

Scene Three

(The time is evening several days later. The doors are shut. The windows are also shut. The curtains are open.)

(Light Cue No. 01. Act II, Scene Three.)

(When the curtain rises, MRS. BRADMAN is sitting in the armchair. RUTH is standing by the window drumming on the pane with her fingers.)

MRS. BRADMAN. Does it show any signs of clearing?

RUTH. No, it's still pouring.

MRS. BRADMAN. I do sympathize with you, really I do. It's really been quite a chapter of accidents, hasn't it?

RUTH. It certainly has.

MRS. BRADMAN. That happens sometimes, you know. Everything seems to go wrong at once. Exactly as though there were some evil forces at work.

(RUTH comes down to the gramophone.)

I remember once when George and I went away for a fortnight's holiday, not long after we were married, we were dogged by bad luck from beginning to end. The weather was vile – George sprained his ankle – I caught a cold and had to stay in bed for two days – and to crown everything the lamp fell over in the sitting room and set fire to the treatise George had written on hyperplasia of the abdominal glands.

RUTH. *(Absently.)* How dreadful!

(She wanders upstage a little.)

MRS. BRADMAN. He had to write it all over again, every single word.

RUTH. You're sure you wouldn't like a cocktail or some sherry or anything?

MRS. BRADMAN. No, thank you – really not. George will be down in a minute and we've got to go like lightning. We



were supposed to be at the Wilmots' at seven and it's nearly that now.

RUTH. (*Coming away from the window.*) I think I'll have a little sherry. I feel I need it.

(She moves upstage right to the drinks table and pours out sherry.)

MRS. BRADMAN. Don't worry about your husband's arm, Mrs. Condomine. I'm sure it's only a sprain.

RUTH. It's not his arm I'm worried about.

MRS. BRADMAN. And I'm sure Edith will be up and about again in a few days.

RUTH. My cook gave notice this morning.

(She comes down to the fireplace.)

MRS. BRADMAN. Well, really! Servants are awful, aren't they? Not a shred of gratitude. At the first sign of trouble they run out on you – like rats leaving a sinking ship.

RUTH. I can't feel that your simile was entirely fortunate, Mrs. Bradman.

MRS. BRADMAN. (*Flustered.*) Oh, I didn't mean that, really I didn't!

(DR. BRADMAN comes in.)

DR. BRADMAN. (*Above the sofa.*) Nothing to worry about, Mrs. Condomine – it's only a slight strain.

RUTH. I'm so relieved.

DR. BRADMAN. He made a good deal of fuss when I examined it. Men are much worse patients than women, you know – particularly highly-strung men like your husband.

RUTH. Is he highly-strung, do you think?

DR. BRADMAN. Yes. As a matter of fact I wanted to talk to you about that. I'm afraid he's been overworking lately.

RUTH. (*Frowning.*) Overworking?

DR. BRADMAN. He's in rather a nervous condition – nothing serious, you understand –

RUTH. What makes you think so?

DR. BRADMAN. I know the symptoms. Of course the shock of his fall might have something to do with it, but I certainly should advise a complete rest for a couple of weeks.

RUTH. You mean he ought to go away?

DR. BRADMAN. I do. In cases like that a change of atmosphere can work wonders.

RUTH. What symptoms did you notice?

DR. BRADMAN. Oh, nothing to be unduly alarmed about – a certain air of strain – an inability to focus his eyes on the person he is talking to – a few rather marked irrelevancies in his conversation.

RUTH. I see. Can you remember any specific example?

DR. BRADMAN. Oh, he suddenly shouted, ‘What are you doing in the bathroom?’ and then a little later, while I was writing him a prescription, he suddenly said, ‘For God’s sake behave yourself!’

MRS. BRADMAN. How extraordinary.

RUTH. (*Nervously.*) He often goes on like that. Particularly when he’s immersed in writing a book.

DR. BRADMAN. Oh, I am not in the least perturbed about it really – but I do think a rest and a change would be a good idea.

RUTH. Thank you so much, Doctor. Would you like some sherry?

DR. BRADMAN. No, thank you. We really must be off.

RUTH. How is poor Edith?

DR. BRADMAN. She’ll be all right in a few days. She’s still recovering from the concussion.

MRS. BRADMAN. It’s funny, isn’t it, that both your housemaid and your husband should fall down on the same day, isn’t it?

RUTH. Yes, if that sort of thing amuses you.

MRS. BRADMAN. (*Giggling nervously.*) Of course I didn’t mean it like that, Mrs. Condomine.

