

**GILDA**

*Please prepare with a standard British accent*

Side 1 of 2

*From Act I*

LEO. What now?

GILDA. I don't know.

LEO. Not much time to think.

GILDA. A few minutes.

LEO. Are there any cigarettes?

GILDA. Yes, in that box.

LEO. Want one?

GILDA. No.

LEO. [*lighting one*] It's nice being human beings, isn't it? I'm sure God's angels must envy us.

GILDA. Whom do you love best? Otto or me?

LEO. Silly question.

GILDA. Answer me, anyhow.

LEO. How can I? Be sensible! In any case, what does it matter?

GILDA. It's important to me.

LEO. No, it isn't—not really. That's not what's important. What we did was inevitable. It doesn't matter who loves who the most; you can't line up things like that mathematically. We all love each other a lot, far too much, and we've made a bloody mess of it! That was inevitable, too.

GILDA. We must get it straight, somehow.

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LEO. Yes, we must get it straight and tie it up with ribbons with a bow on the top. Pity it isn't Valentine's Day!

GILDA. Can't we laugh a little? Isn't it a joke? Can't we make it a joke?

LEO. Yes, it's a joke. It's a joke, all right. We can laugh until our sides ache. Let's start, shall we?

GILDA. What's the truth of it? The absolute, deep-down truth? Until we really know that, we can't grapple with it. We can't do a thing. We can only sit here flicking words about.

LEO. It should be easy, you know. The actual facts are so simple. I love you. You love me. You love Otto. I love Otto. Otto loves you. Otto loves me. There now! Start to unravel from there.

GILDA. We've always been honest, though, all of us. Honest with each other, I mean. That's something to go on, isn't it?

LEO. In this particular instance, it makes the whole thing far more complicated. If we were ordinary moral, high-thinking citizens we would carry on a backstairs affair for weeks without saying a word about it. We could lunch and dine together, all three, and not give anything away by so much as a look.

GILDA. If we were ordinary moral, high-thinking citizens we shouldn't have had an affair at all.

LEO. Perhaps not. We should have crushed it down. And the more we crushed it down the more we should have resented Otto, until we hated him. Just think of hating Otto—

GILDA. Just think of him hating us.

LEO. Do you think he will?

GILDA. [*inexorably*] Yes.

LEO. [*walking about the room*] Oh, no, no—he mustn't! It's too silly. He must see how unimportant it is, really.

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GILDA. There's no question of not telling him, is there?

LEO. Of course not.

GILDA. We could pretend that you just arrived here and missed them on the way.

LEO. So we could, dear—so we could.

GILDA. Do you think we're working each other up? Do you think we're imagining it to be more serious than it really is?

LEO. Perhaps.

GILDA. Do you think, after all, he may not mind quite so dreadfully?

LEO. He'll mind just as much as you or I would under similar circumstances. Probably a little bit more. Imagine that for a moment, will you? Put yourself in his place.

GILDA. [*hopelessly*] Oh, don't!

LEO. Tell me one thing. How sorry were you last night, when once you realized we were in for it?

GILDA. I wasn't sorry at all. I gave way utterly.

LEO. So did I.

GILDA. Very deep inside, I had a qualm or two. Just once or twice.

LEO. So did I.

GILDA. But I stamped on them, like killing beetles.

LEO. A nice way to describe the pangs of a noble conscience!

GILDA. I enjoyed it all, see! I enjoyed it thoroughly from the very first moment. So there!

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LEO. All right! So did I.

GILDA. [*defiantly*] It was romantic. Suddenly, violently romantic! The whole evening was ‘Gala’. You looked lovely, darling—very smooth and velvety—and your manner was a dream! I’d forgotten about your French accent and the way you move your hands, and the way you dance. A sleek little gigolo!

LEO. You must try not to be bitter, dear.

GILDA. There seemed to be something new about you: something I’d never realized before. Perhaps it’s having money. Perhaps your success has given you a little extra glamour.

LEO. Look at me now, sweet! It’s quite chilly, this morning light. How do I appear to you now?

GILDA. [*gently*] The same.

LEO. So do you, but that’s because my eyes are slow at changing visions. I still see you too clearly last night to be able to realize how you look this morning. You were very got up—very got up, indeed, in your green dress and your earrings. It was ‘Gala’, all right—strong magic!

GILDA. Coloured lights, sly music, overhanging trees, paper streamers—all the trappings.

LEO. Champagne, too, just to celebrate both of us hating it.

GILDA. We drank to Otto. Perhaps you remember that as well?

LEO. Perfectly.

GILDA. How could we? Oh, how could we?

LEO. It seemed quite natural.

GILDA. Yes, but we knew in our hearts what you were up to. It was vile of us.

LEO. I’ll drink to Otto’s health until the day I die! Nothing could change that ever.

**GILDA**

*Please prepare with a standard British accent*  
Side 2 of 2

*From Act II*

OTTO. If you're unkind to me, I shall go back to the Carlton.

GILDA. Have you got a suite, or just a common bedroom and bath?

OTTO. Darling, I do love you so very much!

GILDA. A nice comfortable love, without heart throbs.

OTTO. Are you trying to lure me to your wanton bed?

GILDA. What would you do if I did?

OTTO. Probably enjoy it very much.

GILDA. I doubt if I should.

OTTO. Have I changed so dreadfully?

GILDA. [*maliciously*] It isn't you that's changed—it's time and experience and new circumstances!

OTTO [*rising*] I've finished my supper. It wasn't very good, but it sufficed. I should now like a whisky and soda.

GILDA. It's in that thing over there.

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OTTO. [*getting it out*] It is a thing, isn't it? Do you want one?

GILDA. No, I don't think so.

OTTO. Just a little one?

GILDA. All right.

OTTO. [*pouring them out*] If we were bored, we could always go to the pictures, couldn't we?

GILDA. It's too late; we shouldn't get in to anything that's worth seeing.

OTTO. Oh, how disappointing! How very, very, very disappointing!

GILDA. Personally, I'm enjoying myself here.

OTTO. [*handing her her drink*] Are you, indeed?

GILDA. Yes. This measured skirmishing is delightful.

OTTO. Be careful, won't you? I do implore you to be careful!

GILDA. I never was. Why should I start now?

OTTO. [*raising his glass*] I salute your spirit of defiance, my dearest.

GILDA. [*raising her glass*] Yours, too.

OTTO [*shaking his head*] A bad business, a very bad business..

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GILDA. Love among the artists.

OTTO. Love among anybody.

GILDA. Perhaps not love, exactly. Something a little below it and a little above it, but something terribly strong.

OTTO. Meaning this?

GILDA. Of course. What else?

OTTO. We should have principles to hang on to, you know. This floating about without principles is so very dangerous.

GILDA. Life is for living.

OTTO. You accused me of being too sure. It's you who are sure now.

GILDA. Sure of what?

OTTO. Sure that I want you.

GILDA. Don't you?

OTTO. Of course I do.

GILDA. Keep away, then, a minute, and let me look at you all over again.

OTTO. I used to sit on the top deck of that freighter, and shut my eyes and see you standing there, just like you are now.

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GILDA. Good old romance, bobbing up again and wrapping up our crudities in a few veils!

OTTO. Shut up! Don't talk like that.

GILDA. I'm not nearly as afraid as you are.

OTTO. You haven't got so much to lose.

GILDA. How do you know? You've forgotten everything about me—the real me. That dim figure you conjured up under your damned tropic stars was an illusion, a misty ghost, scratched out of a few memories, inaccurate, untrue—nothing to do with me in any way. This is me, now! Take a good look and see if you can tell what I have to lose in the game, or to win, either—perhaps you can tell that, too! Can you? Can you?

OTTO. You look so terribly sweet when you're angry.

GILDA. Another illusion. I'm not sweet.

OTTO. Those were only love words. You mustn't be so crushing. How are we to conduct this revivalist meeting without love words?

GILDA. Let's keep them under control.

OTTO. I warn you it's going to be very difficult. You've worked yourself up into a frenzy of sophistication. You've decided on being calculating and disillusioned and brazen, even slightly coarse over the affair. That's all very well, but how long is it going to last? That's what I ask myself. How long is it going to last—this old wanton mood of yours?

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GILDA. [*breaking down*] Don't—don't laugh at me.

OTTO. I must—a little.

GILDA. It's an unfair advantage. You've both got it and you both use it against me mercilessly.

OTTO. Laugh, too; it's not so serious, really.

GILDA. If I once started, I should never stop. That's a warning.

OTTO. Duly registered.

GILDA. What are we going to do about Leo?

OTTO. Wait and see what he's going to do about us.

GILDA. The whole thing's degrading, completely and utterly degrading.

OTTO. Only when measured up against other people's standards.

GILDA. Why should we flatter ourselves that we're so tremendously different?

OTTO. Flattery doesn't enter into it. We are different.