

LEO

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's been inevitable for years. 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, I 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.

LEO

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Side 2 of 2

From Act II

LEO. Hallo, darling! I couldn't bear it any more, so I've come back.

OTTO. [*sitting up slowly*] Hello, Leo.

LEO. You!

OTTO. Yes. I couldn't bear it any longer, either, so I've come back.

LEO. Where have you come from?

OTTO. New York.

LEO. When – when did you arrive?

OTTO. Last night.

LEO. Why – why aren't you dressed?

OTTO. I've only just got up.

LEO. You stayed here?

OTTO. Yes.

LEO. [*slowly*] With Gilda?

OTTO. Yes.

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LEO. I see.

OTTO. It wouldn't be any use lying, would it? Pretending I didn't?

LEO. No use at all.

OTTO. I'm not even sorry, Leo, except for hurting you.

LEO. Where is Gilda?

OTTO. She's gone out.

LEO. Out! Why? Where's she gone to?

OTTO. I don't know.

LEO. [*turning away*] How vile of you! How unspeakably vile of you both!

OTTO. It was inevitable.

LEO. [*contemptuously*] Inevitable!

OTTO. I arrived unexpectedly, you were away; Gilda was alone. I love her; I've always loved her – I've never stopped for a minute, and she loves me, too.

LEO. What about me?

OTTO. I told you I was sorry about hurting you.

LEO. Gilda loves me.

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OTTO. I never said she didn't.

LEO. [*hopelessly*] What are we to do? What are we to do now?

OTTO. Do you know, I really haven't the faintest idea.

LEO. You're laughing inside. You're thoroughly damned well pleased with yourself, aren't you?

OTTO. I don't know. I don't know that either.

LEO. [*savagely*] You are! I can see it in your eyes – so much triumph – such a sweet revenge!

OTTO. It wasn't anything to do with revenge.

LEO. It was. Of course it was – secretly thought out, planned for ages – infinitely mean!

OTTO. Shut up! And don't talk such nonsense.

LEO. Why did you do it, then? Why did you come back and break everything up for me?

OTTO. I came back to see you both. It was a surprise.

LEO. A rather cruel surprise, and brilliantly successful. You should be very happy.

OTTO. [*sadly*] Should I?

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LEO. Perhaps I should be happy, too; you've set me free from something.

OTTO. What?

LEO. [*haltingly*] The – feeling I had for you – something very deep, I imagined it was, but it couldn't have been, could it? – now that it has died so easily.

OTTO. I said all that to you in Paris. Do you remember? I thought it was true then, just as you think it's true now.

LEO. It is true.

OTTO. Oh, no, it isn't.

LEO. Do you honestly believe I could ever look at you again, as a real friend?

OTTO. Until the day you die.

LEO. Shut up! It's too utterly beastly – the whole thing.

OTTO. It's certainly very, very uncomfortable.

LEO. Is Gilda going to leave me? To go away with you?

OTTO. Do you want her to?

LEO. Yes, I suppose so, now.

OTTO. We didn't make any arrangements or plans.

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LEO. I came back too soon. You could have gone away and left a note for me – that would have been nice and easy for you, wouldn't it?

OTTO. Perhaps it would, really. I don't know that I should have done it, though.

LEO. Why not?

OTTO. If I had, I shouldn't have seen you at all, and I wanted to see you very much.

LEO. You even wanted to see me, hating you like this? Very touching!

OTTO. You're not hating me nearly as much as you think you are. You're hating the situation: that's quite different.

LEO. You flatter yourself.

OTTO. No. I'm speaking from experience. You forget, I've been through just what you're going through now. I thought I hated you with all my heart and soul, and the force of that hatred swept me away on to the high seas, too far out of reach to come back when I discovered the truth.

LEO. The truth!

OTTO. That no one of us was more to blame than the other. We've made our own circumstances, you and Gilda and me, and we've bloody well got to put up with them!

LEO. I wish I could aspire to such a sublime God's-eye view!

OTTO. You will – in time – when your acids have calmed down.

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LEO. I'd like so very much not to be able to feel anything at all for a little. I'm desperately tired.

OTTO. You want a change.

LEO. It seems as if I'm going to get one, whether I want it or not.

OTTO. [*laughing*] Oh, Leo, you really are very, very tender!

LEO. Don't laugh! How dare you laugh! How *can* you laugh!

OTTO. It's a good joke. A magnificent joke.

LEO. [*bitterly*] A pity Gilda chose just that moment to go out, we could all have enjoyed it together.

OTTO. Like we did before?

LEO. Yes, like we did before.

OTTO. And like we shall again.

LEO. [*vehemently*] No, *never* again – never!

OTTO. I wonder.