

The Shakespeare Theatre Company  
DESIGN FOR LIVING – Audition Sides

**GRACE TORRENCE**

*Please prepare with a standard American accent*

Side 1 of 2

GILDA. Who'd like a highball?

GRACE. We all would. We all need it!

GILDA. People are wrong when they say that the opera isn't what it used to be.  
It is what it used to be—that's what's wrong with it!

HELEN. [*wandering out on the terrace*] This is the most wonderful view I've  
ever seen!

GRACE. You did all this, I suppose, Gilda?

GILDA. Not all of it; just a few extras. Ernest laid the foundations.

GRACE. When's he coming back?

GILDA. Tomorrow.

GRACE. [*wandering about the room*] It's lovely.

GILDA. I'd forgotten you hadn't been here before.

GRACE. [*stopping before an antique chair*] Where did you get this?

GILDA. Italy. We were motoring to Siena, and we stopped at a little village for  
lunch and there it was—just waiting to be grabbed.

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GRACE. You ought to open a shop; with your reputation you'd make a packet!

GILDA. This is my shop, really. I make quite enough, one way and another.

GRACE. But the things in this room aren't for sale, are they?

GILDA. All except the pictures. Those are Ernest's.

GRACE. [*laughing*] Then they are for sale!

GILDA. Perhaps. At a price.

GILDA. Do you want to see over the rest of it, Grace?

GRACE. I do, indeed! I'm taking mental notes, and if any of them come out right, I'll send you a handsome gift.

GILDA. Terrace first? Very nice line in balcony furniture, swing chairs, striped awnings, shrubs in pots—

GRACE. I'd rather die than go near the terrace—it makes me giddy from here.

GILDA. I love being high up.

HELEN. So do I—the higher the better!

GRACE. What floor is this?

GILDA. Thirtieth.

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GRACE. I was caught by fire once on the sixth floor; I had to be hauled down a ladder in my nightgown—since then I've always lived on the ground level.

HELEN. What about burglars?

GRACE. I'd rather have fifty burglars than one fire. What should you do here if there was a fire, Gilda? If it started down below, in the elevator shaft or something?

GILDA. [*pointing towards the servants' door*] Very nice line in fire escapes just through that door.

GRACE. One day there'll be an earthquake in this city, then all you high livers will come tumbling down!

GILDA. Come and see the bedrooms.

GRACE. Higher still?

GILDA. Yes, higher still.

[*GILDA and GRACE disappear through the archway*]

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Side 2 of 2

GILDA. Grace, these are two old friends of mine—Leo Mercuré and Otto Sylvus.

GRACE. [*shaking hands*] Oh—how do you do?

LEO. [*shaking hands*] You must forgive our clothes, but we've only just come off a freight boat.

GILDA. [*to Grace*] Do you know, I haven't seen either of them for nearly two years.

GRACE. Gilda has been showing me this perfectly glorious apartment. Don't you think it's lovely?

OTTO. [*looking around*] Artistically too careful, but professionally superb.

GILDA. [*laughing lightly*] Behave yourself, Otto!

GRACE. [*sinking into a chair*] Where did you come from on your freight boat, Mr. Mercuré?

LEO. Manila.

OTTO. It was very hot in Manila. It was cooler in Hong Kong; and in Vladivostock it was downright cold!

LEO. We had to wear mittens.

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GRACE. Was all this a pleasure trip?

LEO. Life is a pleasure trip, Mrs. Torrence; a Cheap Excursion.

GRACE. [*with a little social laugh*] Well, life certainly hasn't been a cheap excursion for me! Every day it gets more and more expensive. Everyone here has had the most dreadful winter. I was in Europe, of course, but they were feeling it there, too, very badly. Paris, particularly. Paris seemed to have lost its vitality; it used to be much more gay, somehow—

OTTO. I once had a flat in Paris. It was really more a studio than a flat, but I had to leave it.

GRACE. They pulled it down, I suppose. They're pulling down everything in Paris now.

OTTO. They pulled it down to the ground; it was a small edifice and crumbled easily.

GRACE. It's sad, isn't it, to think of places where one has lived not being there any more?

LEO. I remember a friend of mine called Mrs. Purdy being very upset once when her house in Dorset fell into the sea.

GRACE. [*startled*] How terrible!

LEO. Fortunately, Mr. Purdy happened to be in it at the time.

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OTTO. In my case, of course, it was more like an earthquake than anything else, a small but thorough earthquake with the room trembling and the chandelier swinging and the ground opening at my feet.

GRACE. Funny. We were talking about earthquakes just now.

LEO. I've never been able to understand why the Japanese are such a cheerful race. All that hissing and grinning on the brink of destruction.