

The Victoria theatre  
Siege - Late 17

~~ANNA. ROSEN X~~

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~~Victoria Siege~~

~~IN CAME  
OPHELIA  
ORIGINAL~~

'Siege'  
The Vic on the Strand  
'In Came Ophelia'



1722

THE VIKTORIA THEATRE SIEGE

A Play

in

Three Parts

by

MAURICE ROWDON © 1984

CHARACTERS

MARVIN JAMES

LIZZY TURNDALE

THE SCENE is in MARVIN JAMES'S  
dressing room at the Viktoria  
Theatre, Strand, London.

THE TIME is the present.

1.

THE SCENE opens on the dressing room of MARVIN JAMES at the Viktoria Theatre in the Strand.

This is no ordinary dressing room, being equipped like a stage, with a rake and a sophisticated lighting and sound system.

Dowstage actor's right there is a dressing table with the conventional mirror framed with naked light bulbs, except that there is no glass in this mirror, only the frame, so that, when MARVIN is seated making himself up, we see him through it.

On the dressing table are two WIGS, one grey (for MACBETH) and the other a deep blue-black (for HAMLET). They are on frames.

To actor's right of the dressing table there is a further table containing an elaborate console for the lights and sound, together with a phone, a loose radio microphone and a pile of play-scripts.

Besides controlling the lights and the sound, the console also controls an intercom system linking this spoiled man to every part of the theatre. For the purpose of speaking to others in the offices or front-of-house or onstage he uses the radio microphone.

The chair at the dressing table is a soft leather swivel chair coloured burgundy.

At roughly centre-stage there is a SETTEE partly covered with playscripts. There is also a thick blanket. The settee is amply supplied with cushions.

The entrance to the dressing room is on actor's left. This door opens on to the set and in an upstage direction.

There is a wide arched opening upstage-centre, beyond which lies an INNER ROOM with a window visible to us.

Actor's right of this opening there are SCREENS behind which MARVIN can undress. Immediately in front of these screens is a DUMB WAITER.

Downstage and to the right of this dumb waiter, against the wall, there is a CUPBOARD.

There appears to be no window in the dressing room itself.

When the action begins we hear hammering and voices from the stage, brought to us by THE SPEAKERS (two for stereophonic balance).

The door is pushed slowly open by a cane.

The cane is followed by a yellow-gloved hand and an

elegantly cut sleeve, then by MARVIN JAMES, a handsome man in (to say the least) his late middle age. He is dressed urbanely in a striped suit, with a trilby hat set at a rakish angle, in the Jack Buchanan style of the Thirties.

The cane he is holding turns out to have a silver knob.

MARVIN walks to the light-and-sound console and deftly pushes a button with his stick to cut off the stage noises. He pushes another button and we hear the theme music from MAY DAY DARLINGS, one of his musical shows. This music is of the evocative type usually heard from synthesising composers like Jarre.

Everything about MARVIN is suave and controlled without being contrived or self-conscious. It is the fruit of a lifetime of performance in both public and private life.

He deposits his stick in a rack for that purpose, then sits down at the dressing table. He puts on the light of the naked bulbs round the frame. A copy of THE TIMES lies ready for him on the table. He opens it and then begins the remarkable operation of scanning the paper from end to end in order to spot a mention of himself. His head and eyes dart about diagonally, taking in every column with expertise and dismissing it. The operation is over in a few seconds. Having found nothing, he screws the paper into a ball with a surprisingly savage movement and throws it into an empty wastepaper basket.

This finished, he rises and takes off his gloves and hat, and deposits them on a shelf of the

dumb waiter. He then removes his jacket and waistcoat, and hangs them carefully.

He goes behind the screen and takes off his shirt, throwing it over the screen.

He emerges in a light smock for making up. This smock resembles a doublet. He takes his shirt from the screen and hangs it on the dumb waiter.

His movements are precise, with a somnambulistic spontaneity as if repeated every day.

He once more seats himself at the dressing table. This time he begins adjusting the lights by playing with dials of the console. He watches the flies, waiting for each area of lights to come up.

His next movement affords him great satisfaction: it is to press the button which puts him in the amber glow of a spotlight.

He gazes at himself in the mirror with the detachment of the experienced actor. He opens the pot of cold cream and begins rapidly creaming his face.

When he is lathered up the phone at his side rings. He takes no notice. It stops ringing.

He dries off the cream and puts a foundation on. Then he begins pencilling in wrinkles. But he leaves this in order to try on the Macbeth wig. He gazes at himself, wincing.

The phone rings again, this time without stop. He nonchalantly continues fitting the wig. Then he returns to the pencil.

To avoid having his work interrupted he quickly tips the phone off its cradle with his right elbow. He goes on making up.

A voice gratingly and indistinctly talks from the phone while he continues work. He gives particular attention to the area round his eyes, and has clearly decided on a Henry Irving view of Macbeth as sardonic and evil.

He dries his hands, picks up the phone, switches off the music.

MARVIN: Listen, if you're that johnny who wanted a pair of my socks last night you can bloody-well sweat in your own! What an idea, collecting great actors' socks! How did you get my number anyway? (Pausing) What? Well why didn't you say so in the first place? (Pausing) When were you anything else than worried? And when were box office receipts anything else but down? (Pausing) Listen, I told you ages ago, they'll never take another play by the Old Chap this year, particularly after that lousy Lear. I was all for doing a Coward revival. I once filled the Henry Miller theatre with Present Laughter, you seem to forget. (Pausing) It had nothing to do with your direction! A Coward play directs itself. They were touting tickets at three times the price. We'll be lucky to fill the front row with The Play. It makes me sick, doing The Play. He's such a miserable old bugger. Murdering people in their beds and getting on his wife's nerves and having nightmares at the dinner table. And all that brief candle talk. I'd like to tell him where to stuff it. Anyway what are the takings? (Pausing) Oh my god! I shan't go on! (Pausing) What's that? I'm upset because The Times didn't mention me this morning? I've told you repeatedly I don't give a damn about The Times, I don't even read it (with a bland glance at the wastepaper basket). As for you, you're sore because you can't direct and the public has tumbled to it at last. I shall never forget the time I stood behind no fewer than fifteen armour-clad henchmen at the Final Dress and your little voice comes piping up from the stalls---'Marvin's completely masked!' Masked indeed! I was obliterated! Nobody could see the top of my head, let alone hear me speak! You don't call that blocking, do you? That's blundering! (Pause) I see. You're too distraught to listen. And you've heard

it all before. (Pausing) Your who? Your ex-wife? I didn't even know you'd been married. (Pausing) She's what? Well of course she left you, you got a divorce, didn't you? (Pausing) You went back together? Three times? Twice you remarried her? (Pausing) And what's the state of play at the moment? (Pausing) She ran out of the house---

LIZZY TURNDALE enters left, a cup of coffee in her hand. She is a bright, attractive young woman with wide, piercing, black eyes. She is in a one-piece dress, sexually provocative.

She stands there uncertainly, glancing about the dressing room in an inquisitive, even insatiable manner.

MARVIN (cont.) To what? Come here? What the devil for? Because she's in love with me? Oh for god's sake man they all say that! Anyway, I'm not responsible for your domestic skirmishing. As far as I'm concerned, you've cooked your goose this morning---you've lost your lady and your leading man in one fell swoop! I am certainly not going to play to a 55% house. But I'll tell you what I am going to do. I'm going to play Hamlet!

LIZZY almost drops the coffee with surprise.

He slams the phone down and only now seems to realise what he has just said. He leans back in his chair, gazing before him in a dream.

MARVIN (to himself, mumbling) Ha! Are you honest?

LIZZY (taking this to be addressed to her) Me?

MARVIN (jumping out of his skin) Who the---

He stares at her, then at the cup of coffee. He then rises and courteously takes the cup from her, deposits it on his dressing table.

Suddenly he seizes hold of her. She is about to scream but he puts his hand over her mouth. Her eyes stare in fear.

MARVIN (cont.) Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them out. What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? We are arrant knaves---! (Breaking from her) No, dammit! It just won't do!

He returns to his dressing table sulkily, and resumes his making up. But now he tears off his wig, and begins creaming out the wrinkles.

He puts on a smoother foundation and is quickly a younger, if not young, man.

He tries on the blue-black wig and leans back with great satisfaction. He removes it again.

At first LIZZY stands gazing at him with astonishment. Then the astonishment gives way to steady curiosity, and she sits quietly down on the settee.

He suddenly turns to her--- expecting to find her in her former place, surprised to find her on the settee.

MARVIN: Whose idea was that, bringing me coffee? Not our director's by any chance? Not Nigel Burbage's? How ridiculous to assume the name of an Elizabethan actor-manager. (He sips his coffee) You've put sugar in. (Resuming his makeup) Never put sugar in Marvin James's coffee. Put it in his tea. Not his coffee. They know it at the Savoy and every major hotel in the West End but in the theatre where he's been resident star for fifteen years news is apparently slow to travel. (Without looking in her direction) Who are you? Wheedled your way into the job to get my autograph or something?

Are you after my socks? Chap at the stagedoor last night was after my socks. You have nice tits, I'll say that.

LIZZY: What?

MARVIN: She speaks but one word---'what'. (Turning to her with a leer) 'What'?

LIZZY: Who do you think you are?

MARVIN: Oh my god, not that line! (Continuing his makeup) Not after Eliza! What's your name anyway?

LIZZY: Lizzy Turndale.

A stunned silence. He turns slowly to look at her.

MARVIN: But no one's called Lizzy Turndale. It's impossible. And you've made a bad thing worse by abbreviating the Elizabeth, don't you see that? However, it's the 'turn' in Turndale I dislike most. Turning down, turning away, turning up, turning round, turning out, it's all bad news, reminding one of funerals, Wednesday matinees and Number Two tours, not to say the closing of shows on second nights. It spells something rather worse than doom---the drab. Elizabeth has been overdone anyway---

two queens and Taylor. No, 'Lizzy Turndale', why, that's completely self-defeating. What's your real name?

LIZZY: Jean Stokes.

MARVIN: That makes me like Lizzy Turndale.

LIZZY (gazing at him) It's exactly what he said.  
You're completely unreal.

MARVIN (unruffled) Who said?

LIZZY: Nigel.

MARVIN: Who's he?

LIZZY: Your director. He's just directed you in Macbeth.

MARVIN (jumping up in wild panic) What did you say?  
Oh my god!

He drags her up from the settee and begins pulling her roughly towards the door.

MARVIN: Get out, go on! Get out quick! And KNOCK!

He pushes her out of the door and closes it smartly.

MARVIN (cont., screaming at her through the door) Knock three times!

LIZZY (off) What?

MARVIN: Oh don't keep saying what woman! This is a matter of life and death! Knock on the fucking door three times!

LIZZY knocks on the door.

He is visibly relieved.

MARVIN (cont.) You may come in!

She reenters.

MARVIN (cont.) Now quick. Turn round three times.  
Turn! Go on!

He whirls her round three times.

MARVIN (cont., hurrying back to his dressing table)  
I'll have to tell Nigel about this. It'll kill him. In fact we can't go on. (Grabbing the phone) Oh my god. We'll have to do Brighton first, oh my god (dialling), I told him we'd never be able to open cold like this! Nigel? This woman, God knows who picked her up for the kitchen, she came in here and named the Play. (Pausing) Yes! She actually named it! She'll be whistling next, the stupid bitch! I did the usual, I sent her outside but it's a bad omen Nigel and together with your news of a poor house I don't think we can go on, anyway I've never thought that opening cold was a good idea on the Play, I think we'd better open at Brighton--- (Pausing) What? Oh stop talking about your bloody ex-wife man! This is theatre and--- (Pausing) What? (Turning to stare at LIZZY) That's right, Lizzy Turndale. And she's an---an...

Very quietly he puts the phone down, his eyes still on her. He then leans back in his chair and takes a leisurely sip of coffee.

He rises and walks to the door, which he locks. He takes the key out and begins playing with it, then puts it in his pocket.

He makes his way towards her.

MARVIN (cont.) So you're an actress. You knew precisely what you were doing! (His face an inch from hers) You're Nigel Burbage's ex-wife, aren't you? (As she is about to speak) It's no use you lying, he's just told me! You came here on the pretext of bringing me my morning coffee and your real intention was to put a bad spell on our production, thus ruining your ex-husband and--- (remembering) hey, wait a minute! Didn't he tell me you were in love with me? (Sitting down by her) Now let's go into this methodically. Why are you here?

LIZZY: Because I'm in love with you.

MARVIN: No, I mean the real reason. Why did you name the Play?

LIZZY: Because you don't want to play in it.

MARVIN (rather taken aback) That's perfectly true.

LIZZY: You want to do Hamlet.

MARVIN; That's true too!

Suddenly she puts two fingers  
in her mouth and does a deafening  
whistle.

MARVIN (gripping her round her throat in horror) No,  
no!

He begins shaking her.

She screams so loud that he  
loosens his grip at once.

MARVIN: (staggered by the noise) Where were you?

LIZZY (nursing her throat) We were talking about Hamlet---

MARVIN: No I mean what drama school.

LIZZY (weakly) Oh, RADA.

MARVIN: I thought that scream was pretty good...

He sits there pondering,  
stroking his chin.

MARVIN (cont.) Got it!

He jumps up and dashes through  
the arch into the inner room.

He disappears for a moment.  
LIZZY cranes round anxiously.

We hear him turn the key in a  
lock.

He returns, playing with a  
second key.

MARVIN (cont.) Both doors locked.

LIZZY: He said that too. He said you were half mad.

MARVIN: But you disregarded him didn't you? And now  
you pay the price. But not quite as you think,  
Miss Turndale. Those two doors are locked,  
not as you think, in order to keep you here,  
though in part that is my plan, but to keep others  
out. (Going to his dressing table again) I'm  
going to take you hostage. And you will see me  
even yet as Hamlet.

He continues making up as the youthful Hamlet. He puts the blue-black wig on his head with careful, even reverential movements.

MARVIN (cont.) They denied it to me as a young man. They ridiculed the idea when, in my early forties, I was still so to speak eligible. They said I was too fat in the middle area. Now that this is no longer true, now that I'm prime Lear material and thin in the shank I shall give them a younger, in the sense of more vital, Hamlet than they've ever seen. They say a woman can't play Juliet until she's too old to play it, the same is true of Hamlet, Miss Turndale. My mother, I mean Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, will probably be half my age, but she shall be seen as a crone next to my adolescence. You will witness one of the most remarkable stage transformations of all time, and the knighted old men are going to writhe with envy.

LIZZY: All you do is talk. That's what Nigel said.

MARVIN: You don't see me removing Macbeth and replacing him with Hamlet before your eyes? You don't hear me saying Macbeth shamelessly, and thus joining with you in the bad spell you put upon that production? You have given me courage, my girl! But why, you will ask, make up as Hamlet two months before rehearsals can possibly begin, and when the opening of Macbeth is billed for the coming Thursday? Because this is revolution, my dear. Talking time is over. Now the screaming will begin. And you will provide the screams.

LIZZY: Those endless speeches. He mentioned those too.

MARVIN: Clever Nigel. But this time he's going to listen to every word. (With sudden earnestness) I hope he's still in love with you?

LIZZY: Oh yes! He only divorces me in order to get me again. He knows I only run after men who can do without me, like you. By divorcing me he's trying to show me he can do without me.

MARVIN: But of course he can't.

LIZZY: Oh no.

MARVIN (rubbing his hands) Excellent! So he will hear those screams with a measure of concern!

Turning to the console at his side he adjusts the lights to a more Hamlet-like setting.

He dials a number on the phone.

MARVIN: Nigel. (Very quietly) I have your ex-wife here. Listen carefully.

MARVIN beckons LIZZY towards him. She approaches him at the dressing table. Suddenly he seizes her and manages to grip her so that his arm is locked round her neck from behind.

MARVIN (at the phone) I intend either to strangle her or plunge a dagger into her neck. I haven't decided which. You may take this as a joke. But I warn you that she may be found dead. If I were you I'd remember your own words, Marvin James is a madman.

He tightens the grip on her neck and she screams frantically.

MARVIN (cont.) Did you hear? Did you recognise the voice? But we can do better than that.

He puts the phone on the table and releases her, leaving her staggering about clutching her throat.

He goes to the cupboard upstage right and pulls it open dramatically. She watches him with horror as he pulls out a dagger.

She grabs the phone.

LIZZY: Nigel, Nigel! He really has gone mad! He's---!

MARVIN approaches her menacingly with the dagger. He grabs her again.

She struggles and tries to bite him.

He suddenly plunges the dagger into her neck.

Blood gushes forth.

She screams blue murder at this. The blood runs down her dress.

MARVIN calmly takes the phone again, having thrown the dagger into the wastepaper basket.

MARVIN: All I did was draw a little blood, Nigel. I promise not to kill her yet. Hadn't you better notify the police? But first let me get your ex-wife seated. I mean, I need to kill her later, which requires her to be alive now.

He helps the sobbing, quivering LIZZY to the settee. Blood is still soaking into her dress.

She is realising slowly that the dagger was a stage-dagger with a spring action, and the blood ketchup. He returns to the phone.

MARVIN (cont.) Luckily I avoided the jugular. This is where a little knowledge of pathology counts, Nigel. Now these are my demands. First, the Final Dress and the first night of the Play will not take place. You will inform not only the police but the media about this. You will tell them that your ex-wife, who left you not an hour ago, is being held hostage by a maddened Marvin James in his dressing room at the Viktoria Theatre. Any attempt to batter down his door will produce an entirely dead Lizzy Turndale in a split second. How the hell did she get that name, by the way? It wasn't your idea was it? (Pausing) Her real name? (Turning to LIZZY) Didn't you tell me Stokes?

LIZZY (trying to speak but unable to) !

MARVIN: She's understandably distraught, Nigel, having lost several pints of good blood. Amazing how much of it we have, isn't it? And its brightness, due I think to the presence of oxyhemoglobins or did I get my lesson wrong? But, to return to business, you will announce today, this morning, a Hamlet production with me in the title role, at this theatre, (Pausing) Oh for god's sake man, I can simulate youth any time of the day. It all depends on your legs. Mine are in mint condition.

He puts the phone down without waiting for a reply.

LIZZY has in the meantime gone to the cupboard and is staring at its contents with open mouth.

MARVIN (cont.) I must say that last scream was even better than the first one.

LIZZY: I wasn't acting this time.

MARVIN (approaching her) You never do otherwise than act, my dear. (Taking her affectionately round the waist) I suppose you're wondering what all this is?

LIZZY: Yes I am.

MARVIN: It's my little museum of stage-daggers. Several date back to 1701. Indeed I have some of the most memorable daggers ever used. (Pulling one out) Garrick! (replacing it and pulling out two others) These were used to murder Duncan in Henry Irving's Lyceum production of Macbeth in 1888. (Replacing them) And then of course there are the most up-to-date ones you can find on the market. I used a 1963 spring-dagger on you which quite frankly I didn't expect to work. But, as you see (indicating her 'blood') it was most efficient. Now why don't you slip behind that screen and put one of my dressing gowns on? (Drawing her behind the screen) You'll find a washbasin, why don't you wash out that ketchup, it doesn't stain?

She follows his directions helplessly.

We hear her washing the dress.

MARVIN: That's Clarissa's dress from May Day Darlings isn't it?

LIZZY (off) Yes!

MARVIN: Was that to flatter me?

LIZZY (off) I thought it might give you pleasure.

MARVIN: Where did you find it?

LIZZY (off) At Berman's. They wanted fifty pounds a day for it.

MARVIN: Did you give it to them?

LIZZY (off) Nigel did.

MARVIN (sitting at his dressing table and gazing before him with pleasure) I suppose it's sort of historical isn't it? To buy it you'd probably have to pay thousands. I suppose your ex-husband has a lot of wonderful anecdotes about me? For instance how I exhausted three leading ladies during the Broadway run of May Day Darlings. Just didn't have my stamina you see.

LIZZY (off) He said you were very unpredictable.

MARVIN (with satisfaction) Witness our present situation.

LIZZY (off) He said you're always dropping your lines and are never letter-word-perfect even by the end of a run. And you have half your speeches pinned to the back of the furniture.

MARVIN (trying to retain his composure) Really!

LIZZY (off) He said it was his productions people came to see, not your performances.

MARVIN: He---!

LIZZY (off) And the general public---

MARVIN: The general public?

LIZZY (off) They think you're old hat.

MARVIN: Old---! Old---!

LIZZY (off) A museum piece.

MARVIN: A mus---!

LIZZY (off) He said it was only the Americans kept you alive, because of all their stuff about the Brits and Tradition and all that. And they expect Shakespeare to be boring anyway. He said you're more of an effigy than an actor.

MARVIN: Eff---?

LIZZY (off) People say you must have been marvellous in your heyday.

MARVIN: 'Heyday'!

LIZZY (off) Because in those days you could be really ham and get away with it.

MARVIN (rising, aghast) Ham!

LIZZY (off) What's wrong?

MARVIN: With ham? What's wrong with ham? I shall throttle you just for the pleasure of it!

LIZZY (off) The critics say among themselves that unfortunately Nigel has to build his productions round you because any intelligence in the direction would make too great a contrast to your acting.

Words fail MARVIN JAMES,  
perhaps for the first time  
in his life.

LIZZY (cont., off) And now the public won't even come and see a fascinating museum piece. Witness their failure to book Macbeth.

MARVIN (bursting out) I filled the Henry Miller theatre with Present Laughter for over a year. And do you see these lights? What actor in the world has his dressing room equipped with an elaborate sound-and-lighting system by means of which he can simulate a theatrical performance in perfect privacy? (Dashing to the console and in desperation, as if trying to convince himself, changing the lights, dimming and introducing momentary strobe effects) Do you see that? From the moonlit mood we pass in a moment to the golden autumnal! It cost thousands, thousands! (Almost crying)

LIZZY (off) Did you know how you got your nickname?

MARVIN: Nick---?

LIZZY: 'Hamlegs'. My legs are in mint condition!

This is too much for him.  
With a great roar he goes  
behind the screen and drags  
her back by the hair.

She is now dressed in one  
of his superb gold dressing  
gowns. It demonstrates  
her cleavage even better than  
the dress.

MARVIN: You're a critic aren't you? A fucking reporter? (Shaking her) Are you a damned feminist--- a lesbian---a radical---you're a friend of

Vanessa Redgrave's!

LIZZY (flinging him off with amazing strength so that he reels away) Nigel always said you couldn't take criticism! That's your downfall he said! That's exactly why you became a museum piece, why it's impossible to direct you, why playwrights fly to the Bahamas when you announce an interest in one of their scripts! And the worse you get the more the managers want you! 'Old Marvin', they say, 'Old Marvin's like a nostalgia record, we'd better exploit him while we can, it may be his last year!' But Hamlet's more than legs!

MARVIN: !!!!!

The phone rings.

MARVIN (cont., picking the phone up with a furious gesture and bellowing into it) What is it? (Turning back to LIZZY and waving the phone at her) This has saved your life! (At the phone again, but very quietly now) Oh, really? (To LIZZY, with sarcastic charm) It's Mr Nigel Burbage himself. (At the phone again) No, Mr Burbage, I repeat this isn't a joke. I'm already ankle-deep in your ex-wife's blood and she happens to be hanging on to life by the merest thread. Believe me, if you don't get your fat arse over here in ten minutes flat, she will never scream again! Secondly, I'm going to unplug this phone and you will talk to me from now on, and so will the police, on my intercom system. You will not negotiate with me through the door because, being an actor, I need my voice.

He slams phone down, unplugs it.

LIZZY (before he can start up again) Another thing he said was that all your acting is Talking Heads stuff. Don't you realise that The Old Chap as you call him is full of the heat of the flesh? Look at the way you played that scene when I came in! You could just as well have been a radio announcer. You just stalk and talk! (Putting her face close to his precisely as he did to her) You remember what Hamlet said? 'Suit the action'---action, action, Marvin!--- 'suit the action to the word, the word to the action'! But all you do is moon around the stage trying to mask other people. No wonder box office receipts are down to fifteen percent capacity!

MARVIN: Fifteen---?

LIZZY: Fifteen percent! You don't think Nigel would dare to give you the real figure do you?

MARVIN (holding his head and groaning) Fifteen percent!

LIZZY: Let's go through that scene you just turned into a recital.

He allows himself to be led like a dummy to centre stage.

LIZZY: Take it from I did love thee once.

MARVIN: What?

LIZZY: Isn't that your line? I did love thee once.

MARVIN: Ah!

LIZZY: Well say it!

MARVIN: I did love thee once!

LIZZY: Indeed my lord you made me believe so.

MARVIN: You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

LIZZY: OK, now get hold of me---like this (grabbing his hand and putting it over her mouth, then drawing his head close to her ear).

MARVIN (hissing in her ear, not without personal malice) Get thee to a nunnery.

LIZZY: Good! Now turn it round and smile.

He leers at her. She then takes his hand and puts it down the slit in her dressing gown, inducing him to fondle her breasts.

MARVIN: Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?

LIZZY: Now pull me down to the floor.

She draws him down with her.

Then she draws one of his hands up her leg, under the gown.

LIZZY (cont.) OK, go on!

We hear police sirens in the distance.

LIZZY (cont.) Go on!

MARVIN: I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother---

The sound of rushing steps along the corridor outside.

MARVIN (cont.) ---it were better my mother had not---

A violent hammering on the door. Shocked out of their wits, MARVIN and LIZZY sit up and stare at each other.

NIGEL BURBAGE's voice comes blaring over the intercom.

BURBAGE (VO) Lizzy, this is Nigel! Are you OK?  
Talk to me Lizzy! Is it true he's holding you  
hostage? Lizzy!

They listen, astonished.

Suddenly LIZZY screams in the most bloodcurdling fashion.

MARVIN (hissing at her) What are you doing?

LIZZY (hissing back) Tell him you mean business, go on!

Once more she screams.

BURBAGE (VO) Oh Marvin, Marvin, don't hurt her Marvin!  
Let her alone for my sake Marvin!

LIZZY (hissing) Tell him to vacate the corridor outside, not to hammer on the door.

MARVIN (shouting towards the door) I've given you your directions Burbage! If the police---!

BURBAGE (VO) I can't hear you Marvin! Use the intercom!

LIZZY jumps up and gets the radio microphone from the table. She thrusts it into MARVIN's hand. He is still seated on the floor.

MARVIN (into the mike) If the police aren't here in a jiffy she dies by strangulation! Though she could quite easily die of terror before then!

The police sirens come nearer.

BURBAGE (VO) They're on their way Marvin! You can hear them Marvin!

LIZZY screams again.

MARVIN (hissing at her) All right, don't overdo it!

LIZZY (shouting frantically into the mike) He's trying to strangle me Nigel (making throttled noises)!

MARVIN stares at her aghast.

LIZZY (cont.) He's got guns as well Nigel! (Screams) He's got two 45-calibre rifles, a .357 Magnum pistol, a shotgun, a 9mm Walther pistol, an AR-7 survival rifle, about three .22 calibre pistols, a .30.06 rifle with telescopic sights!

MARVIN (hissing) What the---?

BURBAGE (VO) Marvin, Marvin, don't do anything unwise, we'll have the Hamlet production---!

LIZZY gives MARVIN an intimate 'You see?' expression.

BURBAGE (VO) ---we'll strike the Macbeth set now, there'll be no Final Dress tonight! (Yelling frantically) Marvin, Marvin, are you there Marvin?

MARVIN (pulling the mike away from her) Are you trying to get me in gaol for life dammit? What are you talking about, guns?

LIZZY: That was from a part I did in rep. (Seizing the mike again) He wants you to leave the corridor free, Nigel, he doesn't want you hammering on the door!

Steps on distant staircases.

BURBAGE(VO) OK, Lizzy, I'm going to the end of the corridor now, the police have just arrived, keep calm Marvin, we love you Marvin, we believe in you Marvin!

LIZZY (to MARVIN) That's so that we can talk without them overhearing us. Because you and I have got lots to talk about.

MARVIN (with menace) I'll say! (Trying to scramble to his feet) I'm going to tell them the truth!

LIZZY (pushing him back) Oh no you don't, you chicken-livered---!

The intercom cuts in with the urbane voice of the HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR.

HN (VO) Good morning Mr James! Have you a problem? Police are now surrounding this theatre and I'm your Hostage Negotiator. Now I've had considerable experience of this kind of thing Mr Marvin and if there's the smallest chance of our coming to terms right now, please state what the terms are and I'll do my best at this end.

LIZZY (hissing) Tell them, 'I've stated my terms to Nigel Burbage, he knows perfectly well what they are'.

As he does nothing she screams again.

HN (VO) Now then Mr Marvin, let's talk about this calmly, are you OK Miss Turndale?

MARVIN (into the mike) I've made my demands, Nigel Burbage knows what they are!

LIZZY (hissing) Good!

MARVIN (hissing) This'll ruin us both!

LIZZY (hissing back) Only you! I'm the hostage,  
remember!

HN (VO) Very well, Mr James, Mr Burbage is here at  
my side and corroborates what you say. We  
understand you wish to (mumbling to someone)---  
you wish to cancel the Macbeth production---  
you want the public refunded for the bookings  
on that show and you wish a Hamlet production  
to be scheduled and announced, and the booking  
to start as soon as possible, and you will  
release Miss Lizzy Turndale on hearing that  
the show has been fully booked for the first  
three nights. Is that correct sir?

MARVIN (hissing) It's much more than I said.

LIZZY (hissing back) That's Nigel, he's always helpful  
in an emergency! Tell him yes!

MARVIN (into the mike) Yes it's correct!

HN (VO) Have you been injured Miss Turndale? Do you  
mind Miss Turndale talking to us Mr James?

MARVIN: Well, keep it brief!

LIZZY (into the mike) I'm more in shock! There's a  
little blood.

HN (VO) Blood Miss Turndale?

LIZZY: He tried to knife me in the throat!

MARVIN (hissing) You fucking---!

LIZZY (hissing back) Stop being Macbeth! Lift your  
chin up! Look like a man! (Into the mike)  
He says you must alert the principal radio  
stations and television networks and press  
agencies at once. He won't release me until  
he hears a news broadcast has gone out on the  
matter!

HN (VO) I believe news has already gone out Mr James.  
If it's publicity you need, you can trust the  
media to provide more than is healthy for anyone.  
Let me assure you, Mr James, you don't have to  
murder anyone for some extra publicity. You've  
already made your point. On the contrary, if  
you injure this woman, not to say kill her,  
you will spend much of your life in prison.

Think it over Mr James! If you release this young woman now, and come out of your dressing room behind her with your hands in the air, there is a strong possibility that you will receive no more than a few months in prison or a fine for what, with Miss Turndale's permission, will be classed as an elaborate hoax. Is it a hoax Mr James?

MARVIN is about to reply  
but LIZZY screams again.

HN (VO) All right, Mr James, you've made your point. I'm in contact with the Home Office and they'll be giving me their decision about your terms in a few moments. Meanwhile Mr James keep very calm because I'm sure you don't want anything to happen that might not only hurt your reputation permanently but put you behind prison bars until the day you die. Don't risk it Mr James! Release the young woman. Come out with your hands in the air and who knows, perhaps no charges will be brought against you!

LIZZY screams again.

HN (VO) OK, Mr James, just wait for the Home Secretary's answer calmly.

More police sirens outside.

MARVIN: Oh my god... (Trying to grab the mike from her)  
I'm going to tell him your screams are fake!

LIZZY: They won't believe you! Because my screams are convincing! Do you think Nigel Burbage believed you when you said you were taking me hostage? Of course he didn't! He hasn't believed a word of yours in twenty years, so why should he start now? It was my screams that saved the day, my screams!

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR breaks  
in again over the intercom.

HN (VO) Mr James, there've already been a number of special news broadcasts. Two television crews are setting up cameras outside this theatre with the intention of giving hourly news coverage of what has become known as the Viktoria Theatre Siege. You couldn't wish for more, Mr James. We're told that NBC news are covering the story for American television. Mr Burbage tells me that the Macbeth production has already been cancelled. He has also announced a Hamlet

production with you in the title role but so far the media hasn't taken this up. However, he's confident that all this publicity will ensure early booking. Thus all you asked for Mr James and more has been conceded---

LIZZY screams.

MARVIN (hissing at her) But they're giving me what I want dammit!

She screams again.

MARVIN (grabbing the mike with determination) She keeps on screaming, blast her eyes!

HN (VO) If you don't want the lady to scream just take your hands off her Mr James! Are you alright Miss Turndale?

LIZZY (gasping into the mike, which she has torn from MARVIN's grasp) He's---he's---hurting me!

HN (VO) I beg you Mr James think your position over! If at the end of five minutes---we're going to give you five minutes---if you walk out of your dressing room with your hands above your head no charges will be preferred against you, unless of course Miss Turndale wishes it. There's only one proviso, that you submit to a medical checkup at St George's Hospital, including a psychiatric examination.

MARVIN (grabbing the mike) She's the one who needs attention!

HN (VO) No doubt she is Mr James if you've been trying to strangle her. Now come to your senses, man, you've a great career behind and in front of you, don't send it up in smoke!

LIZZY (grabbing the mike) He says he doesn't believe you're real police!

MARVIN: !!

HN (VO) Thank you for clearing that up Miss Turndale. Mr James if you don't believe we're police just take a peep out of your window and you'll see at least a hundred of us down there. Will you do that? Please do that Mr James.

Together MARVIN AND LIZZY steal to the window in the inner room. When they have

glanced below they stare at each other with somewhat chastened astonishment.

MARVIN (hissing at her as they return to the main room)  
There, see what you've done!

HN (VO) Have you taken a look Mr James?

MARVIN (taking the mike) Yes I have!

HN (VO) Are you satisfied that the metropolitan police force is here in some strength?

MARVIN (into the mike) Yes I am.

HN (VO) Very well Mr James. We shall give you five minutes to make up your mind in. After that, if you don't come out peacefully, we shall have to resort to less friendly methods. I'm afraid this may mean risking Miss Turndale's life but you will both appreciate that we can hardly tie up so many policemen indefinitely. The Irish Republican Army is threatening to renew its bomb attacks and if the past is anything to go by they take advantage of any abnormal situation of this kind, where the police force is concentrated in one spot. Help your country Mr James! Don't facilitate the murder of innocent men and women!

LIZZY (at the mike) He wants to know what these less friendly methods are.

HN (VO) Well Miss Turndale, they mean for starters he'll be charged with assault and battery, kidnapping, resisting arrest and attempted murder. I needn't tell you what the penalty is for that lot but I can with confidence say that if convicted Mr James will never see the inside of a theatre again.

MARVIN: Oh my god!

HN (VO) Once again, Mr James, come to your senses. We are giving you five minutes.

The intercom abruptly switches out.

MARVIN (grabbing her) What the hell are you doing this for?

LIZZY (pushing him off so that he falls on to the settee into a half-lying position) That's just what

I'm going to explain! Now there was one thing he missed out and that was me playing Ophelia in the Hamlet production.

MARVIN: What?

LIZZY: Now it's your turn to say what! The fact is Marvin I didn't mention the matter to the Hostage Negotiator because I wanted to talk to you first about my motives in entering this siege.

MARVIN: Oh yes!

LIZZY: It's that I too need publicity, and much more than you do because I'm not famous already. One sure way of getting publicity is to hook on to somebody famous and either star with them or cause a lot of trouble. I'm doing both.

MARVIN: Very honest of you!

LIZZY: In a short time there won't be a household in the western world hasn't heard of Lizzy Turndale even if they haven't heard of you. For years I've been sweating it out in provincial reps while that idiot Nigel Burbage told me I wasn't good enough for the West End. Oh he always dangled the carrot but it was for a small part next week or next season or next year and if I said let me meet Marvin James he said you were too busy or he was too busy or you weren't getting on with each other. But today I clinched it. I walked out of the house and said I'm going to see him now!

MARVIN: And here you are,

LIZZY: But don't think I was after any famous person. I was after you---my obsession and perpetual daydream since I was fourteen years of age!

MARVIN: Oh my god.

LIZZY: That's another of your nicknames.

MARVIN: What is?

LIZZY: Oh My God. They say 'Oh My God's' threatening do a one-man show on his life in the theatre called 'On the Boards'---

MARVIN: 'On the---'!

LIZZY: There isn't much I don't know about you is there, dammit---another one of your nicknames,

Dammit. Now you're going to end on the rocks and not on the boards unless you listen to me. You've got about three minutes in which to do so!

MARVIN: Oh my god...

LIZZY: All these years, I'm twenty-eight now, you've figured in my daydreams, my masturbations! I think I saw every London production you were in, and several of the Brighton flops. (As he is opening his mouth to protest) I had to go secretly because mother would have been furious if she'd known.

MARVIN: That's right, there's always a mother somewhere!

LIZZY: You'll see later just how true that is. But back to business. When that man comes on the intercom again you're going to tell him you want me as your Ophelia and, another thing, my name goes next to yours above the title.

MARVIN (his mettle up) Ophelia my arse! You can get any actor in the world to put his hand up your skirt without picking on me! Ophelia isn't a hotpants, little lady, just as Hamlet isn't a pair of legs! I'm sick and tired of that word love on the lips of women whose hearts are made of ice-cubes! (Striding about dramatically while she watches him with some curiosity) Why for god's sake was I given so much charisma? Why the magnetic personality, the eyes that turn their heads with a glance, the smile that while it hasn't launched a thousand ships has turned a thousand silly heads! I never had a leading lady who didn't fall in love with me! I never knew in all my life a single girl who didn't swoon to touch my hand! (Closing in on her) My mother told me all about your damned breed! Yes I too had a mother, and a finer actress than you'll ever be! She warned me early what seething caldrons of manipulation you people are! Why else do you think Hamlet told her 'If thou wilt marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them.'? I pleaded with my mother, for god's sake don't give me so much charisma I said, the girls are going to give me trouble all my life, they'll hang about my dressing rooms, solicit my agents, my managers! Why insist mother that my eyes should be hypnotic, my lips beyond reproach, my walk, my stance, my expression, even my way of thinking and choice of words so far beyond ordinary capacities that into whatever drawing room I set foot they turn

towards me as one creature and ask each other with importuning nudges 'Who is that?'

LIZZY: You see, you really can act when you want to.

MARVIN: !!

LIZZY: If you'd played like that in May Day Darlings, naturalistically, you'd have done much better. Of course I realise you were supposed to be a ham actor in it but even ham actors have natural feelings sometimes. (Gazing at him with some puzzlement) You don't seem to know what a real feeling is. When you were throttling me a while back it was a stage throttle. And when you were playing with my tits it was stage play. So the first didn't scare me and the second didn't turn me on.

MARVIN: Would you have wished me to use a real knife? Or make love to you hardly knowing your name?

LIZZY: Why not?

MARVIN: 'Why not'!

LIZZY: And why shouldn't Ophelia be played as a hotpants? She didn't mind Hamlet lying in her lap right in front of other people, and making a pun on her cunt. Are you telling me she loved him? It was her father who organised that love affair. The rest was her silly daydreams about marrying a prince. Which is typical of a hot pants. Anyway you've got about two minutes to decide on your future, Marvin James. If you don't come up with the right answer it's curtains for you and your stage career. Has the penny not dropped then? (Underlining it vehemently) It isn't only Ophelia I'm after, it's a new production of Hamlet on my terms! Do you get it? No more Talking Heads. No more striding round the stage in that fucking sable cloak, swishing it in people's noses and letting the audience see the 'good' side of your face and never the 'bad'. No wonder Nigel Burbage always directs 'round' you! 'Twentieth century productions with a nineteenth century lead,' as he always says!

MARVIN: Oh bugger what Nigel Burbage always says. It's a pity you don't look into yourself instead of me! You're trying to get into my pants and you're

just using Hamlet as a ploy. But don't be sure you'd like it once you got inside! A lot of ladies have had their little fannies burned---remained in agony for the rest of their lives! Two suicides---untold nervous breakdowns---the close of at least five promising stage careers! You'd cut your veins in less than a fortnight. Oh I admit you're quite intelligent! You can talk like a character out of Bernard Shaw but this isn't a Shaw comedy, Miss Turntable, it won't end in an upper-class drawing room amid a gale of laughter but in Wandsworth Prison for me and Wormwood Scrubs for you!

LIZZY: I'm going to marry you too!

MARVIN (falling back) Marry me? Nobody's ever succeeded in doing that!

LIZZY:1 Why else do you think we were flung together this morning? why else should I be magnetised to this room? It hurts me to hear you spoken of as too old for Lear---

MARVIN: Too old for---!!

LIZZY: And to see you doing different things in different plays but in such a way that it always looks like the same production! Don't you see what a wonderful story we're making between us? World famous actor marries his own hostage! They fall in love in the first moments of the siege! And they play together for the rest of their lives, like Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontann! I saw the potential the moment you plunged that phoney dagger in my neck---I thought this is all too ham, no one's going to believe him---but with my cooperation, my convincing screams, he'll have half of Scotland Yard round the theatre in twenty minutes and that's the case! Why do you think you always hated playing Macbeth? Because you identified with him! Because you saw yourself as a king but couldn't do the dirty deed to make it possible! Now this is the dirty deed, what we're doing here. And you need a woman to push you into it---a Lady Macbeth---that's me!

MARVIN: I'd rather die than be a knight let alone a king!

LIZZY: You fucking liar, you'd give your right hand to be a knight, everybody in the business knows that! You go green with envy every time Sir John or Sir Lawrence or Sir Michael are mentioned! As for

being a king---!

There is suddenly a violent hammering on the door.

It looks as if the door might break down. It trembles on its hinges.

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR's voice breaks in over the intercom, in some alarm.

HN (VO) Mr James---Mr James---we---!

There is an enormous EXPLOSION.

Simultaneously the LIGHTS BLACK OUT.

Screams in the distance. Shattering glass. People running.

The hammering on the door has ceased.

LIZZY (her screams genuine this time) Marvin! Marvin!

Ambulance sirens.

2.

The scene opens on a BLACKOUT.

The LIGHTS suddenly come up.

MARVIN and LIZZY are asleep on the settee. LIZZY is more or less lying on top of him.

Her panties are lying on the floor with her shoes.

A few seconds after the lights come up MARVIN and LIZZY stir. Blinking awake, they are surprised to find themselves where they are, and with whom they are, and at what proximity.

LIZZY's clothes are disordered. He is dishevelled.

They slump back into sleep.

The voice of the HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR comes over the inter-com.

HN (VO) (considerably politer than before, almost unctuous)  
Mr James. Miss Turndale.

They fail to wake.

HN (VO) Are you there Mr James? Miss Turndale?

MARVIN stirs. He kisses  
LIZZY lightly on the cheek.

MARVIN (mumbling) What happened for christsake?

LIZZY (her eyes still closed) I'm probably pregnant.  
That's what happened.

MARVIN: I'm asking him not you.

HN (VO) Mr James, Miss Turndale, the light cables have  
just been repaired. Could you report back  
that your lighting system is working again?  
And the sound of course? Are you hearing me?

MARVIN fumbles around for the  
radio microphone. He finds it  
underneath him.

MARVIN (talking into the mike) Yes we've got the lights.  
What happened?

HN (VO) Three people were killed in the explosion Mr  
James.

MARVIN: Three people!

LIZZY starts awake.

MARVIN (cont.) But what happened for god's sake?

HN (VO) It was an IRA bomb Mr James, just outside the  
theatre---they blew up half the foyer!

MARVIN: Oh my god!

HN (VO) There were seven of them dressed as policemen  
Mr James. They were helping to hold back the  
crowds drawn by---er---yourself and Miss Turndale.  
I did warn you Mr James that the IRA might take  
advantage of the situation.

MARVIN: You did dammit!

HN (VO) After the bomb went off, in the confusion, the  
IRA men entered the foyer of the theatre and took  
possession of it. They're still there Mr James.

MARVIN: What? They're in this theatre?

HN (VO) I'm afraid we are now their hostages Mr James.  
All of us.

MARVIN (to LIZZY) Do you hear that?

HN (VO) That is, we are barricaded in on the auditorium side of the foyer doors, they are barricaded in on the other side. We are thus in control of the auditorium, the stage and the dressing rooms, while they occupy the foyer and the foyer bar. They have radio-controlled bombs and are threatening to blow up this theatre with themselves, and of course all of us, in it, if they don't get their demands.

MARVIN: Which are?

HN (VO) That twenty-one IRA men at present serving life-sentences in Northern Ireland be released within the next twenty-four hours. They're prepared to negotiate, and I find myself in the rather odd position of being a hostage negotiator while at the same time being a hostage. But I was in the excellent position of already having a direct line to the Home Secretary to handle your case. By the way, Mr James, the guerillas, as they prefer to be called, wish to say that they would be especially sorry to see your life sacrificed, as they've all seen performances of yours at the Gate theatre in Dublin.

MARVIN: Nice of them dammit!

HN (VO) I'm afraid you do bear a heavy responsibility Mr James for attracting the IRA to this theatre, thus incurring the death of three innocent people. We have armed police on this side, at every door leading into the auditorium, and of course at the foyer doors, which are our contact-points with the guerillas. We've been ordered not to enter your room, Mr James. There is an understandable fear on their side that the only exit to the street still unguarded is the one leading from your suite to the stage door.

LIZZY (horrified) Where's that?

MARVIN (indicating the inner room) Through there! (To the HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR, through the mike) Is the stage door in their hands then?

HN (VO) I'm afraid so, Mr James.

MARVIN: Oh my god.

HN (VO) They overran the corridor running down the side of the stalls and managed to get to the stage door that way, through the pass door to the stage.

So some of them are at the stagedoor, some in the foyer. They're in radio communication with each other but are fearful about talking because we can monitor every word. Luckily the dressing rooms in this theatre are above the stage, and the access to the stage from them down a flight of stairs. When we realised what was going on we occupied the stage and the auditorium, thus protecting ourselves and the backstage staff and, to some extent, you.

MARVIN: But my exit goes down to the stagedoor dammit!

HN (VO) Right again sir. In this sense you and Miss Turndale are more their hostages than we are.

MARVIN: Charming!

HN (VO) And there is the point that, being out of touch with the foyer guerillas, the stagedoor guerillas may endeavour to negotiate with me through you or, worse, kill or torture one or both of you in an attempt to twist the Home Secretary's arm. Is your other door locked Mr James?

MARVIN: Yes, I locked it against you.

HN (VO) Good. Not that it'll give you much protection. But I'm forgetting. You can defend yourselves very adequately. You have an arms cache in there.

MARVIN: That's boloney! This idiot Turndale was making it up! Even her screams were counterfeit! (To LIZZY, vehemently) You see what a mess you've got us all into?

HN (VO) Then you're unarmed sir?

MARVIN: Of course I am! The only thing I've ever fired is a stage gun and I'm terrified of that! The blasted things can backfire and scorch one's wrist.

HN (VO) Exactly sir! What was Miss Turndale's motive in lying about this, do you think?

MARVIN: Publicity! She wants to play Ophelia to my Hamlet. She wants the world to know her name. These are valid objectives in a young actress but usually they're earned on a stage, acting. Not so in her case.

HN (VO) Well, sir, it's lucky for you both that I didn't know this before! I mean, I told the IRA that you had an arms cache in there which would make them green with envy. So I don't think they'll

be raiding you up the backstairs without some forethought.

MARVIN: Thank god for small mercies.

HN (VO) Indeed sir. Well, I'll have to resume my negotiations. I expect to be down there quite some time, Mr James. It might take till morning, even longer. In case there's a deadline we have to meet, an ultimatum, could we synchronise our watches Mr James? The time is 11.15---in the evening of course.

MARVIN: Good god---that late!

HN (VO) We're coming up to 11.16. I shall give you ten seconds. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, it's 11.16 Mr James.

MARVIN (not bothering, and out of earshot to the mike)  
Oh fuck off.

HN (VO) In the meantime Mr James keep as calm as possible. At least you're technically no longer a kidnapper. Was that ever your serious intention, sir, to kidnap anyone?

MARVIN: Of course it wasn't! Oh the idea came into my head, the dramatic idea you might say. But this woman took it seriously. I must say she did the screams pretty well! I mean you took them seriously didn't you?

HN (VO) Let me say this Mr James. If Miss Turndale can assure us that she hasn't been injured or in any way molested then, supposing we all come out of this alive, no charges will be preferred against you.

MARVIN (hissing, to LIZZY) Why the devil don't you say something?

LIZZY (hissing back) Because I've got nothing to say!

HN (VO) Well Mr James we must all be brave and patient and pray to god that peace enters the hearts of our captors.

LIZZY (hissing) Say Amen!

MARVIN: Balls!

The intercom cuts out.

MARVIN (flinging her off and striding about the room)  
Trust a damned little rep actress to get me into the crisis of my life! Let me tell you one thing! The Home Office won't give them their conditions. Release twenty-one prisoners--- impossible! So they'll blow us up. But if they don't, believe me, the minute we walk out of this building I'm going to file charges against you.

LIZZY: I have your baby inside. That's a good defence. I mean you not only fucked me, you fucked as if you'd never had a woman before, I know quite a number of young men who'd have been hospitalised after that.

MARVIN (coldly) I dare you say you do know a number of young men.

LIZZY: But you didn't excite me! You've spent so much of your life being Marvin James that the other person, the one I'm after, is hardly there.

MARVIN: I must say I didn't notice any lack of excitement on your side!

LIZZY: Oh that's nothing, I get hot at the sound of a zip.

She begins nonchalantly making up.

MARVIN (staring at her) You're acting pretty cool!

LIZZY: Oh they won't blow us up. There isn't an Irishman in the world would blow up a theatre, least of all with a famous actor in it. A palace, a government, even a church, but not a theatre. Have you got a loo here?

MARVIN (indicating the inner room) In there.

She gets up and takes her shoes and panties with her.

MARVIN(cont.) Don't mistake the door, otherwise you'll find yourself among the guerillas. Then your false bravado'll fall to pieces.

We hear LIZZY open the lavatory door.

MARVIN paces up and down agitatedly.

MARVIN (to himself) The son of the greatest comedienne of her time---

He is interrupted by the sound of LIZZY peeing. He stares with irritation towards the arch.

MARVIN: ---my god, she behaves---!

He continues to stand there, staring.

We hear the lavatory flush. LIZZY returns to the dressing room.

MARVIN (glaring at her) I've just realised who you remind me of.

LIZZY: Who?

MARVIN: My mother.

LIZZY: Oh no!

MARVIN: She used to leave the lavatory door open too. And she didn't wash her hands either.

LIZZY: Soap's bad for the skin---

MARVIN: Just what she said.

LIZZY: I run my fingers under the water. Perfectly adequate.

MARVIN: She talked to her men like you talk to me. Pulled them down professionally. She had some of the greatest men of the theatre---

LIZZY (sneering, as she continues making up) Yes I know, and she screwed every one of them. 'Dame Helen James plays offstage games', 'Down comes the curtain, up comes her skirt'---

MARVIN: How dare---!

LIZZY: 'First the play, then the lay, Helen James will have her way!' 'Helen's on the hunt, with her outsize---'!

He grabs her.

MARVIN: You vulgar creature!

LIZZY: 'Helen James, she has no shames', 'She plays little tricks with gentlemen's---'!

He claps his hand over her mouth and begins shaking her.

LIZZY (cont., bursting into tears) Don't hold me like that! You're hurting!

MARVIN (relaxing his hold) Hurting you? Me? You're as strong as an ox woman!

LIZZY (hugging his chest) They'll kill us Marvin!  
They'll kill us!

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR breaks in quietly over the intercom.

HN (VO) Are you there Mr James? I've been in conversation with both the Home Office and the guerillas and I'm relieved to say that we've won an hour's respite. During that time none of us will move from our present quarters so that negotiations can proceed in a more methodical manner than was possible while threats of assault were being exchanged. Accordingly the police outside have been withdrawn from the immediate vicinity of the theatre, except for two groups, one outside the main doors of the theatre and the other at the stagedoor. These are assisted by troops. From your window you will see neither. However, this shouldn't mislead you into thinking that we are now unguarded. Do you have provisions Mr James?

MARVIN looks round for the radio microphone and LIZZY is already holding it out to him.

MARVIN (into the mike) A few tins of baked beans, a ham, biscuits, milk and coffee and tea and there's some boose.

HN (VO) Well supplied for a siege, if I may say so, Mr James.

LIZZY and MARVIN make a sour face at each other at this 'humour'.

HN (VO) (cont.) The breathing space will give the

guerillas time to reconsider their actions. The Home Office is offering reduced sentences and/or prison transferrals. But I'm afraid there's no way of overlooking the fact that three people were killed today, and these chaps will be up for murder. They know this and so there's a suicidal recklessness in their approach which is hardly good news for you and me. Nevertheless the outlook is a little more hopeful than before. I'll be in touch again soon.

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR cuts out.

LIZZY (drying her eyes) You said you have some milk?

MARVIN (going to the inner room) I'll get you some.

We hear him opening the fridge.

LIZZY: I suppose I ought to be making you coffee.

MARVIN (off) I never allow other people to make my coffee. I made coffee for my mother on her tours. That's how I knew you were a fake when you first came in.

LIZZY: How?

MARVIN (reappearing with a glass of milk) Because you brought me coffee. No one who belonged here would do that.

He hands her the milk.

LIZZY (sipping) So you played me along.

MARVIN: I was intrigued by those eyes. They remind me of someone.

LIZZY: Your mother!

MARVIN: No. Someone else.

He sits at his dressing table and sips the coffee she brought him earlier.

LIZZY (staring at him) I thought you only drink the coffee you make yourself? That wasn't any good even when I bought it!

He shrugs this off.

MARVIN (with decision) Lizzy, we've been given a reprieve, at least for an hour, and I want you to listen to me. Here's what I propose. If we leave here safe and sound I shall give you an income for life to look after the kid, supposing you're pregnant, which, since you say you are, you almost certainly aren't. But there's to be nothing more intimate than that between us, do you hear? No phonecalls saying how the money hasn't arrived this month and how he's been having a bad time teething lately but otherwise he's a bonny bonny boy. I don't intend to enter the biggest dependency syndrome of my life, thank you. The very fact that I could make love to you three times in a row at my age is my cue to pull out much quicker than even I would normally do. You see, I was my mother's domestic slave. From the age of ten or eleven I took her breakfast in bed. I did most of the cooking, I looked after the sheets, which was a whole drama in itself, considering the number of men she brought home. When you were insulting her just now I felt a strange quickening of emotion---compounded I think of both hatred and sexual excitement. As I say, she talked just like you. When she saw me in my first speaking part at the age of fifteen she walked out of the theatre in the middle and left a message with her agent to tell me I stank. She said later that the only person I could play was myself and I didn't even do that well. But I made it. My first hit was in The Cherry Orchard, where having a world of my own seemed to fit the bill. The rest of my career was a series of flukes, and some good casting. Nigel Burbage was fool enough to think I'd make a good classical actor. (Gazing at her) When you and I made love your noises were the same as hers. I returned to the primal scene while in your arms. You know about Freud and the primal scene. I used to hear all my mother's lovemaking. It dominated my life. If I married you I'd never act again, my old fears would come back and grip me. All my childhood I trembled. Every time my mother bent down to kiss me goodnight it was like saying good bye. Her perfume, the powder on her neck, the way she had of bunching her lips a little when she kissed me, the same way you have, these things were the touch and smell of fear for me. That's why I came three times when I was making love to you. I was in the primal scene, with my mother. Coming and fearing are very close to each other, for me. The smell of blood and the smell of come aren't so distant from each other. My mother always seemed on the point of abandoning me. Always a

new tour, or dinner out, or late rehearsals, or a plane to catch. Sometimes I went with her but mostly I stayed, in the hands of a governess. The governess always used my fear as her disciplinary weapon. 'If you don't do this your mother'll never come back.' And now I need that fear like a drug. You can see me trembling now maybe but I'm in my seventh heaven. If I married you I'd be trembling night and day.

She gazes at him in silence.

LIZZY (quietly) Isn't that from a show?

MARVIN: What?

LIZZY: Isn't it a speech from A Man Called Shrink? Nigel produced it about four years ago!

MARVIN (unconcerned) What about it? The sentiments happen to fit the case. That's why I accepted the script. Why else should I accept a script?

LIZZY: You're not a man, you're an IT. You're not even a monster. You're a THING, a STAGE THING. Your mother must have fucked a theatre to get you!

He is sipping his coffee but suddenly puts it down with disgust.

MARVIN (jumping up) You're right! One simply shouldn't be drinking this stuff---even under sentence of death! I have an idea!

He hurries to the inner room.

MARVIN (cont., off) That speech always wore me out.

LIZZY: What speech?

MARVIN (off) The one from A Man Called Shrink. It must be the longest fucking speech in the history of the theatre. I tried it as an extended exit line---you know, I kept half going out and coming back in again.

We hear the pop of a champagne cork.

MARVIN (cont.) Healthy sound, what? Burbage said that's no good at all. You can't keep bobbing in and out like that. Keep seated, he said. Then it'll come from inside.

LIZZY (gloomily) That's good news at any rate.

He reappears with two glasses  
of champagne.

MARVIN: What is?

LIZZY: That you've got an inside.

MARVIN (handing her a glass) Have some bubbly and save  
your wit for the IRA. (As they touch glasses)  
Here's to survival.

They drink.

LIZZY (her gloom unabated) I don't even believe you're Helen James's son. Your mother worked on the railways. I read it in one of your programme notes.

MARVIN: Oh that was for a dramatisation of Zola's La Bête Humaine. We had to have a hookup with the railways so we put it out that my mother was Britain's first woman train driver. Another time we were doing a show on Dr Barnado's homes, not the musical but a play which came to nothing. I got thousands of letters suggesting ways of finding my mother. The PR idiot put it out that I was an orphan myself and Helen James had only adopted me and like the man in the play I was searching for my mother. Finally the mail got so heavy we had to make a statement, so we put it out that my mother had been found. We got Tilly Armitage to paint a few wrinkles round her eyes and passed her off as my mother who lived in Barnstable and had been widowed in the last war and lived like a recluse out of remorse for having given me up for adoption, but the war had been on and she'd been forced to work in a munitions factory and had thought it best for me to be---

LIZZY: Oh for christsake don't let's have another long speech! That's another thing they say about you. When he's nervous he talks, and mostly lies.

He drinks off his champagne  
and goes to the inner room  
for a refill.

LIZZY(cont.) So who do my eyes remind you of, if not your ghastly mother?

MARVIN:(off) Tilly Armitage as a matter of fact. My leading lady!

LIZZY: Well of course I remind you of her! I'm her daughter!

MARVIN (dashing back into the room without his champagne) What?! You're her---!!! (Staring at her) By god---! Why the devil---? Why didn't you say so before? I'd have kicked you out long ago! (Vehemently, putting his face right in hers) She sent you here, didn't she, you little bitch?

LIZZY: Sent me? Her? She barred all mention of your

name when I was a kid! That's why I had to see your shows in secret.

MARVIN (studying her closely) My god you're the spitten image!

LIZZY: She told all the front-of-house people---if you see Lizzy kick her out. Like you want to kick me out now!

MARVIN (pacing about) I thought there was something fishy! I mean a girl doesn't walk into a man's dressing room just like that, except in plays. OK (rounding on her) that's the last time I touch you! Oh my god, sleeping with Tilly Armitage's daughter---she'd kill me!

LIZZY (calmly) And me.

MARVIN: You'd better keep your mouth shut dammit! The IRA's saved you, otherwise you'd have been out of here already! Of course (studying her again at close quarters) I should have seen it! Those unmistakable eyes!

LIZZY (quietly) Why don't you just sit down and shut up? You're not convincing. You know she hates you anyway. She wants to kill you anyway.

MARVIN: Of course I know it! It's the most famous line of this century---Marvin James killed my career, acted me off the stage, he hogged all the light, shouted me down, masked me. In return I gave him all I had. After twenty years I found I'd turned him into a star and myself into a nonentity the audiences hardly notice. (Imitating his leading lady's gravelly baritone) 'I feel totally unseeeen'.

LIZZY: It's true though isn't it?

MARVIN (furiously) Well of course it's true! I'm an actor, woman!

LIZZY: I'm amazed you never made it with her. Nigel Burbage reckoned you had fifty-four actresses in the course of fifteen productions---

MARVIN: Don't you dare raise his name again or you'll be out of that window head first! But of course! That's her husband's name isn't it---Stokes? You told me your name was Jean Stokes. It's that pot-bellied stockbroker with the bald patch---!

LIZZY (in her enormous voice) Just you leave my father out of this!

MARVIN (leeringly) I'd love to! And his daughter as well! She started just like you did by the way.

LIZZY: Who did?

MARVIN: Tilly Armitage! She was so determined to get there she was prepared to bribe, intimidate, fuck and even marry her way to it! Don't forget that Stokes is one of the principal angels in the City! She can turn on the waterworks at will just like you---you don't think I took your pathetic stage snivelling a few minutes ago seriously do you? I mean RADA can't have gone down all that much since my day!

Behind his back, as he paces up and down, she imitates his gestures.

MARVIN (cont.) You saw early on, when you married Nigel Burbage for the first time, that it was better to do away with the heart once and for all, rather than have it nagging at you night and day as it does with me! You who have no ethics saw early that the best way to do away with that organ was to play roles in which it seemed to predominate! You see, I know all about you---because I know Tilly Armitage! Now in Lizzy Turndale née Stokes we have a woman who is preeminently woman, in bed woman, in tears woman, but in fact is a player of roles so adept that even when she plays them badly we say to ourselves, it's because she has a heart, the heart insists so much that it takes away from her technique, poor thing! Tilly Armitage all over! Is it true? Is it?

LIZZY: Of course it's true! It works doesn't it?

MARVIN: Precisely! What a technique is there, my friend, in the absence of technique! Even when you're making love I can't tell where the hell your brain is---just like Tilly Armitage---all her lovers said the same---they said when we fuck Tilly it's like wandering round a grand old country mansion where the table's set for a banquet and the fires are all alight but there's no host. The fact is that what she has ticking in her breast isn't so much a heart as what I once called a cardio-calculator linked to casting agencies, top producers and television networks! (Drilling it into her) If those IRA men came in now you'd deflate like

a beach mattress, you'd do anything to save your skin, you'd perjure yourself to hell, you'd deny ever having known me if necessary, you'd walk over my corpse without a tremor if the way led to your freedom! Oh there'd be plenty of waterworks in later years---over poor Marvin, great Marvin, it'd become your stock party ploy, at least with any up-and-coming directors within hearing distance! But there's one difference between me and you, between me and Tilly Armitage. You're both technicians, and I'm a stage beast---I was dandled on knees in dressing rooms before I could utter my first syllables. The only life I know is in terms of that sweating, morose, unkind and yet gentle monster, the theatre audience. And this is why I invariably have them at my feet, even the clever ones who call me ham and pan my performances in the press, because they go to the theatre at most five times a week, whereas I'm always here, night and day!

She sips her champagne quietly.

- LIZZY: And mummy says oh come to bed and shut up. She's sitting, more or less like I am now. Perhaps you've gone potty and just repeat speeches and aren't fit to perform any more.
- MARVIN (with a great sigh) And just like your mother you're infuriating. (Sitting down with great fatigue at the dressing table)
- LIZZY: Just the same, most of that was the Act 11 speech from May Day Darlings.
- MARVIN: If I ever spoke the truth she said you're quoting a speech from a former show! (Accusingly) The names are different!
- LIZZY: Well of course! You adapt the speeches. I'm not saying you don't do that.
- MARVIN: I could never touch that woman. When she said what about a drinky after the show I ran for a cab. I imagine Stokes is wretchedly unhappy. I see him at Whites from time to time.
- LIZZY: Is that your club? Your club should be the Garrick if you're an actor.
- MARVIN: I don't do obvious things.

He looks forlorn.

LIZZY (watching him) You don't do intelligent things.

MARVIN (hardly audible) Tilly Armitage again... My mother!

LIZZY: Otherwise you'd have seen long ago that you needed this siege not for Hamlet but to save your life! to keep you off the streets and in a job!

MARVIN: I have a job thank you!

LIZZY: For years now Nigel's been renting this place out to other productions, it was dark for nine whole months two years ago!

MARVIN: I sometimes needed a rest dammit!

LIZZY: No one can break through to you! You were offered an off-Broadway venue last month weren't you?---off-Broadway! You, the star!

MARVIN: Times are hard dammit!

LIZZY: And the Macbeth you were going to dress for was a studio Macbeth, broken down to a two-hander--- you and Lady M! Because you can't afford the cast, the sets, the lights! And you're dragging Nigel downhill with you---he'll have to sell up soon!

MARVIN: He has nothing to sell! The theatre isn't his!

LIZZY: But the board trusts him. And last week they decided to sell within the year unless something dramatic happens---

MARVIN: Isn't this dramatic?

LIZZY: But even now you only see it in little personal terms---how poor Marvin James is being held by the IRA. You don't see the meaning at all, you don't see what there is to use in the situation. A few hours ago this siege was a small event in London's theatreland, hardly the kind of story to get daily, much less world, coverage. But with three people killed, and the IRA involved, don't

you see you have the attention of the whole wide world!

MARVIN: And if they should remove the earth from under our feet?

LIZZY: It's a risk. But not even a big one. The IRA can't afford the unpopularity involved in blowing up a West End theatre with dozens of people in it! One could hardly describe us as a military target! But you should be telling me this, not vice versa! Instead, you sit there like a piece of sodden seaweed.

MARVIN (nodding, then with one of his great sighs) Lizzy, I've said it often enough: whatever I did, I did in spite of myself. He can't act, my mother said.

LIZZY shakes her head, gives up.

MARVIN (cont.) But I had to act. Theatre was all I knew. I had to cultivate the ways, shall we say, of a great actor, without being one. And in doing so, I, in a certain way, became one. I began to generate excitement in my audiences. They held their breaths for my first entrance---and disregarded the rest of the play.

LIZZY (staring at him) Are you crying?

MARVIN: That's something I could never do. My mother used to say, shake your shoulders and hide your face, it's as near as you'll ever get.

LIZZY: Did you know they were thinking of turning this room into a studio theatre and calling it Viktoria Two? It could seat between fifty and a hundred. If you broke down that wall (indicating the rear wall). You're not of an age to start all over again Marvin...

He has no response.

LIZZY (cont.) Lost for words.

He nods.

She goes on an impulse and sits on his lap.

LIZZY (cont.) We shouldn't die quarrelling.

MARVIN: Is this quarrelling?

LIZZY: I never opened to a man in my life before you.

You went so deep I thought I would faint.  
That's why I came to you today. A woman can  
see ahead. I know I'm like her. Maybe even  
our bodies are similar!

MARVIN (wriggling uncomfortably) You think so?

LIZZY: Why didn't she seduce you---as I did?

MARVIN (a leer) Because she had Stokes.

LIZZY: She acted with you for ten years before she  
even met him!

MARVIN: That's right dammit, so she did! Which makes  
you not his daughter at all! Twenty-eight years  
ago she didn't even know him!

LIZZY (kissing him) When you're inside me it's like  
having a rich totem in there---quivering and  
trembling!---as if all your imagination was  
down there!

MARVIN: In my pants!

She laughs and kisses him  
again dreamily.

LIZZY: I always wanted to fuck my father.

MARVIN: Oh my god!

LIZZY: When you said his pot belly just now I got  
excited. It doesn't matter his not being my  
real father.

MARVIN: That flatulent, gasping accountant.

LIZZY: He's a good man and you're not. (Nestling her  
head on his chest) I don't care if they kill  
us, I don't care any more.

MARVIN: Maybe I don't either. (With another sigh)  
When I was a child everything was so charming.  
In the theatre people called each other darling  
and meant it and you went to Brighton for the  
weekend on a train called The Flying Fornicator.  
If you went down by car you wore gauntlet gloves  
and flaps over your ears against the wind, and  
you might do five miles of road without seeing  
another vehicle. There were white and yellow  
butterflies, and buttercups in the fields, and  
the beach at Little hampton was so clean it gleamed  
at low tide like salt. Shaftesbury Avenue  
usually had a couple of Shakespeare productions

running, commercial ones, mind, not state subsidised affairs. There were two evening papers and when you opened them you read such authors as Evelyn Waugh and Ezra Pound and it was stuff that didn't insult you. You could pop round to the Piaccdilly hotel or Odenino's for a cup of tea and you got fresh toast and gentleman's relish and cup cakes and some dancing if you felt like it. The world hummed with pleasure in those days, you heard it when you woke in the morning but after 1941 you didn't hear it any more.

LIZZY: Wasn't there a lot of unemployment?

They both laugh, squeeze each other with delight.

MARVIN: You knew it was the next line!

LIZZY: I saw it!

MARVIN (contemplating her intimately) You really did see just about everything... And she wanted to keep you out of the theatre? even rob you of the chance of seeing her?

LIZZY: She knew I wanted you even as a child. You were the only man for me (stroking his face). This is the first time I've felt safe and secure all my life.

MARVIN (with a half-smile) You make everything sound so damned phoney!

LIZZY: Why is that? When I'm sincere it doesn't come off!

MARVIN (a shrug) How can you act if you're sincere? I mean, you only have one feeling really. You want a big part in a big show and your name above the title and you want to be at the top of your agent's list and have your phone ringing every morning with bright new offers from which you can pick like a rich woman picking at grapes. That's what you want. Anything else is counterfeit!

LIZZY: That's what they say about you. What do you feel?

MARVIN: I'm the last person to ask!

LIZZY (laughing) That's silly! You must be human in some respect!

MARVIN: Only when I'm playing.

LIZZY: All the men I've ever known have taken me to mean yes when I say it. You're the only one who sees I mean no. And men think I'm so attentive, such a listening person, but you know I never listen to anybody.

MARVIN: Don't you see that Ophelia was a liar just like you? She only comes out insipid because people play her as truthful and good.

LIZZY (enthusiastically) That's just what I'm saying! I think Hamlet fucked her. He released her animal self. She didn't go mad. She feigned madness like Hamlet did. Their animal selves couldn't stand the court, the Doublethink.

MARVIN (nodding with interest) Certainly her verses are the bawdiest the Old Chap ever wrote, in a lifetime of bawdy language:

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose and donned his clo'es  
And dupp'd the chamber door  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.

MARVIN  
and :  
LIZZY

By Gos and by Saint Charity  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young men will do't if they come to't,  
By Cock, they are to blame!

This delights them.

LIZZY: Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me  
You promised me to wed.'

MARVIN: 'So would I 'a done, by yonder sun,  
An thou hadst not come to my bed.'

LIZZY: Is that what you feel?

MARVIN: What?

LIZZY: That because you fucked me you have no further

interest in me?

MARVIN: I never had any further interest in you!

They laugh.

LIZZY: I spent hours pushing my clit up against his belly when I was 13 or 14.

MARVIN: Against whose belly?

LIZZY: Dad's! Little he cared! Arthur Stokes, chartered accountant, doesn't get anything but figures, but how I wanted that man! And much more than my mother did.

MARVIN: Really?

LIZZY: I swear she had other men, I mean she never got home before three in the morning and her show was usually down by eleven. He used to sit drinking whisky and watching the box and I knew he was good for a cuddle after about the third or fourth glass. I did exactly what I'm doing now, I sat on his lap.

MARVIN: Doesn't he specialise in theatre business?

LIZZY: Film budgets mainly. That's how he met mum. Why are you changing the subject?

MARVIN: I wonder what he and she have in common.

LIZZY: I think they have a funny kind of sex.

MARVIN: Oh yes?

LIZZY: When I was sixteen he went to bed early and I started tickling him and he half pulled me into bed and I started pressing against him, I'd just had a bath and only had a dressing gown on and he started to put it in, I nearly fainted, I was on top of him and then would you believe it the front door opens and in comes mummy, she'd never been home that early before, not in ten years, and the first thing she does is to come to the bedroom, she seemed to know, she was there from the front door in one second flat, it was amazing, he was half inside me, I thought I was going to come and I swear he nearly did too, she came to the bed screaming 'No, no!' and tearing all the bedclothes off. Then she put her arms round me and took me out of the room, we went to her bedroom and she rocked me in her arms and kept saying 'Poor darling! Poor darling!' So ended the greatest thrill of my life. I thought, you

bitch, some instinct brought you home. It isn't that she cared about Arthur Stokes having me, or about me having my own stepfather, she just wanted to keep us both out of the deepest thrill of our lives, especially me! I've never forgiven her for that.

MARVIN: But---as a mother---

LIZZY: Rubbish! She'd sell me to any pimp in town if it suited her book. Anyway I stayed awake all night. I listened for his footsteps in case he went to the john and expected me to go to him. But the wimp never stirred, she made sure of that---

MARVIN: How?

LIZZY: By having him inside her. She didn't let him go until dawn was coming through. Then he fell dead asleep, I could hear him snoring. She made him come twice, so he was exhausted. I had to lie there listening to them making love. She makes a kind of shocked gasp---

MARVIN: Yes?

LIZZY: Almost a protest, a refusal---with a lot of whispering---as if they're just there for conversation and he keeps thrusting from time to time and she's reminded that he's there and makes that gasp as if he's taken a fearful liberty---

MARVIN: Yes!

LIZZY: That's very exciting for a man, don't you think so?

MARVIN: Oh yes.

He looks away.

LIZZY: Am I making you jealous? (Peering at him) You're excited.

MARVIN: Not really. I was thinking---as a matter of fact---how Freud said---I remember it from A Man Called Shrink---a woman's lover or husband is always secondbest for her because he isn't her father.

LIZZY: Fucking you was the best thing I've had, how do you account for that? I wanted you all my life you see, you were close to my mother, much more than my real father.

MARVIN: Maybe she feared your spell over him.

LIZZY: You're changing the subject again. (Kissing him)  
Do I have a spell over you?

MARVIN: I---I can imagine his excitement---and his wife  
rushes in---!

LIZZY: Would it have been the most complete love of my  
life, if he'd managed to get it right in?

MARVIN: Not love---the deepest animal pleasure---beyond  
love!

LIZZY: Is it against the law?

MARVIN: I think so.

LIZZY: Would a baby that came out of it be deformed?

MARVIN: A monster, most likely! Nature can't afford  
pleasures that are too deep!

They gaze before them.

LIZZY: It feels as if everybody's dead (gazing round  
at the inner room)---

MARVIN: Those noises you said---the noises she makes in  
bed---with the accountant---it intrigues me because  
I've never been with Tilly, yet I've been so close,  
in stage embraces, stage marriages!

LIZZY: I can tell she drugs a man---not with her body,  
she hasn't got much of a body, though she likes  
them to play with her at first, but that isn't  
more than a few minutes, it's when they're inside  
that she weaves the spell, there's something  
about her there that makes them prisoners for  
life---I can tell when my father looks at her  
and she only has to make a sound like the sounds  
when he's inside her, maybe a little cough that  
half turns into a gasp---and he's aching for her,  
he keeps awake until she comes back, however late,  
and god alone knows who she's been with---!

MARVIN: You think she has other men?

LIZZY: That organ of hers is so perfect, such a tunnel  
of sweets and ecstasies for men, I can hardly  
believe she doesn't rehearse its performances as  
hard as she does her stage ones. And she's so  
quiet, so secretive without being furtive---

MARVIN: Yes! (With a chuckle) You have a strange sort

of elegance when you talk about her. But tell me, you used to lie awake listening for her sounds at night?

LIZZY: Until I broke free, and that was why I married Nigel Burbage, to get free of her---

MARVIN: Fascinating, fascinating!

LIZZY: I was living sexually in her pleasures!

MARVIN: Of course!

LIZZY: I sometimes thought, what a pity she doesn't bring back other men, what a banquet that would be! And perhaps I could then steal into her husband's bedroom and try to work my spell on him.

MARVIN: Captive of both wife and daughter---poor Arthur Stokes!

LIZZY: But don't you see, he'd never need to have a fantasy or look at another woman after that. There'd always be fresh delights in his own bed! And the rivalry between wife and daughter, neither sharing their secret with the other! I think it's the only thing we've got left---fucking our own family!

MARVIN (laughing) What?

LIZZY: We haven't got a future, we'll all be blown up---

MARVIN: All of us?

LIZZY: If you and I get out of here alive we shall still have the big death hanging over us, the feeling that if just one American or Russian is mad enough to pull the trigger every city in Europe goes up in smoke, everything loses its meaning because of that, don't you see? It means we're reduced to tribal life again, all these grand buildings outside are just leftover things from the past when we had a future, the palaces and old streets and cafés and theatres, we don't belong to them any more, they can't have any influence on us either because they can be reduced to smoke at any moment. That Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey and Buck House and Trafalgar Square lost their connection with us long ago! Only the Americans think we're connected, with all their Brit stuff.

MARVIN: What a strange girl you are!

- LIZZY: Family's gone too. So its laws have gone. But we still grow up. Some effort is made in our babyhood to make us feel that the world is a familiar place and belongs to us. So we fall in love with faces---with uncles and cousins--- they pass through our lives or rather through our dreams, because this is where we love them and feel the sex flowing from them.
- MARVIN: Talking about quoting from plays, are you sure this isn't from one?
- LIZZY: Did you know that there's a huge amount of incest in America? Women are suing their fathers millions of dollars for fucking them when they were girls. Why I wonder? Even the shrinks say it's natural for fathers to want to fuck their daughters and vice versa.
- MARVIN: But---do they condone it? I hardly think so.
- LIZZY: Nothing real's condoned in this world! If you make believe and do a lot of glad-facing on television, that's condoned! If you go round saying everything's the same as it always was, and there's a future like there always was, that's condoned! We've got to make believe, to keep it all going!
- MARVIN (half laughing) Lizzy---are you sure this isn't from the holocaust play I did? You're so quaint! And the language! Augustan, classical, just like that play!
- LIZZY: Let me finish! There have never been people on the earth like us, people who could say the human race might come to an end in a moment, and not only the race but every animal, and all form of animate life, all nature and growth and thought! So we have to live differently. But we don't. We should start all over again, deep in the cells, like having sex in your sleep, in a dream, the best sex of all, and for that kind of deep family sex no strangers are any good---
- MARVIN (quizzically) Strangers?
- LIZZY: Outside the family. People like Nigel Burbage!
- MARVIN: You are a little mad.
- LIZZY: We can't fuck strangers any more! All my life I've tried and failed. All those young men!

And dates! The only thrill I ever got was standing them up. They frightened me you see, I ran away when they started getting all hot and talking about love and waiting at the stage door with trembling flowers in their hands! I read a shrink's case history the other day, it was a woman of 29 who died of cancer, she told the shrink When I'm out of contact with people I feel I don't exist, when I'm in contact I feel swallowed up and controlled. That's how I feel. But I could have told her what was wrong. She was living with strangers instead of with her father. She worshipped her father. She gave him everything, her money even. When he knew she was going to die he asked her to increase her life insurance and give him her car as she wouldn't be needing it again, and she did. That was her real lover! But she married a stranger, could never get it together. (Kissing him urgently) I want to marry you so that I can fuck like in a dream, not be awake like I am with other men, I want to feel you in the slime of life---

MARVIN (laughing) Slime!

LIZZY: When we were asleep I could feel those IRA men downstairs yearning for a woman in their dreams. Danger does that. Do you remember the war-play you did once---

MARVIN: But that's the one I'm talking about! The holocaust play. I lost twenty thousand on it.

LIZZY: Where the woman goes round opening her legs to the men just before the battle starts and they know they're going to be killed. That's family sex! They have no faces any more, no memories, attachments! The last coition! Can you imagine? Well, when we were asleep on that settee I was doing the same for those IRA men down there, they're going to be killed whatever happens, whether they blow us up or walk into the arms of the police and get committed to prison for life. In my dream, while I was fucking them, I could see them sitting in prison for thirty, forty years dreaming about that last coition---with me! (Looking round at the inner room again) I think we should go down to them Marvin!

MARVIN: That's mad!

Lizzy: I think if they see your face, and recognise my face from their own dreams, they'll realise that blowing us up won't solve a thing.

MARVIN: They'll think, good, we'll kidnap these two, we can use them as shields to get to the airport. Listen, the only thing keeping them out of this room is my supposed arms cache.

She has frightened---and aroused herself with her thoughts.

LIZZY: Let's at least enjoy our last moments then. You should be inside me (urgently caressing him again)! I look into Nigel Burbage's face and it's so new---how can I make love to a newcomer? All those childhood years I yearned for you, and now they're going to snatch you away from me! You melted in with the golden light of an afternoon and the tea-table gleaming with white cloth and all the good things, the raisin cake and the fire crackers and icing with little fairies and the chrysanthemums in a bowl, and the hum of voices I knew, and the dark vivid colours of my comics, and the sound of the street outside! How can one open one's legs to an outsider? The only sex there is is when the cells and the glands respond in their dark recesses---respond to a message from long ago when they were suckled on the breast.

She jumps up, trying to pull him into a standing position.

He remains staring at her.

She goes to the settee, inviting him to come.

LIZZY (cont.) Marvin!

She takes off her shoes, standing by the settee, then her panties. She lets the panties fall by the shoes. She looks much like a forlorn child.

Still he doesn't rise.

MARVIN (studying her) You still live in childish sex, still playing with uncles in your mind, unzipping ten-year-old cousins...

LIZZY: But you were hungry for me---you said so---!

MARVIN: Because that's a part of me too---I too am a child---in part---

LIZZY: I only satisfied you in part?

He leaves this unanswered.

LIZZY (cont.) Marvin! Come inside me!

He rises with an awkward, rather helpless movement.

MARVIN: You see Lizzy...

LIZZY: What?

MARVIN: It's Tilly I want.

LIZZY: Tilly?

MARVIN: Tilly Armitage.

LIZZY:(staring at him) My mother?

MARVIN: When it comes over me there's nothing I can do, it's a fever Lizzy and I have to have her!

LIZZY: Have her?

MARVIN: It won't subside until I've had her---! It's an ache, a dull thrilling unbearably wonderful but horrible pain! Don't you see?

LIZZY: But you've had her? My mother?

MARVIN: We meet---! Each week at least! It's a terrific secret---for years, years, at least twenty-eight! And the sex, it burns, sears, scorches, and when the need's aroused in me Lizzy there's nothing I can do---!

She stands gaping at him.

LIZZY: You've had her all these years?

MARVIN: Yes.

LIZZY: That's---criminal!

MARVIN: Don't you see we had to keep it secret, it was something we couldn't control, even marriage couldn't have contained it! We had to have the

lies, a lifetime of them, to shield us from scrutiny.

LIZZY: I don't believe you. I'm going to ask her myself! I am---!

She runs through the arch.  
We hear her grappling with the key at the inner door, then it opens.

MARVIN (dashing after her) Don't go out for god's sake!

Her steps echo on the staircase.

MARVIN (off) Viktoria! Viktoria! Come back!

Their steps echo together.

MARVIN (off) VIKTORIA!

3.

The lights are set very dim.

MARVIN and LIZZY are once more lying asleep on the settee. As before, she is more or less on top of him.

But this time a blanket covers them.

MARVIN's head is thrown back in extreme exhaustion. His mouth is wide open.

They lie motionless, in a dead sleep.

We discern hushed movement in the area of the inner room.

Without a sound A HOODED FIGURE enters through the centre arch, pauses to take in his surroundings.

He sees MARVIN and LIZZY and remains there, more or less under the arch, apparently gazing at them.

He stands there for some time.

Then he moves silently forward,

towards the settee.

When he reaches the settee he stops, facing downstage. He turns his head from MARVIN to LIZZY and back again. He moves closer to MARVIN.

He bends down and peers deeply into MARVIN's face, so that he almost touches him. He remains like this, peering at MARVIN, motionless.

MARVIN, stirred from his deep sleep by this proximity, blinks slightly. He makes a sudden start from his sleep when he sees the HOODED FIGURE. He makes a hoarse rattling sound, like the terrified scream one wishes to make in a nightmare, but which fails to emerge.

Perceiving this, the HOODED FIGURE withdraws, but slowly, silently, still gazing down at MARVIN, who is following his movements with the utmost horror.

The HOODED FIGURE leaves as he came, and as silently.

MARVIN (shaking LIZZY awake) Did you see it? (As she stirs helplessly) Did you see?

LIZZY (suddenly awake, her head up) See what?

MARVIN: That---that---! Oh my god we must have left the door open!

LIZZY (catching his terror) Who was it?

MARVIN: A man! In a hood! One of them!

LIZZY (convinced of the opposite) You dreamed it!

MARVIN: He was here, here! Well get up dammit and shut that door!

LIZZY clings to him, hides her head under the blanket.

MARVIN (cont.) Where the fuck's that microphone! (Feel-

ing around for it on the settee) Oh my god!

He finds it and fiddles around frantically for the on-switch.

MARVIN (cont.) Hullo, hullo! Are you there?

Silence.

MARVIN (cont.) Oh my god, they've cleared off, left us with the IRA! (with desperate glances upstage at the inner room)

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR's voice breaks in quietly over the inter-com.

HN (VO) Are you calling us Mr James?

MARVIN: One of them just came in! Hood over his head!

HN (VO) One of the guerillas sir?

MARVIN: Yes!

HN (VO) With a hood over his head? Was he in policeman's uniform Mr James?

MARVIN: Well I didn't notice that dammit, I was half asleep!

HN (VO) And how did he effect his entry Mr James?

MARVIN: He just walked in! We must have left the door open!

HN (VO) Have you closed it again Mr James?

MARVIN: Not yet. (Hissing at LIZZY as he nudges and pushes at her) Shut that fucking door!

LIZZY (hissing back) And get myself raped?

MARVIN (hissing) It's what you want isn't it?

LIZZY: Go to hell!

HN (VO) Shouldn't you do that right away Mr James?

MARVIN manages to push her off and stumble towards the arch, still holding the microphone.

MARVIN (into the mike) I'm doing it now.

He approaches the further room

in a gingerly fashion, craning round the arch to see if anyone is there.

LIZZY (hissing from the settee) You fucking coward!

MARVIN: Ssssst!

He takes a plunge and with a grotesque run kicks the unseen door closed, then locks it and rushes back as if pursued by a ghost.

MARVIN (cont., into the mike) I've done it, there's nobody there.

HN (VO) Lucky for both of you if I may say so, Mr James. What possessed you to open the door in the first place?

MARVIN (making his way to his dressing table) She ran out. Miss Turndale ran out, couldn't stand the nervous strain any more.

HN (VO) How's the lady now Mr James?

MARVIN: Rested, I think. Will they---try to take us hostage, do you think?

HN (VO) The negotiations are breaking down, Mr James. At the moment they're trying to strike a bargain over your lives.

MARVIN: Oh my god!

LIZZY hides her head again.

HN (VO) Threatening to kill you both if they aren't given safe passage back to Ireland. But of course sir the Home Secretary can hardly let terrorists loose in the first place; and in the second these men have three deaths on their shoulders already. All I can ask you to do is to keep calm.

MARVIN: Aren't they threatening you as well?

HN (VO) Their feeling at the moment is that your name attracts notice, while we're a bunch of policemen. You and Miss Turndale are thus their first line of defence, we their second.

MARVIN: Oh my god!

LIZZY (hissing, her head emerging for a moment) I wish to christ you'd stop saying that!

HN (VO) At this point it's a war of attrition sir. I think we're wearing them down. Being so few, they can only sleep fitfully, and in rota. As for you and Miss Turndale, sir, may I suggest you quarrel less audibly? Your voices are reaching us over the IRA radio.

MARVIN: Oh my god!

HN (VO) Are you a catholic sir?

MARVIN: No.

HN (VO) Ds Miss Turndale?

MARVIN (hissing) Are you a catholic?

LIZZY (hissing with withering scorn) What---Tilly Armitage's daughter? I'm not even baptised!

MARVIN (into the mike) No.

HN (VO) Would you therefore join us in a prayer from one of us here who's a C. of E. minister?

MARVIN: OK!

C. OF E.  
MINISTER  
(VO) Let our minds dwell not on saving this life but on the glories of the next, so that should the moment come we shall be inwardly prepared and readily accept the sacrifice we have been called upon to make for ends which, in our earthly mantle, we cannot properly understand, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

C. OF E.  
MINISTER  
(VO) AND Amen!  
OTHERS  
(VO)

MARVIN is thoroughly mournful after this, his chin in his chest.

The intercom cuts out.

LIZZY (appearing again) When a clergyman turns up it's the death knell. That's why they wear black!

MARVIN: Oh don't be superstitious!

LIZZY (jumping up) I'm going to make some coffee.  
(Going to the further room) We need a plan!

She disappears and we hear  
her opening cupboards,  
switching on the stove.

LIZZY (cont., off) Those idiots aren't going to save us!  
What the hell are you talking about---how you make  
coffee? All you've got is this instant stuff!  
You're just a born fucking liar!

MARVIN: They'll pick that up on the IRA radio!

LIZZY (off) You should have let me go down there. I'd  
have managed it somehow. Wound them round my  
little finger.

MARVIN begins pacing round  
in his restless way.

MARVIN: Either that or put your big foot in it!

He wanders to the archway  
and watches her at work on  
the coffee.

MARVIN (cont.) What the hell are you doing? That's  
for constipation! The coffee's in a jar marked  
jasmine tea.

Something made of glass crashes  
to the floor.

MARVIN: Oh my god!

LIZZY (screaming) STOP SAYING THAT! Can't you see I've  
burned myself?

MARVIN (quietly) You'd better let me do it. Come on.

He leads her back into the  
main room, his arm round her.  
She is nursing her left hand.

MARVIN (cont.) Just like your mother. She can't even  
fix an egg.

LIZZY (hiding her head in his chest) I don't want to die!

MARVIN: Here (lowering her to the settee). So what about  
this plan of yours? Could we manage to talk  
quietly about it?

LIZZY (tearful poutingly) What's the use? You don't believe in me!

They sit close on the settee.

LIZZY (cont.) You can't believe that I might be as serious and knowledgeable as you are on the theatre!

MARVIN: What's that got to do with getting out of here alive?

LIZZY: Don't you see why that man came in here? To see you with his own eyes! The great Marvin James! Don't you see what magic you have for people, as long as they don't know you personally? Now that can be used!

MARVIN: How?

LIZZY: Would you give me your attention for a moment--- then decide if I'm just a cheap rep actress or not?

He nods.

LIZZY (cont.) I needn't tell you that the great Garrick made his first hit as Richard III by playing it without rant or declamation or those big artificial gestures and poses that were fashionable at the time.

MARVIN (drawing away) Listen I don't want a lecture, not in our present situation!

LIZZY: Just listen! Critics of the time tell us he had an easy and familiar yet forceful style. You know too that in 1746 he and the actor Quin, who played in the old flamboyant style, had a competition to see which of them the audiences preferred. They played alternate nights. And Garrick's naturalistic style won. 53 years later another great actor called Kemble made his debut, also as Richard III. He returned to the old high department but not to the ranting. He had a solemn cadence but made rather long stately pauses, while his action was extremely expressive. Now may I ask you a question?

MARVIN (with a glance at the inner room) Yes.

LIZZY: Which of those three do you prefer?

MARVIN (bored) I don't know.

LIZZY: Kemble?

MARVIN: Not really. He was a sort of half-way house, you know. That was the romantic time, it killed theatre, you got all those poets like Shelley and Byron writing unactable scripts.

LIZZY: So it's Garrick?

MARVIN: Oh yes.

LIZZY: So you see Marvin how you live at cross purposes, how you esteem Garrick and act like Quin, so that in the end you succeed only in being Kemble.

A long silence during which he stares at her.

MARVIN: And this is going to get us out of the clutches of the IRA?

LIZZY: Don't you see what I'm saying? that you must now graduate to Henry Irving by adding hypnotism?

MARVIN: You are bonkers you know...

LIZZY: Don't you see that you can go down to those guerillas and become, by the addition of that one thing, magical presence, the captain not only of your own career but their lives, and rescue us all from our present predicament?

MARVIN: It's a speech from that theatre play I did dammit! Lizzy, I swear these aren't your own speeches!

LIZZY: But you're afraid they might be.

MARVIN: Are you seriously proposing---?

LIZZY: I'm proposing that with your magic you can beguile, persuade, flatter and convince anybody to do anything! Don't you see that this was what I wanted to do---go downstairs and use my magic on them but I lack your fifty years of experience on the stage---?

MARVIN: Fifty?!!

LIZZY: All your life you've twisted directors, managers, leading ladies, agents and audiences to your fickle fancy. Again and again people say they're putty in your hands! They plot against you behind your back but the moment you stand before them they're deflated!

MARVIN: That's not your speech dammit! (Wracking his brains frantically) Where the hell---?

LIZZY: You're frightened aren't you? You daren't go down there!

MARVIN: No I daren't! They'll shoot me on sight for one thing.

LIZZY: You're going to leave it to the Home Office to get us out of here? and those policemen? They'll bungle their job, you'll see!

MARVIN (his agitated pacing even quicker) I mean I like the idea! And it could work! I know what you mean---my magic! Especially the Irish! At the Gate theatre (his eyes gleaming), when I said,

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch  
thee;

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
I see---!

LIZZY: Alright, that's enough!

MARVIN: I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw (miming the dagger).  
Thou marshall'st---

LIZZY (waving her hands in front of him) Marvin! Come back!

MARVIN: Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going:  
And such an instrument I was to use.  
Mine eyes are made the fools---

LIZZY (clapping her hand over his mouth) SHUT UP!

MARVIN comes to in a bleary fashion.

LIZZY (cont., quietly, holding him) Don't you see we have work to do?

MARVIN: I---I was about to explain---at the Gate Theatre...

LIZZY: But perform in front of them! here! now!

MARVIN: I'm trembling---!

LIZZY: But you always do before your first entrance.

MARVIN: Yes!

LIZZY: And the more you tremble the better the performance!

MARVIN: Yes!

She leads him gently towards  
the arch.

MARVIN (cont., stopping) No dammit we've got to rehearse something!

LIZZY: Just talk to them!

MARVIN: I never do that. I have to know my lines!  
Listen, let's do a scene. The ha are you honest  
scene, how about that? You go in the kitchen---  
make your entrance from there---I'll take it from  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.  
(Fussing about) Oh my god, the police won't  
like this---

LIZZY: It's better than being blown up!

MARVIN (going to his dressing table) Here, take this  
packet of letters.

He opens a drawer in his  
dressing table and extracts  
a packet of letters neatly  
tied round with blue ribbon.

MARVIN (cont.) I always think she means his letters to  
her when she says I have remembrances of yours.  
We can do a bit of sexual sideplay on the I did  
love you once bit, though it might get you raped.  
Oh my god!

She takes the packet from him  
and goes into the kitchen to await  
her cue. He sets lights, then begins.

MARVIN (cont.) Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action. Soft you now!  
The fair Ophelia!

No LIZZY.

MARVIN (cont.) Soft you now! The fair---! Well come on! What the hell are you doing?

LIZZY comes in quietly. She has taken the ribbon off the packet of letters.

LIZZY: These letters are from my mother!

MARVIN (dashing forward to retrieve them) How dare you---

She jumps aside, clinging to them.

LIZZY (reading from the letters) 'She tried to burn the house down yesterday'. Who's she?

MARVIN: I wouldn't press the enquiry if I were you. You've been hurt once, this time it'll be worse! Worse than me sleeping with your mother once a week!

LIZZY (resolute) Who is she?

He sits himself at his dressing table and pauses before he replies.

MARVIN: She's my daughter. Her name---Viktoria. With a 'k', you know. Like this theatre.

LIZZY: That's the name you shouted at me down the stairs.

He nods.

LIZZY (cont.) She's your daughter.

MARVIN: Yes. By your mother. There---I told you not to walk into the fire.

She sits down too under the weight of the shock. He watches her.

MARVIN (cont.,) That's what growing up is. Taking blow after blow and realising they don't kill you. Read some more, burn your hands more.

LIZZY (reading again reluctantly, yet also excited) 'She's a criminal, like you.' (Looking up at him) 'She said she'll come to your first night and start screaming when you say out out brief candle. She says you can put that candle where the monkey put the nuts. She says you've snuffed out her candle, put her light out. And then she says she loves you'. (Looks up at

MARVIN again) 'And how she'd much rather see you than me. That's your work too isn't it? Undermining and pulling down, counting me for nothing, upstaging me as you've always done in our shows, until the audience hardly sees me any more! By the way, Viktoria says she put a real knife in your dagger cupboard last night---'.

LIZZY looks round at the stage-daggers cupboard.

LIZZY (cont.) A real knife?

MARVIN shrugs.

LIZZY (cont.) If it's true and there's a real knife in there, you could have killed me when you were fooling about. That could have been my blood, not ketchup.

MARVIN: It could.

LIZZY: So is there a real knife in there?

MARVIN: Oh Viktoria's full of nonsense.

LIZZY (reading again) 'She says you'll not tell the difference between that knife and the other knives, you won't find out until too late that you've murdered somebody in one of your scenes, they'll imprison you and then you won't be able to murder us with your mind any more. Viktoria eats like a pig. She grabs food and stuffs it into her mouth and sometimes vomits it out before she's even chewed it, I have to watch this---!' Is all this going on now?

MARVIN: A few months ago.

LIZZY: And now?

MARVIN shrugs.

LIZZY (cont.) You let me think I was bearing your first child!

MARVIN: My first acknowledged child. I built this theatre in her name to celebrate her existence but no one knows I'm her father and no one ever will. No one even knows she's called Viktoria, including herself!

LIZZY (furiously) My ex-husband built this theatre!

MARVIN: Rubbish. He was just the front, like he is for

my productions. Who do you think went round the City with a begging bowl? It was I! Because I wanted a theatre in her name! I needed your damned ex-husband to hide the connection between myself and her, which might otherwise have become public.

LIZZY: Why shouldn't she be known as your daughter? Is she spastic or something?

MARVIN: In a sense.

LIZZY: Then it was you who made her so---by denying her true fatherhood!

MARVIN (with surprising mildness) I've lost every friend in the world on that account. Sooner or later they meet either Tilly Armitage or Viktoria and I begin to fear they will see the truth, and I quickly withdraw from the friendship.

LIZZY: But why shouldn't the truth get out? You are her father! Where's your guts? not to mention your compassion and decency?

MARVIN: Don't you see, that would mean revealing my association with Tilly Armitage?

LIZZY: So---?

MARVIN: I come back to that trembling state of desire when I think of her. I'm not myself. You saw that, you touched it on that settee. And the thrill between Tilly and me depends on utter secrecy.

LIZZY: Good god. So you sacrifice a human being...

He nods.

MARVIN: We can't do without it any more, the furtiveness which was all I learned about sex when I was a child---the forbidden sounds in another room, the creaking of the bed, the rhythmic movement! Oh you're very moral Miss Turndale---about my sexual appetites. Not about your own.

LIZZY: But your own daughter---don't you think she might be proud to be seen as your daughter, acknowledged as such?

MARVIN: She can't be sure she is my daughter. I keep her in doubt, you see.

LIZZY (to herself) Unthinkable...

MARVIN: I suppose she lives in constant terror of me. Terrified to lose my love and attention because never certain that she has a right to them.

LIZZY: That you can even say all this!

MARVIN: I warned you at the beginning against association with me. Those foolish enough to depend on me I sear and scorch for life! Do you realise that since the earliest childhood Viktoria has been forbidden even to name me to her friends---?

LIZZY: I was too!

MARVIN: Children accept that sort of thing if you get them early enough. A strict injunction, repeated often enough, becomes as fixed as the stars in the sky for a child. In the twenty-eight years that have passed since her birth not a soul has discovered, as far as I know, that she isn't the daughter of the man Tilly Armitage married. Namely your father. Arthur Turndale. That's his name?

LIZZY (hating him) That's his name.

MARVIN: The other day I was in a little tea-room and Viktoria came in. I happened to be with Joyce Bellamy, you know the girl who played Clarissa in May Day Darlings. Viktoria came in clutching her belly, oh it was some absurd little drama she was enacting, and Joyce whispered to me venomously, 'Look at that! She's holding her belly because you've got your fist up her cunt!'. Either Joyce Bellamy is psychic or she knows something.

LIZZY (bursting out) So you have got it up her cunt!

MARVIN: May I put in a good word for myself Lizzy? Betrayal was the horror of my childhood, night after night, it was in my mother's goodnight kiss and in her surreptitious return in the early hours with yet another fellow half her age. The bed springs would clang like bells in hell, and at dawn, sleepless, I would rise and go to the door of her bedroom, and do you know what I would do, I would stand there Lizzy and try and smell him, smell the kind of man he was, so that my stomach was sickened for life. Do you wonder I couldn't let my daughter go, even to the point of acknowledging her as my daughter, one who in her due time could fall in love and marry and have children, and thus betray me! Won't you see that she's the only creature in my life not bold enough to do without me and thus betray me? I---

The HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR breaks  
in over the intercom.

HN (VO) Mr James?

Neither of them stirs. Then,  
with his eyes still on LIZZY,  
MARVIN takes up the microphone.

MARVIN: Yes?

HN (VO) I'm afraid we must give up hope.

MARVIN and LIZZY continue to  
sit quite still.

HN (VO) (cont.) The guerillas won't accept the Home  
Secretary's conditions. I can't tell what  
might happen. The police may make a surprise  
attack, in view of the fact that the situation  
is desperate anyway. Of course that's very  
risky and could involve their deaths as well as  
ours. The guerillas delivered their ultimatum  
a few minutes ago: if the Home Secretary doesn't  
recant within ten minutes from now, the fuse will  
be fired. I'm sorry Mr James. Miss Turntable,  
this is particularly tragic in your case because  
you are an innocent party. Prayers are being  
offered throughout the nation and the United  
States, wherever there is an interest in classical  
theatre. The managing committee of Equity in  
Dublin has issued a special appeal to the IRA  
to spare us. We did our best Mr James. We  
must die bravely.

MARVIN: Bravely, yes.

The intercom switches out.

They sit in silence.

LIZZY: I'd have told the whole world you were Viktoria's  
father. I'd have walked out of here and told  
the press.

MARVIN: But if she cannot be identified even on a birth  
certificate?

LIZZY: What's her name?

MARVIN: That's between Tilly and me.

LIZZY: You love a woman passionately and you don't  
acknowledge your child by her! And you make  
love to me like a starving man!

The sound of an ambulance  
siren.

MARVIN: We meet on the last Sunday of every month at  
Leicester Square tube station by the ticket office.  
We go to a hotel. We go through many men, some  
of them imagined, others real.

LIZZY: I'm glad we're going to die.

MARVIN: It was the opposite of your love---for familiar  
faces. We were strangers. That was the thrill  
of the enterprise. Not even love bound us. So  
the thrill depended on the secrecy.

LIZZY: And everything had to be sacrificed to that, even  
a human life.

Another ambulance siren.  
Some police cars with sirens  
sounding.

They stare at each other with  
fear.

MARVIN: Tilly yearned for rough ugly types she wouldn't  
dare even to talk to. I gave them to her, in  
fantasy. So I shared the greatest secret of her  
life. We became used to secrecy. We carried  
it too far perhaps (a shrug). A mistake perhaps  
but not a villainy...

He makes one of his sighs,  
having got it off his chest.

He looks at his watch.

LIZZY: And you? Was it just a charitable function on  
your part, at least at the beginning?

MARVIN: I supplied Tilly with her betrayals, and in order  
to have them she never betrayed me. It was my  
way of getting round the betrayal that my mother  
taught me lay like a worm at the heart of every  
woman.

LIZZY: If we lived---would you go back to her?

MARVIN (going to her) No. (Embracing her) I'd do for  
you what I did for her.

LIZZY (trying to break from him) No!

MARVIN (keeping hold of her) I'd be every man of your life!

She gives way, kisses him. Then she leads him gently to the window in the inner room.

LIZZY (gazing out) Look how normal everything seems--- buses in the distance, people. I can see a woman leading her dog.

MARVIN (also gazing out) We want to be there now it's too late. We never did before. We ran away from it all our lives and now---!

LIZZY: But is it too late? Why don't we do something Marvin? Even if it's only a scene from Hamlet? One last thing! So that we can say we tried! If they're going to blow us up anyway let's go down there, face them! (Clinging to him) I want you---I've got to go on having you---!

Another police siren.

MARVIN: Lizzy! Get that dress of yours on! It'll be dry by now. Quick! The one from May Day Darlings. Do you know the part---Clarissa?

LIZZY: I played it in rep---at York and Coventry and Liverpool.

He draws her in a kind of dancing motion back to the dressing room.

MARVIN: I'm thinking of the dance. Do you remember? Dallying with a maiden?

LIZZY: Of course!

MARVIN: I've a tape of that whole number. And the lighting programme! I can synch them together on that machine!

He hurries to the lights console and extracts two cassettes from the drawer. He inserts them.

MARVIN (cont.) Do you remember? When an old man dallies with a maiden---

She joins in for the next line.

MARVIN)  
LIZZY ) He dances with death, he dances with death!

MARVIN (cont.) We've got three minutes flat!

With a last glance at him for reassurance she runs behind the screen to change into her original dress.

He hurries to the inner room.

MARVIN (cont.) And now for MAGIC!

He too disappears. We hear him open the door to the staircase.

LIZZY (from behind the screen) Marvin!

MARVIN (off) Don't be afraid!

He begins shouting down the staircase at the guerillas, his voice echoing.

MARVIN (cont., off) Guerillas! Guerillas! We're putting on a show for you! From May Day Darlings! With music and lights! Feel free to come upstairs! Have no fear of my arms arsenal! The safety catches are on, the bullets have been removed! Come and see the dance that rocked Broadway! Hear the music that haunted a generation! I shall leave this door open! If we're to die let us do so on a note of joy! Better still, come and join Miss Turndale and I, and leave death for another day!

He hurries back into the

dressings room. He returns to the console and, repeating his routine at the beginning of the play, sets the lights, gazing up at the area where they will next come.

Then he presses two buttons on the console simultaneously.

The overture to May Day Darlings begins.

With childish wonder he watches the lights being reset by the lighting programme he has activated.

MARVIN (cont., mouthing to the rhythm)

When an old man dallies with a maiden  
He dances with death, he dances with death!

MARVIN puts on his trilby hat at a rakish angle. He glances at himself in the dressing table mirror, humming. He is urbane and debonair, as at the beginning of the play. He puts on a jacket.

LIZZY makes a sweeping entrance through the arch in her dress.

The lights continue to change. They come up gold on LIZZY, for her entrance, then the gold spreads to enclose the entire stage in a bustling, cheerful light that exactly reflects MARVIN's man-about-town appearance.

The cue for their dance begins. They meet centre stage, behind the settee, and he takes her hand. She does the first steps, he remaining still to watch them. He mimes charmed approval of her efforts.

Then he joins her steps until they are dancing together with a precision so marked that they seem to be one body.

Her face bears a rapt, joyous

expression, his one of debonair control and mellow pleasure. We feel 'What a remarkable union'.

This carefree music arouses the kind of elation we associate with a successful musical, in which the hit numbers seem to have been written in our own minds before we hear them, so natural and spontaneous are they.

The lights continue to go through changes, sweeping up in the areas where MARVIN and LIZZY dance, adding silver to gold, amber to silver.

The dance has elements of Jack Buchanan's 'soft tap' style.

The mood however undergoes a change. The debonair quality of MARVIN's appearance gives way to a certain rigidity and fatigue. LIZZY on the other hand dances with ever stronger and more emphatic movements.

MARVIN begins to falter, then reel, yet strangely keeping his rhythm. His face takes on a vacant, then frightened look. They now break from each other's rhythm as the lights change to darker and more threatening combinations.

She begins dancing round him as he falters. She stamps rather than dances. There is a strange deep twanging in the music, disturbing.

He almost falls. It is now that the danse macabre begins. He gradually picks up her rhythm but in a helpless, jerky way. She is powerful, flushed, strong. But a certain deathly joy comes over his movements too. It is a mad joy, beyond life, uncanny, as if his movements are being

worked by her. His look is inspired, deathly, while hers is coolly triumphant. The lights go into deep purple, brighten to silver and then begin to dim, almost to blackout. As they do so we perceive that LIZZY's dress has a phosphorescent design of THE REAPER AND HIS SCYTHE, while MARVIN's jacket has a SKULL AND CROSSBONES. For a moment or two there is total BLACKOUT, and these two luminous designs hover together strangely.

Then the lights gradually return to their first setting. The debonair MARVIN is once again there, so is the happy LIZZY, quite as if the danse macabre hadn't taken place.

The music ends.

They look round hopefully at the arch, expecting an audience of guerillas. There is no one.

Holding each other disconsolately they go through the arch, hesitant, alert. They stand looking at the door leading to the staircase.

Then they return to the dressing room, chastened.

He suddenly grips hold of her.

MARVIN (screaming with frustration) It's your damned marriage got me into this! I've been suffocating in this place for five years---in this damned incestuous situation---kept here like a puppet--!!

He begins shaking her. She appears in shock, her eyes wide.

MARVIN (cont.) You and that fucking monster! You organised this between the two of you didn't you? Didn't you? I know you both need me for your fantasies---just like your mother!---that's what you do with him isn't it? Isn't it? I could feel it in you down there (indicating the settee), I could feel it like in your mother! And you fantasise how you're fucking all the men you want, including me---including your father---and being raped by

all those guerillas---and now they're going to kill us---just like your mother---rough ugly types---and me looking on as the jealous father---with Nigel Burbage's prick inside you---(shaking her violently) you're a bitch Viktoria, a bitch!

LIZZY: I'm not Viktoria!

MARVIN: Viktoria! Viktoria! (Shaking her)

LIZZY (frantically) I'm NOT VIKTORIA, NOT, NOT, NOT, NOT!

They continue shouting each other down.

She breaks free from him and in her desperation dashes to the daggers cupboard and pulls it open.

MARVIN (rushing after her) No you don't!

She seizes a dagger and plunges it into his chest. Ketchup sprays everywhere.

MARVIN (cont.) You---!

He seizes a dagger too and not they rain daggers on each other, drenching each other in ketchup.

Finally he staggers away half blinded by it.

She watches him from behind, whimpering.

Suddenly she seizes another dagger from the cupboard and plunges it into his back as he stumbles downstage.

The knife sticks. It remains there in his back.

He stands there. He manages to walk round the settee, as if to his dressing table. But he collapses to the ground.

The knife is still sticking in his back.

LIZZY stands there horrified.  
She begins screaming.

LIZZY:   Marvin!   Marvin!

She runs to him and tries to stir him. She shakes him but he doesn't move.

Whimpering frantically to herself she dashes to the door on the set, actor's left. It is locked. She runs back to MARVIN. She feels in his pockets for the key and finds it. She runs back to the door and manages to open it after panic-stricken fumbling.

MARVIN remains motionless.

She is gone, leaving the door open. A sterile light comes from the corridor.

Some time passes. Silence.

MARVIN stirs. He begins raising himself slowly into a crouching position. With much effort he manages to stand upright.

He moves slowly, shuffling, towards the arch.

The knife is still sticking in his back.

He disappears into the inner room.

We hear the lavatory door being opened. We hear him pee. He flushes the toilet.

Painfully, dimly, he returns to the dressing room. He steadies himself on the back of the settee. He stands there.

LIZZY returns like a shadow, stands there gazing at him in astonishment, quite still.

LIZZY (suddenly rushing to him) Marvin I thought---

He holds her in a loose  
embrace.

They kiss each other, ketchup  
and all.

LIZZY (cont.) Marvin I went right down to the foyer.  
There's no one about! No guerillas, no police!  
Everything normal.

MARVIN: No one there?

LIZZY: No one! I heard people laughing in Nigel's  
office, that's all.

MARVIN (speaking painfully, hushed) I suspected as much.  
When I heard that man's voice, I knew who it was.  
I mean the Hostage Negotiator. I met him several  
times. Every time I had lunch at the House of  
Commons I seemed to meet him. He's the best hostage  
negotiator in the land. (Taking time to get his  
breath) Name of Cowell. Sees right inside a  
guerilla's mind. He saw right inside mine, I'm  
afraid. And yours. What a brilliant stroke,  
inventing the IRA. Turning us into hostages  
ourselves. Brilliant. (Halting to retrieve his  
breath again) They're putting him up for a knight-  
hood, I heard. Well---

He breaks gently from their  
embrace and walks unsteadily  
and with extreme slowness to  
his dressing table.

There he sits with enormous  
relief.

MARVIN (cont.) I'd better get ready for this damned Dress.

LIZZY: It isn't dawn yet! Darling, it's early morning!

MARVIN (working away with great weakness at the cold cream)  
I need to get in the mood. (Musing to himself)  
That hooded man. Brilliant! The explosion.  
So convincing! (He sighs)

He is trying to work on his face  
when he half rises, leaning on  
the table, and gazes before him.

MARVIN (cont.) Oh my god...

He falls to the floor. He

lies face-down, motionless again.

The knife is still sticking in his back.

She approaches him stealthily, staring.

She bends down to look closer.

She sinks to her haunches, close to him.

LIZZY (touching him)      It was worth it for the dance...

He remains there, rigid.

Her head sinks to his back.  
She lies on him, crying silently.

In the distance Big Ben strikes four.