Odds and ends.

(A PAGEBOY is shown in and for a moment no daughter of the home advances to him)

LORD LOAM: Which is to recite? *(To TOMPSETT)* And how are all at home?

TOMPSETT: Fairish, my lord, if 'tis the horses you are inquiring for?

LORD LOAM: No, no, the family. How's the baby?

TOMPSETT: Blooming, your lordship.

LORD LOAM: A very fine boy. I remember saying so when I saw him; nice little fellow.

TOMPSETT: Beg pardon, my lord, it's a girl.

LORD LOAM: A girl? Aha! ha! ha! exactly what I said. I distinctly remember saying, If it's spared it will be a girl. Very delighted to see you, Crichton. Mary, you know Mr. Crichton?

LADY MARY: Milk and sugar, Crichton?

CRICHTON: I'm ashamed to be seen talking to you, my lady.

LADY MARY: To such a perfect servant as you all this must be most distasteful. Oh, please do speak, or I shall have to recite. You do hate it, don't you?

CRICHTON: It pains me, your ladyship. It disturbs the etiquette of the servants' hall. After last month's meeting the pageboy, in a burst of equality, called me Crichton. He was dismissed.

LADY MARY: I wonder--I really do--how you can remain with us.

CRICHTON: I should have felt compelled to give notice, my lady, if the master had not had a seat in the Upper House. I cling to that.

LADY MARY: Do go on speaking. Tell me, what did Mr. Ernest mean by saying he was not young enough to know everything?

CRICHTON: I have no idea, my lady.

LADY MARY: But you laughed.

CRICHTON: My lady, he is the second son of a peer.

LADY MARY: Very proper sentiments. You are a good soul, Crichton.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: (*desperately to TWEENY*) And now tell me, have you been to the Opera? What sort of weather have you been having in the kitchen? (*TWEENY gurgles.*) For Heaven's sake, woman, be articulate.

CRICHTON: No, my lady; his lordship may compel us to be equal upstairs, but there will never be equality in the servants' hall.

LORD LOAM: What's that? No equality? Can't you see, Crichton, that our divisions into classes are artificial, that if we were to return to nature, which is the aspiration of my life, all would be equal?

CRICHTON: If I may make so bold as to contradict your lordship--

LORD LOAM: Go on.

CRICHTON: The divisions into classes, my lord, are not artificial. They are the natural outcome of a civilised society. *(To LADY MARY)* There must always be a master and servants in all civilised communities, my lady, for it is natural, and whatever is natural is right.

LORD LOAM: It is very unnatural for me to stand here and allow you to talk such nonsense.

CRICHTON: Yes, my lord, it is. That is what I have been striving to point out to your lordship.

AGATHA: *(to CATHERINE)* What is the matter with Fisher? She is looking daggers.

CATHERINE: The tedious creature; some question of etiquette, I suppose. How are you, Fisher?

FISHER: I am nothing, my lady, I am nothing at all.

AGATHA: Oh dear, who says so?

FISHER: His lordship has asked that kitchen wench to have a second cup of tea.

CATHERINE: But why not?

FISHER: If it pleases his lordship to offer it to her before offering it to me--

AGATHA: So that is it. Do you want another cup of tea, Fisher?

FISHER: No, my lady--but my position--I should have been asked first.

AGATHA: Oh dear.

(LORD LOAM moves to centre.)

LORD LOAM: My friends, I am glad to see you all looking so happy. It used to be predicted by the scoffer that these meetings would prove distasteful to you. Are they distasteful? I hear you laughing at the question.

(He has not heard them, but he hears them now, the watchful CRICHTON giving them a lead.)

(LORD LOAM): No harm in saying that among us to-day is one who was formerly hostile to the movement, but who to-day has been won over. I refer to Lord Brocklehurst, who, I am sure, will presently say to me that if the charming lady now by his side has derived as much pleasure from his company as he has derived from hers, he will be more than satisfied. For the time being the artificial and unnatural--I say unnatural --barriers of society are swept away. Would that they could be swept away for ever.

(The PAGEBOY cheers)

(LORD LOAM): But that is entirely and utterly out of the question. And now for a few months we are to be separated. As you know, my daughters and Mr. Ernest and Mr. Treherne are to accompany me on my yacht, on a voyage to distant parts of the earth. In less than forty-eight hours we shall be under weigh.

(But for CRICHTON'S eye the reckless PAGEBOY would repeat his success.)

(LORD LOAM): Do not think our life on the yacht is to be one long idle holiday. My views on the excessive luxury of the day are well known, and what I preach I am resolved to practise. I have therefore decided that my daughters, instead of having one maid each as at present, shall on this voyage have but one maid between them.

(Three maids rise; also three mistresses.)

CRICHTON: My lord!

LORD LOAM: My mind is made up.

ERNEST: I cordially agree.

LORD LOAM: And now, my friends, I should like to think that there is some piece of advice I might give you, some thought, some noble saying over which you might ponder in my absence. In this connection I remember a proverb, which has had a great effect on my own life. I first heard it many years ago. I have never forgotten it. It constantly cheers and guides me. That proverb is--that proverb was--the proverb I speak of--

LADY MARY: Oh dear, I believe he has forgotten it.

LORD LOAM: The proverb--that proverb to which I refer-- I have it now--.

LADY MARY: Crichton.

(CRICHTON dismisses the domestics stage right, signs to MR. TREHERNE, and they conduct LORD LOAM with dignity from the room stage left. LADY MARY moves to the down left chair.)

(LADY MARY): One maid among three grown women!

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mary, I think I had better go. That dreadful kitchenmaid--

(To LORD BROCKLEHURST.)

LADY MARY: I can't blame you, George.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Your father's views are shocking to me, and I am glad I am not to be one of the party on the yacht. My respect for myself, Mary, my natural anxiety as to what mother will say. I shall see you, darling, before you sail.

(LORD BROCKLEHURST bows to the others and goes.)

ERNEST: Selfish brute, only thinking of himself. What about my speech?

LADY MARY: One maid among three of us. What's to be done?

ERNEST: Pooh! You must do for yourselves, that's all.

LADY MARY: Do for ourselves. How can we know where our things are kept?

AGATHA: Are you aware that dresses button up the back?

CATHERINE: How are we to get into our shoes and be prepared for the carriage?

LADY MARY: Who is to put us to bed, and who is to get us up, and how shall we ever know it's morning if there is no one to pull up the blinds?

(CRICHTON returns from stage left.)

ERNEST: How is his lordship now?

CRICHTON: A little easier, sir.

LADY MARY: Crichton, send Fisher to me.

(CRICHTON goes)

ERNEST: I have no pity for you girls, I--

LADY MARY: Ernest, go away, and don't insult the broken-hearted.

ERNEST: And uncommon glad I am to go. Ta-ta, all of you. He asked me to say a few words. I came here to say a few words, and I'm not at all sure that I couldn't bring an action against him.

(ERNEST departs stage left.)

LADY MARY: My poor sisters, come here. *(They go to her doubtfully.)* We must make this draw us closer together. I shall do my best to help you in every way. Just now I cannot think of myself at all.

AGATHA: But how unlike you, Mary.

LADY MARY: It is my duty to protect my sisters.

CATHERINE: I never knew her so sweet before, Agatha. What do you propose to do, Mary?

LADY MARY: I propose when we are on the yacht to lend Fisher to you when I don't need her myself.

AGATHA: Fisher?

LADY MARY: Of course, as the eldest, I have decided that it is my maid we shall take with us.

CATHERINE: Mary, you toad.

AGATHA: Nothing on earth would induce Fisher to lift her hand for either me or Catherine.

LADY MARY: I was afraid of it, Agatha. That is why I am so sorry for you.

(The further exchange of pleasantries is interrupted by the arrival of FISHER, who stays by the door.)

(LADY MARY): Fisher, you heard what his lordship said?

FISHER: Yes, my lady.

LADY MARY: You have given me some satisfaction of late, Fisher, and to mark my approval I have decided that you shall be the maid who accompanies us.

FISHER: I thank you, my lady.

LADY MARY: That is all; you may go.

FISHER: If you please, my lady, I wish to give notice.

LADY MARY: Oh, certainly--you may go.

CATHERINE: But why, Fisher?

FISHER: I could not undertake, my lady, to wait upon three. We don't do it. Oh, my lady, to think that this affront--

LADY MARY: I thought I told you to go, Fisher.

(FISHER stands for a moment irresolute; then goes. As soon as she has gone LADY MARY puts down her book and weeps. She is a pretty woman, but this is the only pretty thing we have seen her do yet. She moves to the sofa.)

AGATHA: Serves you right.

(CRICHTON returns from stage left. CATHERINE sits on the sofa.)

CATHERINE: It will be Simmons after all. Send Simmons to me.

CRICHTON: My lady, might I venture to speak?

CATHERINE: What is it?

CRICHTON: I happen to know, your ladyship, that Simmons desires to give notice for the same reason as Fisher.

CATHERINE: Oh!

AGATHA: Then, Catherine, we take Jeanne.

CRICHTON: And Jeanne also, my lady.

(AGATHA sits on the sofa.)

AGATHA: We can't blame them. Could any maid who respected herself be got to wait upon three?

LADY MARY: I suppose there are such persons, Crichton?

CRICHTON: I have heard, my lady, that there are such.

LADY MARY: Crichton, what's to be done? We sail in two days; could one be discovered in the time?

AGATHA: Surely you can think of some one?

(CRICHTON moves to down left.)

CRICHTON: There is in this establishment, your ladyship, a young woman--

LADY MARY: Yes?

CRICHTON: A young woman, on whom I have for some time cast an eye.

CATHERINE: Do you mean as a possible lady's-maid?

CRICHTON: I had thought of her, my lady, in another connection.

LADY MARY: Ah!

CRICHTON: But I believe she is quite the young person you require. Perhaps if you could see her, my lady--

LADY MARY: I shall certainly see her. Bring her to me. *(CRICHTON goes stage right)* You two needn't wait.

CATHERINE: Needn't we? We see your little game, Mary.

AGATHA: We shall certainly remain and have our two-thirds of her.

(They sit there doggedly until CRICHTON returns with TWEENY, who looks scared, and brings her to down centre.)

CRICHTON: This, my lady, is the young person.

CATHERINE: Oh dear!

LADY MARY: Come here, girl. Don't be afraid.

CRICHTON: Her appearance, my lady, is homely, and her manners, as you may have observed, deplorable, but she has a heart of gold.

LADY MARY: What is your position downstairs?

TWEENY: I'm a tweeny, your ladyship.

CATHERINE: A what?

CRICHTON: A tweeny; that is to say, my lady, she is not at present, strictly speaking, anything; a between maid; she helps the vegetable maid. It is she, my lady, who conveys the dishes from the one end of the kitchen table, where they are placed by the cook, to the other end, where they enter into the charge of Thomas and John.

LADY MARY: I see. And you and Crichton are--ah--keeping company?

TWEENY: A butler don't keep company, my lady.

LADY MARY: Does he not?

CRICHTON: No, your ladyship, we butlers may--*(he makes a gesture with his arms)* --but we do not keep company.

AGATHA: I know what it is; you are engaged?

(TWEENY looks longingly at CRICHTON.)

CRICHTON: Certainly not, my lady. The utmost I can say at present is that I have cast a favourable eye.

LADY MARY: As you choose. But I am afraid, Crichton, she will not suit us.

CRICHTON: My lady, beneath this simple exterior are concealed a very sweet nature and rare womanly gifts.

AGATHA: Unfortunately, that is not what we want.

CRICHTON: And it is she, my lady, who dresses the hair of the ladies'-maids for our evening meals.

LADY MARY: She dresses Fisher's hair?

TWEENY: Yes, my lady, and I does them up when they goes to parties.

CRICHTON: Does!

TWEENY: Doos. And it's me what alters your gowns to fit them.

CRICHTON: What alters!

TWEENY: Which alters.

AGATHA: Mary?

LADY MARY: I shall certainly have her.

CATHERINE: We shall certainly have her. Tweeny, we have decided to make a lady's-maid of you.

TWEENY: Oh lawks!

AGATHA: We are doing this for you so that your position socially may be more nearly akin to that of Crichton.

CRICHTON: It will undoubtedly increase the young person's chances.

LADY MARY: Then if I get a good character for you from Mrs. Perkins, she will make the necessary arrangements.

TWEENY: My lady!

LADY MARY: By the way, I hope you are a good sailor.

TWEENY: You don't mean, my lady, I'm to go on the ship?

LADY MARY: Certainly.

TWEENY: But-- You ain't going, sir?

CRICHTON: No.

(*TWEENY moves to down left*)

TWEENY: Then neither ain't I.

AGATHA: YOU must.

TWEENY: Leave him! Not me.

LADY MARY: Girl, don't be silly. Crichton will be--considered in your wages.

TWEENY: I ain't going.

CRICHTON: I feared this, my lady.

TWEENY: Nothing'll budge me.

LADY MARY: Leave the room.

(*CRICHTON shows TWEENY out with marked politeness.*)

AGATHA: Crichton, I think you might have shown more displeasure with her.

(*CRICHTON moves to down left*)

CRICHTON: I was touched, my lady. I see, my lady, that to part from her would be a wrench to me, though I could not well say so in her presence, not having yet decided how far I shall go with her.

(*LORD LOAM enters stage left*)

LORD LOAM: The ingrate! The smug! The fop!

CATHERINE: What is it now, father?

LORD LOAM: That man of mine, Rolleston, refuses to accompany us because you are to have but one maid.

AGATHA: Hurrah!

LADY MARY: Darling father, rather than you should lose Rolleston, we will consent to take all the three of them.

LORD LOAM: Pooh, nonsense! Crichton, find me a valet who can do without three maids.

CRICHTON: Yes, my lord. In the time--the more suitable the party, my lord, the less willing will he be to come without the--the usual perquisites.

LORD LOAM: Any one will do.

CRICHTON: My lord!

LORD LOAM: The ingrate! The puppy!

(AGATHA has an idea, and whispers to LADY MARY.)

LADY MARY: I ask a favour of a servant?--never!

AGATHA: *(To Crichton)* Then I will. Crichton, would it not be very distressing to you to let his lordship go, attended by a valet who might prove unworthy? It is only for three months; don't you think that you--you yourself--you--

(CRICHTON pulls himself up with noble, offended dignity.)

(AGATHA): I beg your pardon.

(CRICHTON bows stiffly)

CATHERINE: *(to CRICHTON)* But think of the joy to Tweeny.

(CRICHTON shakes his head.)

LADY MARY: Crichton, do you think it safe to let the master you love go so far away without you while he has these dangerous views about equality?

(After a struggle, CRICHTON goes to his master.)

CRICHTON: My lord, I have found a man.

LORD LOAM: Already? Who is he?

(CRICHTON presents himself with a gesture.)

(LORD LOAM): Yourself?

CATHERINE: Father, how good of him.

LORD LOAM: Uncommon good. Thank you, Crichton. This helps me nicely out of a hole; and how it will annoy Rolleston! Come with me, and we shall tell him. Not that I think you have lowered yourself in any way. Come along.

(LORD LOAM goes stage left, and CRICHTON is to follow him, but is stopped by AGATHA impulsively offering him her hand.)

CRICHTON: My lady--a valet's hand!

AGATHA: I had no idea you would feel it so deeply; why did you do it?

(CRICHTON is too respectful to reply.)

LADY MARY: Crichton, I am curious. I insist upon an answer.

CRICHTON: My lady, I am the son of a butler and a lady's-maid--perhaps the happiest of all combinations, and to me the most beautiful thing in the world is a haughty, aristocratic English house, with every one kept in his place. Though I were equal to your ladyship, where would be the pleasure to me? It would be counterbalanced by the pain of feeling that Thomas and John were equal to me.

CATHERINE: But father says if we were to return to nature--

CRICHTON: If we did, my lady, the first thing we should do would be to elect a head. Circumstances might alter cases; the same person might not be master; the same persons might not be servants. I can't say as to that, nor should we have the deciding of it. Nature would decide for us.

LADY MARY: You seem to have thought it all out carefully, Crichton.

CRICHTON: Yes, my lady.

CATHERINE: And you have done this for us, Crichton, because you thought that--that father needed to be kept in his place?

CRICHTON: I should prefer you to say, my lady, that I have done it for the house.

AGATHA: Thank you, Crichton. Mary, be nicer to him. If there was any way in which we could show our gratitude.

CRICHTON: If I might venture, my lady, would you kindly show it by becoming more like Lady Mary. That disdain is what we like from our superiors. Even so do we, the upper servants, disdain the lower servants, while they take it out of the odds and ends.

(CRICHTON goes, and THE LADIES bury themselves in cushions.)

AGATHA: Oh dear, what a tiring day.

CATHERINE: I feel dead. Tuck in your feet, you selfish thing.

LADY MARY: I wonder what he meant by circumstances might alter cases.

AGATHA: Don't talk, Mary, I was nearly asleep.

LADY MARY: I wonder what he meant by the same person might not be master, and the same persons might not be servants.

CATHERINE: Do be quiet, Mary, and leave it to nature; he said nature would decide.

LADY MARY: I wonder--

(THE LADIES are at rest until it is time to dress.)

ACT II - THE ISLAND

Two months have elapsed, and the scene is a tropical island. It is 36 hours since their boat sank. ERNEST sits on a bucket down right, writing. He is dressed in a horribly mismatched outfit, all he could be bothered to salvage. Ladies MARY, AGATHA, and CATHERINE, sit close together on rocks up left, as if his audience. They are not interested in anything but their own misery. Their dress is very rudimentary. AGATHA, on the front of the rocks, is lounging casually in Ernest's dressing gown. CATHERINE, down stage of AGATHA and lower in the rocks, is wearing sailors' waterproofs, and visibly the unhappiest. MARY is wrapped in a table cloth perched on the rear of the rocks, but as elegantly as she can manage.

ERNEST: This is what I have written. 'Wrecked, wrecked, wrecked! on an island in the Tropics, the following: the Hon. Ernest Woolley, the Rev. John Treherne, the Ladies Mary, Catherine, and Agatha Lasenby, with two servants. We are the sole survivors of Lord Loam's steam yacht Bluebell, which encountered a fearful gale in these seas, and soon became a total wreck. The crew behaved gallantly, putting us all into the first boat. What became of them I cannot tell, but we, after dreadful sufferings, and insufficiently clad, in whatever garments we could lay hold of in the dark'--

LADY MARY: Please don't describe our garments.

ERNEST: --'succeeded in reaching this island, with the loss of only one of our party, namely, Lord Loam, who flung away his life in a gallant attempt to save a servant who had fallen overboard.'

AGATHA: But, Ernest, it was Crichton who jumped overboard trying to save father.

ERNEST: Well, you know, it was rather silly of uncle to fling away his life by trying to get into the boat first; and as this document may be printed in the English papers, it struck me, an English peer, you know--

LADY MARY: Ernest, that is very thoughtful of you.

ERNEST: --'By night the cries of wild cats and the hissing of snakes terrify us extremely'--(he makes a correction) --'terrify the ladies extremely. Against these we have no weapons except one cutlass and a hatchet. A bucket washed ashore is at present our only comfortable seat'--

LADY MARY: And Ernest is sitting on it.

ERNEST: H'sh! Oh, do be quiet.--'To add to our horrors, night falls suddenly in these parts, and it is then that savage animals begin to prowl and roar.'

LADY MARY: Have you said that vampire bats suck the blood from our toes as we sleep?

ERNEST: No, that's all. I end up, 'Rescue us or we perish. Rich reward. Signed Ernest Woolley, in command of our little party.' This is written on a leaf taken out of a book of poems that Crichton found in his pocket. Fancy Crichton being a reader of poetry. Now I shall put it into the bottle and fling it into the sea.

(He pushes the precious document into a soda-water bottle, and rams the cork home.)

(ERNEST): The tide is going out, we mustn't miss the post.

(The ladies ignore him.)

ERNEST: Crichton!

(CRICHTON appears with some urgency from up left, through the undergrowth.)

CRICHTON: Anything wrong, sir?

ERNEST: The tide, Crichton, is a postman who calls at our island twice a day for letters.

CRICHTON: Thank you, sir.

(CRICHTON exits to the hut (stage left).)

ERNEST: Poor Crichton! I sometimes think he is losing his sense of humour. Come along, Agatha.

(ERNEST and AGATHA exit up right.)

CATHERINE: How horribly still it is.

LADY MARY: It is best when it is still.

CATHERINE: (*drawing closer to her*) Mary, I have heard that they are always very still just before they jump.

LADY MARY: Don't. (*A distinct chapping is heard, and they are startled.*) It is only Crichton knocking down trees.

CATHERINE: Mary, let us go and stand beside him.

LADY MARY: Let a servant see that I am afraid!

CATHERINE: Don't, then; but remember this, dear, they often drop on one from above.

(*CATHERINE exits up left. MARY sits stoically, but when something falls from above, she forgets her dignity and screams.*)

LADY MARY: Crichton, Crichton!

(*CRICHTON enters from the hut (down left) drawing his cutlass.*)

CRICHTON: Did you call, my lady?

LADY MARY: !! Why should I?

CRICHTON: I made a mistake, your ladyship. If you are afraid of being alone, my lady--

LADY MARY: Afraid! Certainly not. (*She moves right.*) You may go.

(*He remains, cutting the bamboo stage left.*)

(LADY MARY): I wish, Crichton, you could work without getting so hot.

CRICHTON: I wish I could, my lady.

LADY MARY: (*Loosening her sheet.*) It makes me hot to look at you.

CRICHTON: It almost makes me cool to look at your ladyship.

LADY MARY: Anything I can do for you in that way, Crichton, I shall do with pleasure.

CRICHTON: Thank you, my lady.

(At last tears run down LADY MARY'S face. CRICHTON turns to notice.)

(CRICHTON): Don't give way, my lady, things might be worse.

LADY MARY: My poor father.

(They start to move together centre.)

CRICHTON: If I could have given my life for his.

LADY MARY: You did all a man could do. Indeed I thank you, Crichton. You are a man.

CRICHTON: Thank you, my lady.

LADY MARY: But it is all so awful. Crichton, is there any hope of a ship coming?

CRICHTON: Of course there is, my lady.

LADY MARY: Don't treat me as a child. I have got to know the worst, and to face it. Crichton, the truth.

CRICHTON: We were driven out of our course, my lady; I fear far from the track of commerce.

LADY MARY: Thank you; I understand.

(She momentarily loses her composure, but quickly gathers it.)

CRICHTON: You're a good pluckt 'un, my lady.

LADY MARY: I shall try to be. *(correcting herself)* Crichton, how dare you?

CRICHTON: I beg your ladyship's pardon; but you are. And until a ship comes we are three men who are going to do our best for you ladies.

LADY MARY: Mr. Ernest does no work.

CRICHTON: But he will, my lady.

LADY MARY: I doubt it.

CRICHTON: (*Resuming work.*) No work--no dinner--will make a great change in Mr. Ernest.

LADY MARY: No work--no dinner. When did you invent that rule, Crichton?

(*MARY moves stage left.*)

CRICHTON: I didn't invent it, my lady. I seem to see it growing all over the island.

LADY MARY: Crichton, your manner strikes me as curious.

CRICHTON: I hope not, your ladyship.

LADY MARY: You are not implying anything so unnatural, I presume, as that if I and my sisters don't work there will be no dinner for us?

CRICHTON: If it is unnatural, my lady, that is the end of it.

LADY MARY: If? Now I understand. The perfect servant at home holds that we are all equal now. I see.

CRICHTON: My lady, can you think me so inconsistent?

LADY MARY: That is it.

(*CRICHTON pauses in his work, and stands centre.*)

CRICHTON: My lady, I disbelieved in equality at home because it was against nature, and for that same reason I as utterly disbelieve in it on an island.

LADY MARY: I apologise.

CRICHTON: There must always, my lady, be one to command and others to obey.

LADY MARY: One to command, others to obey. Yes. (*realising*) Crichton!

CRICHTON: What is it, my lady?

(TWEENY enters immediately from up right. She is excitedly carrying cocoa-nuts in her skirt. She was able to dress properly as the ship sank.)

TWEENY: Look what I found.

CRICHTON: Cocoa-nuts. Bravo!

(CRICHTON and TWEENY move down right. MARY remains stage left, in her own thoughts.)

TWEENY: They grows on trees.

CRICHTON: Where did you think they grew?

TWEENY: I thought as how they grew in rows on top of little sticks.

CRICHTON: Oh Tweeny, Tweeny!

TWEENY: Have I offended of your feelings again, sir?

CRICHTON: A little.

TWEENY: I'm full o' vulgar words and ways; and though I may keep them in their holes when you are by, as soon as I'm by myself out they comes in a rush like beetles when the house is dark. I says them gloating-like, in my head--'Blooming' I says, and 'All my eye,' and 'Ginger,' and 'Nothink'; and all the time we was being wrecked I was praying to myself, 'Please the Lord it may be an island as it's natural to be vulgar on.'

(She sits on the bucket.)

(TWEENY): That's the kind I am, sir. I'm 'opeless. You'd better give me up.

CRICHTON: I won't give you up. It is strange that one so common should attract one so fastidious; but so it is. There is something about you, Tweeny, there is a je ne sais quoi about you.

TWEENY: Is there, is there? Oh, I am glad.

CRICHTON: (*putting his hand on her shoulder like a protector*) We shall fight your vulgarity together. Now get some dry grass. (*She brings him grass, and he puts it*

under the sticks. He produces an odd lens from his pocket, and tries to focus the sun's rays.)

TWEENY: Why, what's that?

CRICHTON: That's the glass from my watch and one from Mr. Treherne's, with a little water between them. I'm hoping to kindle a fire with it.

TWEENY: Oh sir!

(They are trying together when excited cries near by bring them sharply to their feet. From up right, AGATHA runs to them, white of face, followed by ERNEST.)

ERNEST: Danger! Crichton, a tiger-cat!

CRICHTON: *(getting his cutlass)* Where?

AGATHA: It is at our heels.

ERNEST: Look out, Crichton.

CRICHTON: H'sh!

(TWEENY runs frightened in to the hut (down left), causing TREHERNE to come on from there, joining ERNEST. CATHERINE appears from up left and joins MARY and AGATHA cowering behind them. All of them are behind CRICHTON, who is the only one prepared. There are all looking towards the up right entrance.)

ERNEST: It will be on us in a moment.

TREHERNE: Listen!

ERNEST: The grass is moving. It's coming.

(LORD LOAM appears on his hands and knees from up right, dressed in his night gown and cap, and looking very exhausted and dishevelled. There are dirty stripes on the gown that might look a bit like a tiger's. The LADIES push past the MEN to greet him. ERNEST and TREHERNE queue up patiently for their turn. CRICHTON resumes his place in the background.)

LADY MARY: Father.

LORD LOAM: Mary--Catherine--Agatha. Oh dear, my dears, my dears, oh dear!

(LORD LOAM sits on the bucket.)

LADY MARY: Darling.

AGATHA: Sweetest.

CATHERINE: Love.

TREHERNE: Glad to see you, sir.

ERNEST: Uncle, uncle, dear old uncle.

TREHERNE: Ernest thought you were a tiger-cat.

LORD LOAM: Oh, did you? I knew you at once, Ernest; I knew you by the way you ran.

CRICHTON: *(venturing forward at last)* My lord, I am glad.

ERNEST: But you are also idling, Crichton. *(Making himself comfortable on the ground.)* We mustn't waste time. To work, to work.

CRICHTON: Yes, sir.

(CRICHTON gets an obviously heavy pot from the hut.)

TREHERNE: Ernest, you be a little more civil. Crichton, let me help.

(TREHERNE helps CRICHTON place the pot over the fire. They exit to the hut, and soon sounds of building start.)

LORD LOAM: Is that--but I suppose I'm dreaming again. It isn't by any chance a pot on top of a fire, is it?

LADY MARY: Indeed, it is, dearest. It is our supper.

LORD LOAM: I have been dreaming of a pot on a fire for two days. There's nothing in it, is there?

ERNEST: Sniff, uncle.

LORD LOAM: It smells of onions!

(CATHERINE suddenly notices.)

CATHERINE: Father, you have boots!

LADY MARY: So he has.

LORD LOAM: Of course I have.

ERNEST: You are actually wearing boots, uncle. It's very unsafe, you know, in this climate.

LORD LOAM: Is it?

ERNEST: We have all abandoned them, you observe. The blood, the arteries, you know.

LORD LOAM: I hadn't a notion.

(LORD LOAM presents his feet for CRICHTON to remove the boots, but since he isn't there, ERNEST kneels.)

ERNEST: O Lord, yes.

LADY MARY: Father, he is trying to get your boots from you. There is nothing in the world we wouldn't give for boots.

ERNEST: I only wanted the loan of them.

AGATHA: If you lend them to any one, it will be to us, won't it, father.

LORD LOAM: Certainly, my child.

ERNEST: Oh, very well. I don't want your old boots. *(A pause.)* You don't think you could spare me one boot?

LORD LOAM: I do not.

ERNEST: Quite so. Well, all I can say is I'm sorry for you.

(ERNEST wanders away up right. THE LADIES gather at LORD LOAM's feet to hear his story.)

LADY MARY: Father, we thought we should never see you again.

LORD LOAM: I was washed ashore, my dear, clinging to a hencoop. How awful that first night was.

LADY MARY: Poor father.

LORD LOAM: When I woke, I wept. Then I began to feel extremely hungry. There was a large turtle on the beach. I remembered from the Swiss Family Robinson that if you turn a turtle over he is helpless. My dears, I crawled towards him, I flung myself upon him--*(here he pauses to rub his leg)* --the nasty, spiteful brute.

LADY MARY: You didn't turn him over?

LORD LOAM: Mary, the senseless thing wouldn't wait; I found that none of them would wait.

CATHERINE: We should have been as badly off if Crichton hadn't--

LADY MARY: Don't praise Crichton.

LORD LOAM: And then those beastly monkeys, I always understood that if you flung stones at them they would retaliate by flinging cocoa-nuts at you. Would you believe it, I flung a hundred stones, and not one monkey had sufficient intelligence to grasp my meaning. How I longed for Crichton.

LADY MARY: For us also, father?

LORD LOAM: For you also. I tried for hours to make a fire. The authors say that when wrecked on an island you can obtain a light by rubbing two pieces of stick together. The liars!

LADY MARY: And all this time you thought there was no one on the island but yourself?

LORD LOAM: I thought so until this morning. I was searching the pools for little fishes, which I caught in my hat, when suddenly I saw before me--on the sand--

CATHERINE: What?

LORD LOAM: A hairpin.

LADY MARY: A hairpin! It must be one of ours. Give it me, father.

AGATHA: No, it's mine.

LORD LOAM: I didn't keep it.

LADY MARY: Didn't keep it? Found a hairpin on an island, and didn't keep it?

LORD LOAM: My dears.

AGATHA: Oh father, we have returned to nature more than you bargained for.

LADY MARY: For shame, Agatha. *(She rises.)* Father, there is something I want you to do at once--I mean to assert your position as the chief person on the island.

LORD LOAM: But who would presume to question it?

CATHERINE: She must mean Ernest.

LADY MARY: Must I?

AGATHA: It's cruel to say anything against Ernest.

LORD LOAM: If any one presumes to challenge my position, I shall make short work of him.

AGATHA: Here comes Ernest; now see if you can say these horrid things to his face.

LORD LOAM: I shall teach him his place at once.

LADY MARY: But how?

LORD LOAM: I have just thought of an extremely amusing way of doing it. *(As ERNEST approaches.)* Ernest.

ERNEST: Excuse me, uncle, I'm thinking. I'm planning out the building of this hut.

LORD LOAM: I also have been thinking.

(ERNEST crosses to the hut and gives a good impression of examining it.)

ERNEST: That don't matter.

LORD LOAM: Eh?

ERNEST: Please, please, this is important.

LORD LOAM: I have been thinking that I ought to give you my boots.

ERNEST: What!

LADY MARY: Father.

LORD LOAM: Take them, my boy. (*With a rapidity we had not thought him capable of, ERNEST becomes the wearer of the boots.*) And now I dare say you want to know why I give them to you, Ernest?

ERNEST: (*moving up and down in them deliciously*) Not at all. The great thing is, 'I've got 'em, I've got 'em.'

LORD LOAM: My reason is that, as head of our little party, you, Ernest, shall be our hunter, you shall clear the forests of those savage beasts that make them so dangerous. And now you know, my dear nephew, why I have given you my boots.

ERNEST: This is my answer.

(*He kicks off the boots.*)

LADY MARY: Father, assert yourself.

LORD LOAM: I shall now assert myself. Call Crichton.

LADY MARY: Oh father. Crichton!

(*CRICHTON appears obediently in the hut doorway with TREHERNE. LORD LOAM and THE LADIES stand and turn to face them. ERNEST stands between them and the family group.*)

ERNEST: Crichton, look here.

LORD LOAM: Silence! Crichton, I want your advice as to what I ought to do with Mr. Ernest. He has defied me.

ERNEST: Pooh!

CRICHTON: May I speak openly, my lord?

LADY MARY: That is what we desire.

CRICHTON: Then I may say, your lordship, that I have been considering Mr. Ernest's case at odd moments ever since we were wrecked.

ERNEST: My case?

LORD LOAM: Hush.

CRICHTON: Since we landed on the island, my lord, it seems to me that Mr. Ernest's epigrams have been particularly brilliant.

ERNEST: Thank you, Crichton.

CRICHTON: But I find--I seem to find it growing wild, my lord, in the woods, that sayings which would be justly admired in England are not much use on an island. I would therefore most respectfully propose that henceforth every time Mr. Ernest favours us with an epigram his head should be immersed in a bucket of cold spring water.

(There is a terrible silence.)

LORD LOAM: Serve him right.

ERNEST: I should like to see you try to do it, uncle.

CRICHTON: My feeling, my lord, is that at the next offence I should convey him to a retired spot, where I shall carry out the undertaking in as respectful a manner as is consistent with a thorough immersion.

(Another pause.)

LADY MARY: Father, you must not permit this; Ernest is your nephew.

LORD LOAM: After all, he is my nephew, Crichton; and, as I am sure, he now sees that I am a strong man--

ERNEST: A strong man. You mean a stout man. You are one of mind to two of matter. *(CRICHTON is quietly turning up his sleeves.)*

CRICHTON: Is it to be before the ladies, Mr. Ernest, or in the privacy of the wood? Come.

ERNEST: Oh, all right.

CRICHTON: Bring the bucket.

(ERNEST, CRICHTON and the bucket exit, up right.)

LORD LOAM: I'm sorry for him, but I had to be firm.

LADY MARY: Oh father, it wasn't you who was firm. Crichton did it himself.

LORD LOAM: Bless me, so he did.

LADY MARY: Father, be strong.

LORD LOAM: You can't mean that my faithful Crichton--

LADY MARY: Yes, I do.

TREHERNE: Lady Mary, I stake my word that Crichton is incapable of acting dishonourably.

LADY MARY: I know that; I know it as well as you. Don't you see that that is what makes him so dangerous?

TREHERNE: By Jove, I--I believe I catch your meaning.

CATHERINE: He is coming back.

LORD LOAM: *(LORD LOAM crosses to the hut entrance (down left.)* Let us all go into the hut, just to show him at once that it is our hut.

LADY MARY: *(as they go)* Father, I implore you, assert yourself now and for ever.

LORD LOAM: I will.

LADY MARY: And, please, don't ask him how you are to do it.

(CRICHTON returns, and attends to the pot.)

LORD LOAM: Have you carried out my instructions, Crichton?

CRICHTON: Yes, my lord.

(ERNEST appears, mopping his hair.)

AGATHA: It's infamous, infamous.

LORD LOAM: My orders, Agatha.

LADY MARY: Now, father, please.

LORD LOAM: Before I give you any further orders, Crichton--

CRICHTON: Yes, my lord.

LORD LOAM: Pooh! It's all right.

LADY MARY: No. Please go on.

LORD LOAM: Well, well. This question of the leadership; what do you think now, Crichton?

CRICHTON: My lord, I feel it is a matter with which I have nothing to do.

LORD LOAM: Excellent. Ha, Mary? That settles it, I think.

LADY MARY: It seems to, but--I'm not sure.

CRICHTON: It will settle itself naturally, my lord, without any interference from us.

(LORD LOAM and THE LADIES are clearly uncomfortable with this. They slowly move in to "surround" CRICHTON in a semi circle, LORD LOAM at the right hand end, and LADY MARY at the other.)

LADY MARY: Father.

LORD LOAM: It settled itself long ago, Crichton, when I was born a peer, and you, for instance, were born a servant.

CRICHTON: *(Finally standing. The others flinch.)* Yes, my lord, that was how it all came about quite naturally in England. We had nothing to do with it there, and we shall have as little to do with it here.

TREHERNE: That's all right.

LADY MARY: One moment. In short, Crichton, his lordship will continue to be our natural head.

CRICHTON: I dare say, my lady, I dare say.

CATHERINE: But you must know.

CRICHTON: Asking your pardon, my lady, one can't be sure--on an island.

LORD LOAM: Crichton, I don't like this.

CRICHTON: The more I think of it, your lordship, the more uneasy I become myself. When I heard, my lord, that you had left that hairpin behind--

LORD LOAM: One hairpin among so many would only have caused dissension.

CRICHTON: (*CRICHTON moves slightly towards LORD LOAM, pleadingly.*) Not so, my lord. From that hairpin we could have made a needle; with that needle we could, out of skins, have sewn trousers of which your lordship is in need; indeed, we are all in need of them.

LADY MARY: All?

CRICHTON: On an island, my lady.

LADY MARY: Father.

CRICHTON: My lady, if nature does not think them necessary, you may be sure she will not ask you to wear them. But among all this undergrowth--

(*LADY MARY joins her father. AGATHA and CATHERINE shuffle slowly across to join her.*)

LADY MARY: Now you see this man in his true colours.

LORD LOAM: Crichton, you will either this moment say, 'Down with nature,'

CRICHTON: My Lord!

LORD LOAM: Then this is my last word to you; take a month's notice.

CRICHTON: Your lordship, the disgrace--

LORD LOAM: Not another word: you may go.

LADY MARY: And don't come to me, Crichton, for a character.

ERNEST: Aren't you all forgetting that this is an island?

LADY MARY: It makes only this difference--that you may go at once, Crichton, to some other part of the island.

(CRICHTON turns, bows his head, and moves down right, then turns back imploringly.)

CRICHTON: My lady, let me work for you.

LADY MARY: Go.

CRICHTON: You need me so sorely; I can't desert you; I won't.

LADY MARY: Then, father, there is but one alternative, we must leave him.

TREHERNE: It seems a pity.

CATHERINE: (To TREHERNE) You will work for us?

TREHERNE: Most willingly. But I must warn you all that, so far, Crichton has done nine-tenths of the scoring.

LADY MARY: The question is, are we to leave this man?

LORD LOAM: Come, my dears.

CRICHTON: My lord!

LORD LOAM: (*pointing to the hut*) Treherne--Ernest--get our things.

ERNEST: We don't have any, uncle. They all belong to Crichton.

TREHERNE: Everything we have he brought from the wreck--he went back to it before it sank. He risked his life.

CRICHTON: My lord, anything you would care to take is yours.

LADY MARY: Nothing.

ERNEST: Rot! If I could have your socks, Crichton--

LADY MARY: Come, father; we are ready.

CRICHTON: My lord, I implore you--I am not desirous of being head. Do you have a try at it, my lord.

LORD LOAM: A try at it!

CRICHTON: It may be that you will prove to be the best man.

LORD LOAM: May be! My children, come.

(They all exit, single file, up right, TREHERNE at the rear.)

TREHERNE: Crichton, I'm sorry; but of course I must go with them.

CRICHTON: Certainly, sir. *(gently)* Tweeny!

(TWEENY appears from the hut.)

(CRICHTON): Will you be so kind, sir, as to take her to the others?

TREHERNE: Assuredly.

TWEENY: But what do it all mean?

CRICHTON: Does, Tweeny, does. *(He passes her up the rocks to TREHERNE.)* We shall meet again soon, Tweeny. Good night, sir.

TREHERNE: Good night. I dare say they are not far away.

CRICHTON: They went westward, sir, and the wind is blowing in that direction. That may mean, sir, that nature is already taking the matter into her own hands. They are all hungry, sir, and the pot has come a-boil. The smell will be borne westward. That pot is full of nature, Mr. Treherne. Good night, sir.

TREHERNE: Good night.

(As TREHERNE leaves with TWEENY, CRICHTON, now alone, proceeds manfully with his preparations for the night. He sits down to the right of the fire, which casts a red gleam on his face. He is a strong figure, in the great stillness that has fallen over the land.)

(Shadows other than those cast by the fire begin to descend the rocks. They are the adventurers returning.)

ACT III - THE HAPPY HOME

Two years have passed. TWEENY is sitting on the bucket (stage right) plucking the feathers off a bird and dropping them on a sheet placed there for that purpose on the floor. LORD LOAM enters up left playing on his “concertina” trying to impress Tweeny. A whir is heard and a mechanically worked placard appears showing the word ‘Silence’.

(LORD LOAM moves to TWEENY on tiptoes.)

LORD LOAM: I thought the Gov. was out.

TWEENY: Well, you see he ain’t. And if he were to catch you here idling--

(LORD LOAM pales. He lays aside his musical instrument and hurriedly dons an apron. TWEENY gives him the bird to pluck, and busies herself laying the table (up left) for dinner. LORD LOAM sits on the bucket.)

LORD LOAM: What is he doing now?

TWEENY: I think he’s working out that plan for laying on hot and cold.

LORD LOAM: And he’ll manage it too. The man who could build a blacksmith’s forge without tools--

TWEENY: He made the tools.

LORD LOAM: Out of half a dozen rusty nails. The saw-mill, Tweeny; the speaking-tube; the electric lighting; and look at the use he has made of the bits of the yacht that were washed ashore. And all in two years. He’s a master I’m proud to pluck for.

TWEENY: Daddy, you’re of little use, but you’re a bright, cheerful creature to have about the house. Do you ever think of old times now? We was a bit different.

LORD LOAM: Circumstances alter cases.

TWEENY: But, Daddy, if the chance was to come of getting back?

LORD LOAM: I have given up bothering about it.

(TWEENY moves to up centre)

TWEENY: You bothered that day long ago when we saw a ship passing the island. How we all ran like crazy folk into the water, Daddy, and screamed and held out our arms. But it sailed away, and we've never seen another.

LORD LOAM: If we had had the electrical contrivance we have now we could have attracted that ship's notice. *(Their eyes rest on a mysterious apparatus that fills a corner of the hall.)* A touch on that lever, Tweeny, and in a few moments bonfires would be blazing all round the shore.

TWEENY: It's the most wonderful thing he has done.

(LORD LOAM puts down the bird and stands. TWEENY and LORD LOAM meet in the centre.)

LORD LOAM: And then--England--home!

TWEENY: London of a Saturday night!

(LORD LOAM clasps his skins in his hands as if they were robes and moves to down stage right)

LORD LOAM: My lords, in rising once more to address this historic chamber--

(TWEENY moves down stage left)

TWEENY: There was a little ham and beef shop off the Edgware Road--

(LORD LOAM returns to the bucket and to his plucking. TWEENY returns to checking the table.)

LORD LOAM: Tweeny, do you think I could have an egg to my tea? *(An entirely changed ERNEST appears from stage right carrying two pails.)*

ERNEST: What is that about an egg? Why should you have an egg?

LORD LOAM: That is my affair, sir. The Gov. has never put my head in a bucket.

(LORD LOAM taps the bucket he is sat on, rises and exits stage left.)

ERNEST: (*coming to rest on one of his buckets, and speaking with excusable pride. To TWEENY*) Nor mine for nearly three months. It was only last week, Tweeny, that he said to me, 'Ernest, the water cure has worked marvels in you, and I question whether I shall require to dip you any more.' Of course that sort of thing encourages a fellow.

(*TWEENY moves to ERNEST*)

TWEENY: I will say, Erny, I never seen a young chap more improved.

ERNEST: Thank you, Tweeny, that's very precious to me.

(*She retires to the fire to work the great bellows with her foot, and ERNEST turns to TREHERNE, who has come from stage right, in looking more like a cow-boy than a clergyman. He has a small box in his hand which he tries to conceal. ERNEST stands and moves to TREHERNE*)

(ERNEST): What have you got there, John?

TREHERNE: Don't tell anybody. It is a little present for the Gov.; a set of razors. One for each day in the week.

ERNEST: Shells! He'll like that. He likes sets of things.

TREHERNE: Have you noticed that?

ERNEST: Rather.

TREHERNE: He's becoming a bit magnificent in his ideas.

ERNEST: John, it sometimes gives me the creeps.

(*TREHERNE moves ERNEST to down stage left*)

TREHERNE: (*making sure that TWEENY is out of hearing*) What do you think of that brilliant robe he got the girls to make for him.

ERNEST: I think he looks too regal in it.

TREHERNE: Regal! I sometimes fancy that that's why he's so fond of wearing it. Well, I must take these down to the grindstone and put an edge on them.

(*TREHERNE moves to go out stage left but ERNEST stops him grabbing his arm gently.*)

ERNEST: I say, John, I want a word with you.

TREHERNE: Well?

ERNEST: Dash it all, you know, you're a clergyman.

TREHERNE: One of the best things the Gov. has done is to insist that none of you forget it.

ERNEST: Then--would you, John?

TREHERNE: What?

ERNEST: Officiate at a marriage ceremony, John?

TREHERNE: Now, that's really odd.

ERNEST: Odd? Seems to me it's natural. And whatever is natural, John, is right.

TREHERNE: I mean that same question has been put to me today already.

ERNEST: By one of the women?

TREHERNE: Oh no; they all put it to me long ago. This was by the Gov. himself.

ERNEST: By Jove! I say, John, what an observant beggar he is.

TREHERNE: Ah! You fancy he was thinking of you?

ERNEST: I do not hesitate to affirm, John, that he has seen the love-light in my eyes. You answered--

TREHERNE: I said Yes, I thought it would be my duty to officiate if called upon.

ERNEST: You're a brick.

TREHERNE: But I wonder whether he was thinking of you?

ERNEST: Make your mind easy about that.

TREHERNE: Well, my best wishes. Agatha is a very fine girl.

ERNEST: Agatha? What made you think it was Agatha?

TREHERNE: Man alive, you told me all about it soon after we were wrecked.

ERNEST: Pooh! Agatha's all very well in her way, John, but I'm flying at bigger game.

TREHERNE: Ernest, which is it?

ERNEST: Tweeny, of course.

TREHERNE: Tweeny? Ernest, I hope her cooking has nothing to do with this.

ERNEST: Her cooking has very little to do with it.

TREHERNE: But does she return your affection.

ERNEST: Yes, John, I believe I may say so. I am unworthy of her, but I think I have touched her heart.

TREHERNE: Some people seem to have all the luck. As you know, Catherine won't look at me.

ERNEST: I'm sorry, John.

TREHERNE: It's my deserts; I'm a second eleven sort of chap. Well, my heartiest good wishes, Ernest.

ERNEST: Thank you, John. How's the little black pig to-day?

TREHERNE: (*departing*) He has begun to eat again.

(*TREHERNE departs stage left. ERNEST moves to TWEENY*)

ERNEST: Are you very busy, Tweeny?

TWEENY: There's always work to do; but if you want me, Ernest--

ERNEST: There's something I should like to say to you if you could spare me a moment.

TWEENY: Willingly. What is it?

(*ERNEST moves TWEENY to down centre*)

ERNEST: What an ass I used to be, Tweeny.

TWEENY: Oh, let bygones be bygones.

ERNEST: I'm no great shakes even now. But listen to this, Tweeny; I have known many women, but until I knew you I never knew any woman.

TWEENY: Take care--the bucket.

ERNEST: I didn't mean it in that way. *(He goes chivalrously on his knees)* Ah, Tweeny, I don't undervalue the bucket, but what I want to say now is that the sweet refinement of a dear girl has done more for me than any bucket could do.

TWEENY: Are you offering to walk out with me, Erny?

ERNEST: More than that. I want to build a little house for you--in the sunny glade down by Porcupine Creek. I want to make chairs for you and tables; and knives and forks, and a sideboard for you.

TWEENY: I like to hear you. Would there be any one in the house except myself, Ernest?

ERNEST: Not often; but just occasionally there would be your adoring husband.

TWEENY: It won't do, Ernest.

ERNEST: It isn't as if I should be much there.

TWEENY: I know, I know; but I don't love you, Ernest. I'm that sorry.

(TWEENY moves down stage right. ERNEST follows her shuffling on his knees.)

ERNEST: Twice a week I should be away altogether--at the dam. On the other days you would never see me from breakfast time to supper. If you like I'll even go fishing on Sundays.

TWEENY: It's no use, Erny.

ERNEST: *(rising manfully)* Thank you, Tweeny; it can't be helped. Tweeny, we shall be disappointing the Gov.

TWEENY: What's that?

ERNEST: He wanted us to marry.

(TWEENY turns to face ERNEST)

TWEENY: You and me? the Gov.! *(From without is heard the whistling of a happier spirit.)* That's her; that's the thing what has stole his heart from me. *(LADY MARY jumps athletically into the room from stage right with a fat buck over her shoulder. ERNEST returns to sitting on his bucket.)* Drat you, Polly, why don't you wipe your feet?

LADY MARY: Come, Tweeny, be nice to me. It's a splendid buck.

(But TWEENY shakes her off, and retires to the kitchen fire. LADY MARY heaves the buck onto the table.)

ERNEST: Where did you get it?

(LADY MARY moves to centre using the whole of the up stage to live out her tale.)

LADY MARY: I sighted a herd near Penguin's Creek, but had to creep round Silver Lake to get to windward of them. However, they spotted me and then the fun began. There was nothing for it but to try and run them down, so I singled out a fat buck and away we went down the shore of the lake, up the valley of rolling stones; he doubled into Brawling River and took to the water, but I swam after him; the river is only half a mile broad there, but it runs strong. He went spinning down the rapids, down I went in pursuit; he clambered ashore, I clambered ashore; away we tore helter-skelter up the hill and down again. I lost him in the marshes, got on his track again near Bread Fruit Wood, and brought him down with an arrow in Firefly Grove.

TWEENY: Aren't you tired?

(LADY MARY moves down left to deposit her weapons.)

LADY MARY: Tired! It was gorgeous. *(She is whistling again.)*

TWEENY: I can't abide a woman whistling.

LADY MARY: I like it.

(TWEENY moves to centre)

TWEENY: Drop it, Polly, I tell you.

LADY MARY: I won't. I'm as good as you are. *(They are facing each other defiantly)*

(ERNEST rises from his bucket and stands between LADY MARY and TWEENY)

ERNEST: Is this necessary? Think how it would pain him.

(ERNEST returns to his bucket.)

LADY MARY: Tweeny, I beg your pardon. If my whistling annoys you, I shall try to cure myself of it. *(Instead of calming TWEENY, this floods her face in tears, and she moves down right)* Why, how can that hurt you, Tweeny dear?

TWEENY: Because I can't make you lose your temper.

LADY MARY: *(to TWEENY)* Indeed, I often do. Would that I were nicer to everybody.

TWEENY: *(turning to face LADY MARY)* There you are again. What makes you want to be so nice, Polly?

(LADY MARY moves to down right.)

LADY MARY: Only thankfulness, Tweeny. It is such fun to be alive.

(CATHERINE and AGATHA bounce in from stage right, also in manly attire, and place their fish on the table)

CATHERINE: We've got some ripping fish for the Gov.'s dinner. Are we in time? We ran all the way.

TWEENY: You'll please to cook them yourself, Kitty, and look sharp about it. *(She retires to her hearth, where AGATHA follows her)*

AGATHA: Has the Gov. decided who is to wait upon him to-day?

CATHERINE: It's my turn.

AGATHA: I don't see that.

TWEENY: It's to be neither of you, Aggy; he wants Polly again.

(LADY MARY is unable to resist a joyous whistle.)

AGATHA: Polly, you toad.

TWEENY: How dare you look so happy?

LADY MARY: *(to TWEENY)* I wish, Tweeny, there was anything I could do to make you happy also.

TWEENY: Me! Oh, I'm happy. I've just had a proposal, I tell you.

(TWEENY moves closer to ERNEST)

AGATHA: A proposal?

CATHERINE: Not--not--

ERNEST: You needn't be alarmed; it's only me.

LADY MARY: Oh, you!

AGATHA: Ernest, you dear, I got such a shock.

CATHERINE: It was only Ernest. They are beautifully fresh; come and help me to cook them.

ERNEST: Do you mind if I don't cook fish to-night? I think you might all be a little sorry for a chap. I'm particularly disappointed in you, Aggy; seeing that I was half engaged to you, I think you might have had the good feeling to be a little more hurt.

AGATHA: Oh, bother.

(ERNEST rises from his bucket)

ERNEST: I shall now go and lie down for a bit. *(He retires coldly but unregretted, exiting stage left.)*

LADY MARY: Tweeny, as the Gov. has chosen me to wait on him, please may I have the loan of it again? *(The reference made with such charming delicacy is evidently to TWEENY's skirt)*

TWEENY: No, you mayn't.

AGATHA: Don't you give it to her.

LADY MARY: You know quite well that he prefers to be waited on in a skirt.

TWEENY: I don't care. Get one for yourself.

LADY MARY: It is the only one on the island.

(TWEENY moves down stage right)

TWEENY: And it's mine.

LADY MARY: *(an aristocrat after all)* Tweeny, give me that skirt directly.

CATHERINE: Don't.

TWEENY: I won't.

LADY MARY: I shall make you.

TWEENY: I should like to see you try.

(An unseemly fracas appears to be inevitable, but at a sign from CRICHTON in the other room, the ladies look at each other guiltily and immediately proceed on tiptoe to their duties. When they are done TWEENY signs that all is ready, and she and the younger sisters retire into the kitchen, stage left, taking with them the buck and the fish from the table. LADY MARY blows on a hollowed out horn, which announces dinner. CRICHTON, the master, comes in quietly from stage left, with a book in his hand. He sits at the table barely acknowledging LADY MARY.)

CRICHTON: Clear, please.

(LADY MARY blows the horn to signal to the kitchen, and TWEENY's hands emerge from stage left with two soup plates. LADY MARY selects a plate and places it deftly in front of CRICHTON. She sits on the plucking bucket with her head resting on her hands looking longingly at CRICHTON.)

(CRICHTON): An excellent soup, Polly, but still a trifle too rich.

LADY MARY: Thank you.

(LADY MARY stands, blows the horn again, and clears the soup plates. As she does this, two hands emerge from stage left, one empty, one holding a fish course. In a quick move LADY MARY hands the soup plate to the empty hand whilst taking the fish course and placing it before CRICHTON. LADY MARY moves to return to the plucking bucket but is stopped by CRICHTON's next remark.)

CRICHTON: Polly, you are a very smart girl.

LADY MARY: La!

CRICHTON: And I'm not the first you've heard it from, I'll swear.

LADY MARY: *(wriggling)* Oh God!

CRICHTON: Got any followers on the island, Polly?

LADY MARY: *(tossing her head)* Certainly not.

CRICHTON: I thought that perhaps John or Ernest--

LADY MARY: I don't say that it's for want of asking.

CRICHTON: I'm sure it isn't. You may clear.

(LADY MARY blows the horn again, two hands appear from stage left, one empty one holding a plate with a bird and vegetables. LADY MARY collects CRICHTON's fish plate and in another quick move swaps plates with the disembodied arms. She places the meal before CRICHTON and returns to the plucking bucket looking longingly at CRICHTON once more.)

(CRICHTON): Did you lose any arrows to-day?

LADY MARY: Only one in Firefly Grove.

CRICHTON: You were as far as that? How did you get across the Black Gorge?

LADY MARY: I went across on the rope.

CRICHTON: Hand over hand?

LADY MARY: I wasn't in the least dizzy.

CRICHTON: You brave girl! But never do that again.

LADY MARY: (*pouting*) It is such fun, Gov.

CRICHTON: I forbid it.

LADY MARY: I shall.

CRICHTON: Polly! (*He signs to her sharply to step forward, but for a moment she holds back petulantly, and even when she does come it is less obediently than like a naughty, sulky child. Nevertheless, with the forbearance that is characteristic of the man, he addresses her with grave gentleness rather than severely*) You must do as I tell you, you know.

LADY MARY: I shan't.

CRICHTON: We shall see. Frown at me, Polly; there, you do it at once. Clench your little fists, stamp your feet, bite your ribbons--(*LADY MARY screws up her face like a baby and cries. He is immediately kind.*) You child of nature; was it cruel of me to wish to save you from harm?

(*LADY MARY moves to down right*)

LADY MARY: (*drying her eyes*) I'm an ungracious wretch. Oh God, I don't try half hard enough to please you. I'm even wearing--(*she looks down sadly*) --when I know you prefer it.

CRICHTON: I admit I do prefer it. Perhaps I am a little old-fashioned in these matters. Ah, don't, Polly; that's nothing.

LADY MARY: If I could only please you, Gov.

CRICHTON: You do please me, child, very much----very much indeed. (*He looks at his plate.*) No more, thank you. (*CRICHTON rises and moves to up centre regarding the view while LADY MARY clears the table exquisitely.*) Polly, there is only one thing about you that I don't quite like. That action of the hands.

LADY MARY: What do I do?

CRICHTON: So--like one washing them. I have noticed that the others tend to do it also. It seems odd.

LADY MARY: Oh Gov., have you forgotten?

CRICHTON: What?

LADY MARY: That once upon a time a certain other person did that.

CRICHTON: You mean myself? *(She nods, and he shudders)* Horrible!

LADY MARY: You haven't for a very long time. Perhaps it is natural to servants.

CRICHTON: That must be it. Polly! *(She looks up expectantly, but he only sighs and turns away)*

LADY MARY: You sighed, Gov.

CRICHTON: Did I? I was thinking. *(He paces the room and then turns to her agitatedly, yet with control over his agitation. There is some mournfulness in his voice)* I have always tried to do the right thing on this island. Above all, Polly, I want to do the right thing by you.

LADY MARY: How we all trust you. That is your reward, Gov.

(CRICHTON moves to down right.)

CRICHTON: And now I want a greater reward. Is it fair to you? Am I playing the game? Bill Crichton would like always to play the game. If we were in England--

(LADY MARY moves to up centre regarding the view.)

LADY MARY: We know now that we shall never see England again.

CRICHTON: I am thinking of two people whom neither of us has seen for a long time--Lady Mary Lasenby, and one Crichton, a butler.

LADY MARY: *(to CRICHTON)* That cold, haughty, insolent girl. Gov., look around you and forget them both.

CRICHTON: *(turning to LADY MARY)* I had nigh forgotten them. He has had a chance, Polly--that butler--in these two years of becoming a man, and he has tried to take it. There have been many failures, but there has been some success, and with it I have let the past drop off me, and turned my back on it. That butler seems a far-away figure to me now, and not myself. I hail him, but we scarce know each other. If I am to bring him back it can only be done by force, for in my soul he is now abhorrent to me. But if I thought it best for you I'd haul him

back; I swear as an honest man, I would bring him back with all his obsequious ways and deferential airs, and let you see the man you call your Gov. melt for ever into him who was your servant.

(LADY MARY moves to down left.)

LADY MARY: You hurt me. You say these things, but you say them like a king. To me it is the past that was not real.

CRICHTON: A king! I sometimes feel-- I say it harshly, it is so hard to say, and all the time there is another voice within me crying--

LADY MARY: If it is the voice of nature--

CRICHTON: I know it to be the voice of nature.

LADY MARY: (*turning to CRICHTON*) Then, if you want to say it very much, Gov., please say it to Polly Lasenby.

CRICHTON: A king! Polly, some people hold that the soul but leaves one human tenement for another, and so lives on through all the ages. I have occasionally thought of late that, in some past existence, I may have been a king. It has all come to me so naturally, not as if I had had to work it out, but-as-if-I-remembered. 'Or ever the knightly years were gone, With the old world to the grave, I was a king in Babylon, And you were a Christian slave.' It may have been; you hear me, it may have been.

LADY MARY: It may have been.

(CRICHTON moves to up centre pointing out all he surveys.)

CRICHTON: I am lord over all. They are but hewers of wood and drawers of water for me. These shores are mine. Why should I hesitate; I have no longer any doubt. I do believe I am doing the right thing. Dear Polly, I have grown to love you; are you afraid to mate with me? 'I was a king in Babylon, And you were a Christian slave.'

(CRICHTON sits at the table. LADY MARY moves to him and sits at CRICHTON's feet looking up adoringly at his face.)

LADY MARY: You are the most wonderful man I have ever known, and I am not afraid. I want you to tell me--every woman likes to know--when was the first time you thought me nicer than the others?

CRICHTON: I think a year ago. We were chasing goats on the Big Slopes, and you out-distanced us all; you were the first of our party to run a goat down; I was proud of you that day.

LADY MARY: Oh Gov., I only did it to please you. Everything I have done has been out of the desire to please you. If I thought that in taking a wife from among us you were imperilling your dignity--

CRICHTON: Have no fear of that, dear. I have thought it all out. The wife, Polly, always takes the same position as the husband.

LADY MARY: But I am so unworthy. It was sufficient to me that I should be allowed to wait on you at that table.

CRICHTON: You shall wait on me no longer. At whatever table I sit, Polly, you shall soon sit there also. Come, let us try what it will be like.

LADY MARY: As your servant at your feet.

CRICHTON: No, as my consort by my side.

(They are sitting thus when two hands appear at the doorway (stage left) offering coffee. After no-one appears to take the coffee AGATHA and CATHERINE peep their heads through in consternation. In vain they rattle the cup and saucer. AGATHA brings the coffee to CRICHTON.)

(CRICHTON): Help your mistress first, girl. Are you a good girl, Kitty?

CATHERINE: I try to be, Gov.

CRICHTON: That's right. *(ERNEST comes in cheerily from stage left, but finding CRICHTON here is suddenly weak, wondering what has happened. He sits on his bucket.)* Ernest. *(ERNEST rises)* You are becoming a little slovenly in your dress, Ernest; I don't like it.

ERNEST: Thank you.

(ERNEST sits again. LORD LOAM and TREHERNE arrive from stage left. TREHERNE crosses to the hearth (up right). LORD LOAM stays centre. CRICHTON rises.)

CRICHTON: Daddy, I want you.

LORD LOAM: Is it because I forgot to clean out the dam?

CRICHTON: No, no. A glass of wine with you, Daddy.

LORD LOAM: Your health, Gov.

CRICHTON: And hers. Daddy, this lady has done me the honour to promise to be my wife.

LORD LOAM: Polly!

CRICHTON: I ought first to have asked your consent. I deeply regret--but nature; may I hope I have your approval?

LORD LOAM: May you, Gov.? Rather! Polly! (*He puts his proud arms round her*)

TREHERNE: We all congratulate you, Gov., most heartily.

(ERNEST rises)

ERNEST: Long life to you both, sir.

(*There is much shaking of hands, all of which is sincere.*)

TREHERNE: When will it be, Gov.?

CRICHTON: (*after turning to LADY MARY, who whispers to him*) As soon as the bridal skirt can be prepared. My friends, I thank you for your good wishes, I thank you all. And now, perhaps you would like me to leave you to yourselves. Be joyous. Let there be song and dance to-night. Polly, I shall take my coffee in the parlour--you understand.

(*He retires with pleasant dignity. He exits stage left. Immediately there is a rush of two girls at LADY MARY.*)

LADY MARY: Oh, oh! Father, they are pinching me.

LORD LOAM: Agatha, Catherine, never presume to pinch your sister again. On the other hand, she may pinch you henceforth as much as ever she chooses.

(In the meantime TWEENY is weeping softly, and the two are not above using her as a weapon.)

CATHERINE: Poor Tweeny, it's a shame.

AGATHA: After he had almost promised you.

TWEENY: *(loyally turning on them)* No, he never did. He was always honourable as could be. 'Twas me as was too vulgar. Don't you dare say a word agin that man.

ERNEST: *(to LORD LOAM)* You'll get a lot of tit-bits out of this, Daddy.

LORD LOAM: That's what I was thinking.

ERNEST: I dare say I shall have to clean out the dam now.

LORD LOAM: I dare say. *(He seizes the "concertina").*

TREHERNE: That's the proper spirit. *(He puts his arm round CATHERINE, and in another moment they are all dancing to LORD LOAM's music. Never were people happier on an island. A moment's pause is presently created by the return of CRICHTON from stage left. Never has he looked more regal.)*

CRICHTON: No, no; I am delighted to see you all so happy. Go on.

TREHERNE: We don't like to before you, Gov.

CRICHTON: It is my wish.

(The merrymaking is resumed, and soon CRICHTON himself joins in the dance. It is when the fun is at its fastest and most furious that all stop abruptly as if turned to stone. They have heard the boom of a gun. Presently they are alive again. ERNEST leaps to the veranda (up right). TREHERNE moves to up centre, also to the veranda.)

TREHERNE: It was a ship's gun. Gov.?

(CRICHTON moves down left)

CRICHTON: Yes.

(In another moment LADY MARY and LORD LOAM are alone, as ERNEST, CRICHTON, TREHERNE, AGATHA and CATHERINE all run out from the room stage right, except for CRICHTON who exits last more slowly than the others.)

LADY MARY: Father, you heard.

LORD LOAM: Yes, my child.

LADY MARY: But it was a gun, father.

LORD LOAM: Yes--a gun--I have often heard it. It's only a dream, you know; why don't we go on dancing?

(She takes his hands, which have gone cold.)

LADY MARY: Father. Don't you see, they have all rushed down to the beach? Come.

LORD LOAM: Rushed down to the beach; yes, always that--I often dream it.

LADY MARY: Come, father, come.

LORD LOAM: Only a dream, my poor girl.

(CRICHTON returns from stage right. He is pale but firm.)

CRICHTON: We can see lights within a mile of the shore--a great ship.

LORD LOAM: A ship--always a ship.

LADY MARY: Father, this is no dream.

LORD LOAM: *(looking timidly at CRICHTON)* It's a dream, isn't it? There's no ship?

CRICHTON: *(soothing him with a touch)* You are awake, Daddy, and there is a ship.

LORD LOAM: You are not deceiving me?

CRICHTON: It is the truth.

(CRICHTON sits at the table)

LORD LOAM: True?--a ship--at last!

(He goes after the others pitifully, exiting stage right.)

CRICHTON: There is a small boat between it and the island; they must have sent it ashore for water.

LADY MARY: Coming in?

CRICHTON: No. That gun must have been a signal to recall it. It is going back. They can't hear our cries.

LADY MARY: Going away. So near--so near. I think I'm glad.

CRICHTON: Have no fear. I shall bring them back.

(CRICHTON reaches for the apparatus but hesitates as LADY MARY moves rushes to him)

LADY MARY: What are you going to do?

CRICHTON: To fire the beacons.

LADY MARY: Stop! Don't you see what it means?

(CRICHTON stands to face LADY MARY)

CRICHTON: It means that our life on the island has come to a natural end.

LADY MARY: Gov., let the ship go--

CRICHTON: The old man--you saw what it means to him.

(LADY MARY falls into CRICHTON's arms)

LADY MARY: But I am afraid.

CRICHTON: Dear Polly.

LADY MARY: Gov., let the ship go.

CRICHTON: *(she clings to him, but though it is his death sentence he loosens her hold)* Bill Crichton has got to play the game. *(He pulls the levers. Soon through the*

window one of the beacons is seen flaring red. There is a long pause. Shouting is heard.
ERNEST is the first to arrive from stage right.)

ERNEST: Polly, Gov., the boat has turned back. They are English sailors; they have landed! We are rescued, I tell you, rescued!

(LADY MARY moves to down right)

LADY MARY: Is it anything to make so great a to-do about?

ERNEST: Eh?

LADY MARY: Have we not been happy here?

ERNEST: Happy? Lord, yes.

LADY MARY: Ernest, we must never forget all that the Gov. has done for us.

ERNEST: Forget it? The man who could forget it would be a selfish wretch and a-
-But I say, this makes a difference!

LADY MARY: No, it doesn't.

ERNEST: A mighty difference!

(The others come running in, some weeping with joy, others boisterous. LORD LOAM comes accompanied by a naval OFFICER from stage right, whom he is continually shaking by the hand. LORD LOAM brings the naval OFFICER to down centre.)

LORD LOAM: And here, sir, is our little home. Let me thank you in the name of us all, again and again and again.

OFFICER: Very proud, my lord. It is indeed an honour to have been able to assist so distinguished a gentleman as Lord Loam.

LORD LOAM: A glorious, glorious day. I shall show you our other room. Come, my pets. Come, Crichton.

(He has not meant to be cruel. He does not know he has said it. It is the old life that has come back to him. They all go, exiting stage right. All leave CRICHTON except LADY MARY.)

LADY MARY: *(stretching out her arms to him)* Dear Gov., I will never give you up.

(There is a smile on his face as he shakes his head to her. By an effort of will he ceases to be an erect figure; he has the humble bearing of a servant. His hands come together as if he were washing them, as he moves up centre.)

CRICHTON: My lady.

(She goes away. There is none to salute him now, unless we do it.)

ACT IV - THE OTHER ISLAND

LORD LOAM and CATHERINE are sitting on the sofa down right, and AGATHA is in the chair up left. All three are reading from newspapers. LORD LOAM is noisily turning pages, looking for his own name. ERNEST is standing centre, holding more newspapers, ready to give one to the next eager reader. No-one is yet dressed for dinner.

AGATHA: (*Reading from a newspaper.*) 'In conclusion, we most heartily congratulate the Hon. Ernest Woolley. This book of his, regarding the adventures of himself and his brave companions on a desert isle, stirs the heart like a trumpet.'

ERNEST: (*Handing AGATHA another paper*) Here is another.

CATHERINE: 'From the first to the last of Mr. Woolley's engrossing pages it is evident that he was an ideal man to be wrecked with, and a true hero.' Ernest!

ERNEST: That's how it strikes them, you know. Here's another one.

(*ERNEST hands CATHERINE a paper*)

AGATHA: 'There are many kindly references to the two servants who were wrecked with the family, and Mr. Woolley pays the butler a glowing tribute in a footnote.'

(*Some one coughs uncomfortably.*)

LORD LOAM: Excellent, excellent. At the same time I must say, Ernest, that the whole book is about yourself.

ERNEST: As the author--

LORD LOAM: Certainly, certainly. Still, you know, as a peer of the realm----I think, Ernest, you might have given me one of your adventures.

ERNEST: I say it was you who taught us how to obtain a fire by rubbing two pieces of stick together.

LORD LOAM: Do you, do you? I call that very handsome. What page?

ACT IV - THE OTHER ISLAND

(Here the door stage right opens, and CRICHTON, butler once more, enters with the evening papers. Everyone else stops reading and carefully watches CRICHTON as he puts the papers on the table left of the sofa and then leaves the way he came. After a short pause AGATHA, CATHERINE and ERNEST pounce on the papers. CATHERINE and AGATHA briefly squabble over one, and CATHERINE wins. AGATHA picks up another one and sits in the chair again to read it. LORD LOAM makes a late and ineffectual attempt at a pounce, and CATHERINE hands him her hard-won paper and takes another from the table. ERNEST moves down left to survey his fans.)

AGATHA: Father, see page 81. 'It was a tiger-cat,' says Mr. Woolley, 'of the largest size. Death stared Lord Loam in the face, but he never flinched.'

(She gets up and hands it to him.)

LORD LOAM: Page 81.

AGATHA: 'With presence of mind only equalled by his courage, he fixed an arrow in his bow.'

LORD LOAM: Thank you, Ernest; thank you, my boy.

(She moves centre and starts the melodramatically act out what she read in the paper.)

AGATHA: 'Unfortunately he missed.'

LORD LOAM: Eh?

AGATHA: 'But by great good luck I heard his cries'--

LORD LOAM: My cries?

AGATHA: --'and rushing forward with drawn knife, I stabbed the monster to the heart.'

(CRICHTON enters again from stage right, carrying a plant. AGATHA, whose acting has left her in front of the chair, sits nonchalantly in it. LORD LOAM lets his newspaper fall to his lap.)

LORD LOAM: Anything in the papers, Catherine?

CATHERINE: No, father, nothing--nothing at all.

ERNEST: The papers! The papers are guides that tell us what we ought to do, and then we don't do it.

(CRICHTON has taken the bucket from its stand, replaced it with the plant, and is leaving the way he came. ERNEST starts to follow CRICHTON and the bucket, but by the time he reaches centre stage CRICHTON has left, and ERNEST comes to himself.)

LORD LOAM: I told him to take it away.

ERNEST: I thought--*(he wipes his brow)* --I shall go and dress. *(He exits stage left.)*

CATHERINE: Father, it's awful having Crichton here. It's like living on tiptoe.

(LORD LOAM stands and moves towards the display cabinet up left.)

LORD LOAM: While he is here we are sitting on a volcano.

AGATHA: How mean of you! I am sure he has only stayed on with us to--to help us through. It would have looked so suspicious if he had gone at once.

CATHERINE: But suppose Lady Brocklehurst were to get at him and pump him. She's the most terrifying, suspicious old creature in England; and Crichton simply can't tell a lie.

LORD LOAM: My dear, that is the volcano to which I was referring. It's all Mary's fault. She said to me yesterday that she would break her engagement with Brocklehurst unless I told him about--you know what.

AGATHA: Is she mad?

LORD LOAM: She calls it common honesty.

CATHERINE: Father, have you told him?

LORD LOAM: She thinks I have, but I couldn't. She's sure to find out to-night.

(He idly plays his "concertina" from the island. The noise it makes causes them to jump uncomfortably.)

CATHERINE: It's like a bird of ill-omen.

LORD LOAM: I must have it taken away; it has done that twice.

ACT IV - THE OTHER ISLAND

(LADY MARY comes in from stage left. Undoubtedly she meant to sail in, but she forgets, and it is a manly entrance. She tries again, and indicates to her sisters that she wishes to be alone with LORD LOAM.)

AGATHA: All right, but we know what it's about. Come along, Kit.

(They exit stage left. LADY MARY sits (like a boy) on the left of the sofa, and seeks to draw her father's attention by whistling. This troubles them both.)

LADY MARY: How horrid of me!

LORD LOAM: If you would try to remember--

LADY MARY: I do; but there are so many things to remember.

LORD LOAM: There are--. Do you know, Mary, I constantly find myself secreting hairpins.

LADY MARY: I find it so difficult to go up steps one at a time.

LORD LOAM: I was dining with half a dozen members of our party last Thursday, Mary, and they were so eloquent that I couldn't help wondering all the time how many of their heads he would have put in the bucket.

LADY MARY: I use so many of his phrases. And my appetite is so scandalous. Father, I usually have a chop before we sit down to dinner.

LORD LOAM: As for my clothes--. My dear, you can't think how irksome collars are to me nowadays.

LADY MARY: They can't be half such an annoyance, father, as--(She looks dolefully at her skirt)

LORD LOAM: Quite so--quite so. You have dressed early to-night, Mary.

LADY MARY: That reminds me; I had a note from Brocklehurst saying that he would come a few minutes before his mother as--as he wanted to have a talk with me. He didn't say what about, but of course we know. It was good of you to tell him, father. Oh, it is horrible to me--(covering her face) . It seemed so natural at the time.

LORD LOAM: Never again make use of that word in this house, Mary.

LADY MARY: Father, Brocklehurst has been so loyal to me for these two years that I should despise myself were I to keep my--my extraordinary lapse from him. Had Brocklehurst been a little less good, then you need not have told him my strange little secret.

LORD LOAM: Polly--I mean Mary--it was all Crichton's fault, he--

LADY MARY: No, father, no; not a word against him though. I haven't the pluck to go on with it; I can't even understand how it ever was. Father, do you not still hear the surf? Do you see the curve of the beach?

LORD LOAM: I have begun to forget--. But they were happy days; there was something magical about them.

LADY MARY: (*standing*) It was glamour. Father, I have lived Arabian nights. I have sat out a dance with the evening star. But it was all in a past existence, in the days of Babylon, and I am myself again. But he has been chivalrous always. If the slothful, indolent creature I used to be has improved in any way, I owe it all to him. I am slipping back in many ways, but I am determined not to slip back altogether--in memory of him and his island. That is why I insisted on your telling Brocklehurst. He can break our engagement if he chooses. Mary Lasenby is going to play the game.

LORD LOAM: But my dear--

FOOTMAN: (*At stage right*) Lord Brocklehurst.

(*LORD BROCKLEHURST enters from stage right and stands behind the sofa.*)

LADY MARY: (*Without turning.*) Father, dear, oughtn't you to be dressing?

LORD LOAM: The fact is--before I go--I want to say--

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Loam, if you don't mind, I wish very specially to have a word with Mary before dinner.

LORD LOAM: But--

(*MARY moves centre, and encourages LORD LOAM to leave.*)

LADY MARY: Yes, father. (*After LORD LOAM has left stage left, she turns to face LORD BROCKLEHURST.*) I am ready, George.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: (*Stepping towards her.*) It is a painful matter--I wish I could have spared you this, Mary.

LADY MARY: Please go on.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: In common fairness, of course, this should be remembered, that two years had elapsed. You and I had no reason to believe that we should ever meet again.

LADY MARY: I was so lost to the world, George.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: (*with a groan*) At the same time, the thing is utterly and absolutely inexcusable--

LADY MARY: (*Realising this is not how she expected the conversation to go.*) Oh!

LORD BROCKLEHURST: And so I have already said to mother.

LADY MARY: You have told her?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Certainly, Mary, certainly; I tell mother everything.

LADY MARY: And what did she say?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: To tell the truth, mother rather pooh-poohed the whole affair.

LADY MARY: Lady Brocklehurst pooh-poohed the whole affair!

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She said, 'Mary and I will have a good laugh over this.'

LADY MARY: George, your mother is a hateful, depraved old woman.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mary!

LADY MARY: Laugh indeed, when it will always be such a pain to me.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: If only you would let me bear all the pain, Mary.

LADY MARY: George, I think you are the noblest man--

(She is touched, and takes both his hands. He simpers in pain, and turns from MARY down left.)

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She was a pretty little thing. Ah, not beautiful like you. I assure you it was the merest flirtation; there were a few letters, but we have got them back. It was all owing to the boat being so late at Calais. You see she had such large, helpless eyes.

LADY MARY: George, when you lunched with father to-day at the club--

LORD BROCKLEHURST: I didn't. He wired me that he couldn't come.

LADY MARY: But he wrote you?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: No.

LADY MARY: You haven't seen him since?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: No.

LADY MARY: George, who and what is this woman?

(BROCKLEHURST turns to MARY)

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She was--she is--the shame of it--a lady's-maid.

(He turns away, biting his fist.)

LADY MARY: A what?

(BROCKLEHURST turns back to MARY)

LORD BROCKLEHURST: A lady's-maid. A mere servant, Mary. *(MARY turns away.)* I first met her at this house when you were entertaining the servants; so you see it was largely your father's fault.

LADY MARY: A lady's-maid?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Her name was Fisher.

LADY MARY: My maid!

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Can you forgive me, Mary?

(MARY turns towards him again, more warmly this time.)

LADY MARY: Oh George, George!

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mother urged me not to tell you anything about it; but--

LADY MARY: I am so glad you told me.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: You see there was nothing wrong in it.

LADY MARY: No, indeed.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: And she behaved awfully well. She quite saw that it was because the boat was late. I suppose the glamour to a girl in service of a man in high position--

LADY MARY: Glamour!--yes, yes, that was it.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mother says that a girl in such circumstances is to be excused if she loses her head.

LADY MARY: George, I am so sorry if I said anything against your mother. I am sure she is the dearest old thing.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Of course for women of our class she has a very different standard.

LADY MARY: Of course.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: You see, knowing how good a woman she is herself, she was naturally anxious that I should marry some one like her. That is what has made her watch your conduct so jealously, Mary.

LADY MARY: I know. I--I think, George, that before your mother comes I should like to say a word to father.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: About this?

LADY MARY: Oh no; I shan't tell him of this. About something else.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: And you do forgive me, Mary?

LADY MARY: Yes, yes. I--I am sure the boat was very late, George.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: It really was.

LADY MARY: I am even relieved to know that you are not quite perfect, dear. *(She takes his hand.)* George, when we are married, we shall try to be not an entirely frivolous couple, won't we? We must endeavour to be of some little use, dear.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Noblesse oblige.

LADY MARY: Mary Lasenby is determined to play the game, George.

(They kiss gently, and MARY turns to exit stage left. Their hands linger, and he trails slightly after her. Once she has gone, he is left in his reverie, which is interrupted after a short pause by the FOOTMAN entering stage right.)

FOOTMAN: Lady Brocklehurst.

(LADY BROCKLEHURST enters stage right.)

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Alone, George?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mother, I told her all; she has behaved magnificently.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Silly boy. *(She is touring the room, looking at the island trophies.)* So these are the wonders they brought back with them. Gone away to dry her eyes, I suppose?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She didn't cry, mother.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: No? You're quite right. I wouldn't have cried. Cold, icy. Yes, that was it.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: I assure you, mother, that wasn't it at all. She forgave me at once.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Oh!

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She was awfully nice about the boat being late; she even said she was relieved to find that I wasn't quite perfect.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: (*This makes her take notice.*) She said that?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: She really did.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I mean I wouldn't. Now if I had said that, what would have made me say it? George, is Mary all we think her?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: If she wasn't, mother, you would know it.

(*LADY BROCKLEHURST, having completed her lap of the room sits on the left of the sofa.*)

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Hold your tongue, boy. We don't really know what happened on that island.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: You were reading the book all the morning.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: How can I be sure that the book is true?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: They all talk of it as true.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: How do I know that they are not lying?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Why should they lie?

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Why shouldn't they? If I had been wrecked on an island, I think it highly probable that I should have lied when I came back. Weren't some servants with them?

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Crichton, the butler. (*She rings the bell*) Why, mother, you are not going to--

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Yes, I am. George, watch whether Crichton begins any of his answers to my questions with 'The fact is.'

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Why?

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Because that is usually the beginning of a lie.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mother, you can't do these things in other people's houses.

(CRICHTON enters stage right and moves to down right in as LADY BROCKLEHURST addresses him.)

LADY BROCKLEHURST: It was I who rang. So you were one of the castaways, Crichton?

CRICHTON: Yes, my lady.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Delightful book Mr. Woolley has written about your adventures. Don't you think so?

CRICHTON: I have not read it, my lady.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Odd that they should not have presented you with a copy.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Presumably Crichton is no reader.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: By the way, Crichton, were there any books on the island?

CRICHTON: I had one, my lady--Henley's poems.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Never heard of him.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I think you were not the only servant wrecked?

CRICHTON: There was a young woman, my lady.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I want to see her. Fetch her up. (CRICHTON goes.)

LORD BROCKLEHURST: This is scandalous.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I am a mother.

(CATHERINE and AGATHA, now dressed for dinner, enter from stage left, and the sight of LADY BROCKLEHURST visibly startles them. They shrink to the back up right, keeping their distance, and close together for security.)

(LADY BROCKLEHURST): How d'you do, Catherine--Agatha? You didn't dress like this on the island, I expect! By the way, how did you dress?

AGATHA: Not--not so well, of course, but quite the same idea.

ACT IV - THE OTHER ISLAND

(TREHERNE enters from stage left.)

LADY BROCKLEHURST: How do you do, Mr. Treherne? There is not so much of you in the book as I had hoped.

TREHERNE: There wasn't very much of me on the island, Lady Brocklehurst.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: How d'ye mean? *(He shrugs his honest shoulders)*

LORD BROCKLEHURST: I hear you have got a living, Treherne. Congratulations.

TREHERNE: Thanks.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Is it a good one?

TREHERNE: So--so. They are rather weak in bowling, but it's a good bit of turf.

(ERNEST enters from stage right, and after greeting LADY BROCKLEHURST, takes up a position behind down right.)

ERNEST: How do you do, Lady Brocklehurst.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Our brilliant author!

ERNEST: Oh, I don't know.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: It is as engrossing, Mr. Woolley, as if it were a work of fiction.

ERNEST: *(suddenly uncomfortable)* Thanks, awfully. The fact is--*(He is puzzled by seeing the Brocklehurst family exchange meaning looks)*

CATHERINE: Lady Brocklehurst, Mr. Treherne and I--we are engaged.

AGATHA: And Ernest and I.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I see, my dears; thought it wise to keep the island in the family.

(LORD LOAM and LADY MARY enter together from stage left. LADY MARY joins LORD BROCKLEHURST. LORD LOAM approaches LADY BROCKLEHURST, who stands to receive his kiss on her hand.)

LORD LOAM: Aha! ha, ha! younger than any of them, Emily.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Flatterer. You seem in high spirits, Mary.

LADY MARY: I am.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: After--

LADY MARY: I--I mean. The fact is--

(Again that disconcerting glance between the Countess and her son.)

LORD LOAM: She hears wedding bells, Emily, ha, ha!

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Do you, Mary? Can't say I do; but I'm hard of hearing.

LADY MARY: If you don't, Lady Brocklehurst, I'm sure I don't.

LORD LOAM: Tut, tut. Seen our curios from the island, Emily; I should like you to examine them.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Thank you, Henry. I am glad you say that, for I have just taken the liberty of asking two of them to step upstairs.

(CRICHTON and TWEENY enter from stage right, and stand behind the sofa. LORD BROCKLEHURST and MARY move right to join TREHERNE.)

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Loam, I have no hand in this.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Pooh, what have I done? You always begged me to speak to the servants, Henry, and I merely wanted to discover whether the views you used to hold about equality were adopted on the island; it seemed a splendid opportunity, but Mr. Woolley has not a word on the subject.

ERNEST: The fact is--

LORD LOAM: I assure you, Emily--

LADY MARY: Father, nothing whatever happened on the island of which I, for one, am ashamed, and I hope Crichton will be allowed to answer Lady Brocklehurst's questions.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: To be sure. There's nothing to make a fuss about, and we're a family party. *(To CRICHTON)* Now, truthfully, my man.

CRICHTON: I promise that, my lady.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Well, were you all equal on the island?

CRICHTON: No, my lady. I think I may say there was as little equality there as elsewhere.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Ah the social distinctions were preserved?

CRICHTON: As at home, my lady.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: The servants?

CRICHTON: They had to keep their place.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Wonderful. How was it managed? You, girl, tell me that?

TWEENY: If you please, my lady, it was all the Gov.'s doing.

CRICHTON: In the regrettable slang of the servants' hall, my lady, the master is usually referred to as the Gov.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I see. *(She turns to LORD LOAM)* You--

LORD LOAM: Yes, I understand that is what they call me.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: You didn't even take your meals with the family?

CRICHTON: No, my lady, I dined apart.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: You, girl, also? Did you dine with Crichton?

TWEENY: No, your ladyship.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: With whom?

TWEENY: I took my bit of supper with--with Daddy and Polly and the rest.

ERNEST: Dear old Daddy--he was our monkey. You remember our monkey, Agatha?

AGATHA: Rather! What a funny old darling he was.

CATHERINE: And don't you think Polly was the sweetest little parrot, Mary?

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Ah! I understand; animals you had domesticated?

LORD LOAM: Quite so--quite so.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: The servants' teas that used to take place here once a month--

CRICHTON: They did not seem natural on the island, my lady, and were discontinued by the Gov.'s orders.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: A clear proof, Loam, that they were a mistake here.

LORD LOAM: I admit it frankly. I abandon them. Emily, as the result of our experiences on the island, I think of going over to the Tories.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: I am delighted to hear it.

LORD LOAM: Thank you, Crichton, thank you; that is all.

(CRICHTON turns to leave, but...)

LADY BROCKLEHURST: One moment. Young people, Crichton, will be young people, even on an island; now, I suppose there was a certain amount of--shall we say sentimentalising, going on?

CRICHTON: Yes, my lady, there was.

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Mother!

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Which gentleman? You, girl, tell me.

TWEENY: If you please, my lady--

ERNEST: The fact is--

TWEENY: It was him--Mr. Ernest, your ladyship.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: With which lady?

AGATHA: I have already told you, Lady Brocklehurst, that Ernest and I--

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Yes, now; but you were two years on the island. (*Looking at LADY MARY*) . Was it this lady?

TWEENY: No, your ladyship.

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Then I don't care which of the others it was. Well, I suppose that will do.

(*Everyone relaxes.*)

LORD BROCKLEHURST: Do! I hope you are ashamed of yourself, mother. (*To CRICHTON, who is going*) . You are an excellent fellow, Crichton; and if, after we are married, you ever wish to change your place, come to us.

LADY MARY: Oh no, impossible--

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Why impossible? Do you see why it should be impossible, my man?

(*Everyone is suddenly tense again.*)

CRICHTON: Yes, my lady. I had not told you, my lord, but as soon as your lordship is suited I wish to leave service.

TREHERNE: What will you do, Crichton? (*CRICHTON shrugs his shoulders.*)

CRICHTON: Shall I withdraw, my lord?

(*CRICHTON and TWEENY leave stage right. ERNEST and LORD LOAM join CATHERINE and AGATHA. LADY BROCKLEHURST moves left to join MARY.*)

LADY BROCKLEHURST: Horrid of me, wasn't it? But if one wasn't disagreeable now and again, it would be horribly tedious to be an old woman. He will soon be yours, Mary, and then--think of the opportunities you will have of being disagreeable to me. On that understanding, my dear, don't you think we might--? (*Their cold lips meet*)

LORD LOAM: Quite so--quite so.

(*CRICHTON enters stage right, steps to the down stage side of the door, and stands smartly.*)

CRICHTON: Dinner is served, my Lord.

(They all file out to dinner stage right. LORD LOAM stays behind, to see his guests out, but when he sees that MARY is also hanging back, he decides to let her. Once she is alone with CRICHTON, who is still at attention by the door, she holds out her hand.)

LADY MARY: To wish you every dear happiness.

(He does not accept her hand, but bows obsequiously.)

CRICHTON: The same to you, my lady.

(She moves to follow her family to dinner, but hesitates.)

LADY MARY: Do you despise me, Crichton? You are the best man among us.

CRICHTON: On an island, my lady, perhaps; but in England, no.

LADY MARY: Then there's something wrong with England.

CRICHTON: My lady, not even from you can I listen to a word against England.

LADY MARY: Tell me one thing: you have not lost your courage?

CRICHTON: No, my lady.

(She follows her family. Once alone, CRICHTON regains a little of the regal air he had that last day on the island. He scans the room, and, satisfied that all is in order, turns out the light, and exits.)