

OTTO

Please prepare with a standard British accent

Side 1 of 2

From Act II

OTTO. You're certainly in a state, aren't you?

GILDA. Yes, I am. And it's getting worse.

OTTO. Turbulent! Downright turbulent.

GILDA. There isn't any mustard.

OTTO. Never mind: I don't want any, do you?

GILDA. I don't know, really. I'm always a little undecided about mustard.

OTTO. It might pep up the rice pudding!

GILDA. Strange, isn't it? This going on where we left off?

OTTO. Not quite where we left off, thank God.

GILDA. Wasn't it horrible?

OTTO. I was tortured with regrets for a long while. I felt I ought to have
knocked Leo down.

GILDA. I'm awfully glad you didn't. He hates being knocked down.

OTTO. Then, of course, he might have retaliated and knocked me down!

GILDA. You're bigger than he is.

OTTO. He's more wiry. He once held me in the bath for twenty minutes while
he poured cold water over me.

GILDA. [*laughing*] Yes, I know!

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OTTO. [*laughing too*] Oh, of course—that's what you were both laughing at when I came in that day, wasn't it?

GILDA. [*weakly*] Yes, it was very, very unfortunate.

OTTO. An unkind trick of Fate's, to have dropped it into your minds just then.

GILDA. It made a picture, you see—an unbearably comic picture—we were both terribly strained and unhappy; our nerves were stretched like elastic, and that snapped it.

OTTO. I think that upset me more than anything.

GILDA. You might have known it wasn't you we were laughing at. Not you, yourself.

OTTO. It's exactly a hundred and twenty-seven years ago today.

GILDA. A hundred and twenty-eight.

OTTO. We've grown up since then.

GILDA. I do hope so, just a little.

OTTO. I went away on a freight boat, you know. I went for thousands of miles and I was very unhappy indeed.

GILDA. And very sea-sick, I should think.

OTTO. Only the first few days.

GILDA. Not steadily?

OTTO. As steadily as one can be sea-sick.

GILDA. Do you know a lot about ships now?

OTTO. Not a thing. The whole business still puzzles me dreadfully. I know about starboard and port, of course, and all the different bells; but no one has

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yet been able to explain to me satisfactorily why, the first moment a rough sea occurs, the whole thing doesn't turn upside down!

GILDA. Were you frightened?

OTTO. Petrified, but I got used to it.

GILDA. Was it an English ship?

OTTO. No, Norwegian. I can say, 'How do you do?' in Norwegian.

GILDA. We must get to know some Norwegian people immediately, so that you can say 'How do you do?' to them.—Where are your pictures?

OTTO. Not unpacked yet. They're at the Carlton.

GILDA. The Carlton! You haven't gone 'grand' on me, too, have you?

OTTO. I have, indeed. I've got several commissions to do portraits here in London. The very best people. I only paint the very best people.

GILDA. [*almost snappily*] They have such interesting faces, haven't they?

OTTO. [*reproachfully*] I don't paint their faces, Gilda. Fourth dimensional, that's what I am. I paint their souls.

GILDA. You'd have to be eight dimensional and clairvoyant to find them.

OTTO. I'm grieved to see that Leo has done little or nothing towards taming your proud revolutionary spirit.

GILDA. He's inflamed it.

OTTO. I know what's wrong with you, my sweet. You're just the concentrated essence of 'Love Among the Artists'.

GILDA. I think that was unkind.

OTTO. If you were creative yourself you'd understand better. As it is, you know a lot. You know an awful lot. Your critical faculty is first-rate. I'd rather

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have your opinion on paintings or books or plays than anyone else's I know. But you're liable to get side-tracked if you're not careful. Life is for living first and foremost. Even for artists, life is for living. Remember that.

GILDA. You have grown up, haven't you?

OTTO. In the beginning, when we were all in Paris, everything was really much easier to manage, even our emotional problems. Leo and I were both struggling, a single line was in both our minds leading to success—that's what we were planning for, working like dogs for! You helped us both, jostling us on to the line again when we slipped off, and warming us when we were cold in discouragement. You picked on me to love a little bit more, because you decided, rightly then, that I was the weaker. They were very happy, those days, and glamour will always cling to them in our memories. But don't be misled by them; don't make the mistake of trying to recapture the spirit of them. That's dead, along with our early loves and dreams and quarrels, and all the rest of the foolishness.

GILDA. I think I want to cry again.

OTTO. There's nothing like a good cry.

GILDA. You can't blame me for hating success, when it changes all the—the things I love best.

OTTO. Things would have changed, anyhow. It isn't only success that does it—it's time and experience and new circumstances.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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?

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?

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LEO. Yes, I suppose so, now.

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

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.

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

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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.