

Cast: 1 Male?

Characters:

Joyce – 50s/60s
Maggie – 50s/60s
Jane – 30s/40s
Louise – 30s/40s
Lucy – 20s/30s
Sarah – Teens

Alistair – 40s
Charlie – 30s

Scene One – Page 2 – 18
Scene Two – Page 18 – 22
Scene Three – Page 22 - 25
Scene Four – Page 25 - 27
Scene Five – Page 27 - 31
Scene Six -Page 31 - 34
Scene Seven - Page 35 - 36
Scene Eight – Page 37 - 41
Scene Nine – Page 42 – 44

Set

The play takes place in the backstage area of the Female Amateur Theatre Society (F.A.T.S). The room has three exit points. There are double doors stage right that lead to the stage and the exterior of the building. Beside this door there is a light switch on the upstage side. There is a door up stage left that leads out to the bathroom and there is a door frame and hatch in the wall stage left that both lead into a kitchen area through which you can see light. There are theatre posters all over the wall for previous productions (“Snow White and the Seven Dwarfettes”, “Daisy Pulls it Off”, “The Vagina Monologues” ect.) and in the middle of the back wall is a sign that says ‘Welcome to F.A.T.S’ There is a table centre stage and two stacks of chairs against the back wall.

Scene One

(Music and House lights come up slightly revealing a bare stage still in gloom, after a few moments the jingling of keys is heard and Joyce enters stage left. She is a woman in her 50s/60s but dressed respectably and carrying a bag with the F.A.T.S emblem on the side. She reaches round and switches on the lights before moving into the room. She puts her bag on the table and proceeds over into the kitchen area. After a moment a light comes on there and she proceeds to hum as you hear the sound of cups being taken out. There is a moment of this before the stage right door opens again and Maggie walks in. She is a woman also in her 50s/60s but she is wearing a baggy woolly jumper with some overall trousers on her bottom half and wellies on. She carries with her a plastic box, which she promptly walks over and puts on the table.)

Maggie: *(calling into the kitchen)* That you Joyce?

Joyce: Well given its only you and me with keys Maggie who else is it likely to be?

Maggie: *(moving to start to take the chairs down)* I don't know do I? Could be some mad axe murderer who's broken in.

Joyce: They tend to prefer places with people in them to murder.

Maggie: Aye, I suppose so.

Joyce: That... *(Joyce emerges from the kitchen with a tray of cups, one containing teaspoons)* and they don't tend to be big hummers of show tunes the murderers.

Maggie: Well you could be...

Joyce: *(putting the tray down)* I think we've established that it's me now don't you?

Maggie: *(Putting a chair down before sitting on it breathing a little heavily)* I suppose so.

Joyce: You sure you should be doing that? What about your knee?

Maggie: Oh don't be daft! I've been up on the farm all day with my knee I dare say I can move a chair or two.

Joyce: *(Apprehensively)* Well the doctor said...

Maggie: Joyce Longcross, how long have I known you now?

Joyce: *(Thinking)* Oh, hmmm must be over 40 years now.

Maggie: And how long have you known that I do not, nor will I ever pay the slightest bit of attention to what the bloody doctor says?

Joyce: *(Smiling)* About 39 years.

Maggie: Well then *(She taps the plastic box)* Charlie made some of his coffee and walnut sponge.

Joyce: Oh bless him, he didn't have to do that. I brought biscuits.

Maggie: I did tell him, but I suppose he thinks as the only male member of an all female organisation if he keeps us plied with cake we won't notice he's a man and throw him out.

Joyce: *(Taking up the plastic box)* Oh we'd never get rid of your Charlie, he's a life saver with all his technical knowledge, I wouldn't have a clue.

Maggie: Nor me.

Joyce: *(Walking over into the kitchen)* Where is he then? Not like him to miss a meeting.

Maggie: He's popped to the shop for some milk, wasn't sure who was meant to be bringing it.

Joyce: *(From the kitchen)* I think it's Jane's turn this time, she said she wrote it down.

Maggie: Well good job he did then, with how scatty Jane can be.

Joyce: *(Still in the kitchen)* Oh it's not her fault, poor love, dealing with all the divorce stuff and Sarah of course. *(Pause)* She...said she might bring Sarah along.

Maggie: You are joking!

Joyce: Well we're always needing new people.

Maggie: Joyce we are looking for polite nice people who would relish performing on our stage. Not someone from Kilington's most wanted list.

Joyce: *(Emerging from the kitchen with the cake on a plate, sliced)* Oh she's not that bad.

Maggie: Mmmmm if you say so, all I'm saying is one bit of lip and she's out. *(Pause)* So who else is coming?

Joyce: Lucy I think.

Maggie: See now there is a lovely girl, quiet and always happy to help. I suppose she's got more free time on her hands now.

Joyce: Maggie!

Maggie: Well I'm sorry Joyce but the poor girl does have the most terrible luck with men.

Joyce: I know.

Maggie: What was it this time?

Joyce: I don't know all the details but I saw him getting into a taxi with some very posh looking thing and he's not been seen since.

Maggie: Bastard!

Joyce: Maggie I have told you before I do not like that kind of language.

Maggie: And I have told you that sometimes the occasion calls for a rude word, especially when your boyfriend has run off with some short skirt wearing little...

(The stage right door opens and Lucy walks in. She is in her 20s/30s and wearing a pair of jeans and a polo neck jumper and glasses. She carries a large handbag.)

Lucy: Hi Joyce, hi Maggie.

Joyce & Maggie: Hi

Lucy: Sorry if I'm late.

Joyce: Oh you're not at all. Why don't you grab a chair? We've a few more to come yet.

(Lucy smiles sheepishly and walks over to the chairs. As she starts to try and lift it the door opens and Charlie walks in. He is a man in his 30s, dressed in overalls on the bottom half and a baggy jumper and wellies. He is carrying a small carton of milk and a folder. He immediately puts them down on the table and darts over to Lucy when he sees her.)

Charlie: *(Lifting the chair for her)* Let me help you with that.

Lucy: Oh I don't want to be a bother.

Maggie: Oh don't be daft love, it's what Charlie is there for. He does most of my heavy lifting these days.

Charlie: *(Carrying the chair over to the table)* There you go.

Lucy: Thank you.

(Lucy sits down and Charlie looks at her for a moment before going to get himself a chair and sitting down away from the table.)

Lucy: So is this all of us?

Joyce: No there's a few more coming.

(From off stage right Jane and Sarah's voices are heard arguing.)

Sarah: Why do I have to be here?

Jane: Because it's good for you to get out of the house!

Sarah: But I don't want to!!

Maggie: And here they are now.

Jane: They are very nice people and you will enjoy it!

Sarah: Whatever!

(The stage right door opens and Sarah storms in. She is a girl in her teens wearing dark clothes and gothic style make up. Jane walks in behind her. She is a woman in her 40s wearing a pair of leggings and a top but her hair is a little chaotic and she only carries a phone and keys.)

Jane: Hello everyone, sorry we're late.

Sarah: *(In disgust)* Is this it?

Maggie: *(Standing)* You got a problem with that little lady?

(Sarah and Maggie stand staring at each other for a moment before Sarah shrugs and walks over and takes a chair down and putting her chair down away from the table. Jane sighs wearily and takes her own chair and sits down next to Lucy.)

Joyce: Well...now that we're here I have a couple of bits and pieces to go over.

Maggie: No tea or coffee?

Joyce: I'm just waiting for the kettles to boil so we'll proceed for now if that's alright?

Maggie: So long as I know I'm getting tea at some point. Can't be surviving a meeting without tea.

Joyce: Right, well I want to thank you all as well as the rest of the cast who took part in 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfettes'. I think we can all agree that it was a great success with the audiences. *(Lucy raises her hand)* I've told you Lucy you don't have to put your hand up.

Lucy: I...just wanted to know how well we sold.

Joyce: Across the three nights we sold an average of 75%.

Lucy: Well that's good.

Joyce: Yes but it is slightly down on the previous show.

Sarah: (*Muttering*) Hardly surprising.

Jane: Shhhh!

Joyce: And in light of our reduced ticket sales I would like to propose our new production be something a little different...

Maggie: Nudity...

Joyce: No.

Maggie: Swearing...

Joyce: No.

Maggie: Liberal politics.

Joyce: No!

Sarah: Well you lot are such fun!

Joyce: Can I finish please?! (*Silence*) I have written a piece for our next production on The Six Wives of Henry the 8th. (*Silence*) Well?

Jane: Well we all know you are a dab hand with the writing Joyce but it's hardly a revolutionary piece.

Joyce: It will be for us.

Sarah: Oh yea, how?

Joyce: Because for the first time in this society's history, we will have a man on stage.

(*Lucy, Maggie, Jane and Charlie look up shocked.*)

Maggie: What?

Joyce: We will...be having a man join us to play Henry the 8th.

Maggie: Have you gone completely mad?!

Joyce: Now Maggie don't start.

Maggie: The reason F.A.T.S exists to start with is because of all the hassle we had with involving men in theatre to start with....they cannot be trusted.

Jane: Now...I fear that's a bit strong.

Maggie: (*Turning to Jane*) Do you not remember how it was? The egos and the plays of 6 men and 2 women? We were just there to make the tea!

Joyce: Well this won't be like that.

Maggie: Oh don't tell me, the great Joyce Longcross has found a way to reign in the male ego.

Joyce: Well no...

Maggie: Well then what is to stop these men...

Joyce: Man.

Maggie: What?

Joyce: Man, there will only be one gentleman...

Maggie: (*Snorting*) Gentleman, that'll be the day.

Joyce: There will only be one man here, to play the part of Henry. (*glancing at Charlie*) Apart from Charlie of course.

Sarah: Here, hang on a minute! How come the techy nerd man gets to be here?

Jane: Sarah Shhhh!

Joyce: No its an entirely valid point Jane. (*To Sarah*) You see Sarah, when we first separated from the other drama group.

Maggie: And their dictatorship!

Joyce: We weren't really sure on the technical side of things, oh we'd all been on stage, done costumes and all the other bits and pieces but when it came to lights and sound...

Maggie: We didn't have a clue what we were doing.

Joyce: So Maggie then recruited Charlie here to help us out.

Maggie: (*Laughing*) Conscripted more like.

Joyce: And he's stood as our only male member since then.

Sarah: (*Sniggering*) Sometimes you do need a male member.

Joyce: Yes, we often find we do.

(*Sarah bursts out laughing.*)

Joyce: Did I say something funny?

Jane: No, not at all Joyce. Sarah just has a rather...odd sense of humour.

Joyce: Well, anyway that's that covered.

Maggie: Erm no, it's not covered. Who is he, this man?

Joyce: Well he's new to the area.

Maggie: An outsider!

Joyce: Well given our reputation of all female productions I could hardly ask a local could I?

Maggie: Suppose not.

Joyce: Anyway, he trained at R.A.D.A, isn't that exciting?

Sarah: They make showers don't they?

Joyce: What?

Sarah: Rada, my dad had one put in at his new flat.

Jane: Oh did he now?

Sarah: Don't start mum.

Jane: (*Frostily*) I'm not starting anything.

Joyce: (*Interrupting*) To continue, he seemed very keen and he's coming along tonight so you'll all see how perfect he'll be for the part.

Maggie: So where is he then? Not a good sign if he's late on the first night.

Joyce: I asked him to come along a bit later so I could...

Maggie: Ambush us with this news.

Joyce: No, it was so I could discuss it with you and explain what a good thing it will be for this next production and then sort out your parts to ensure everyone is happy.

Maggie: Mmmm a likely story.

Joyce: Look, I know this is new for us, but we need to do something a little different if we want to hang onto our audiences.

Maggie: I don't know...

Sarah: Times are changing Maggie, men deserve equal opportunities too.

Maggie: Don't get smart with me madam. (*Looking back at Joyce, sighing*) Alright fine.

Joyce: Great! (*Turning to Jane and Sarah*) What do you think?

Sarah: (*Shrugging*) Yea sure why not, can't make things any worse.

Maggie: Don't speak too soon.

Joyce: Jane?

Jane: I suppose...it couldn't hurt...if it's just one.

Joyce: Lovely (*Turning to Lucy*) Lucy?

Lucy: Oh...well...if everyone else is happy then...I guess...that's fine.

Joyce: Marvellous! (*Taking a clipboard out of her bag*) Now, parts. As you know, Henry had six wives.

Sarah: (*Sarcastically*) No! I'd no idea.

Jane: Sarah Shhhh!

Joyce: Well, the play will only require the wives and Henry himself so that leaves six parts available.

Maggie: Well that's not going to work, there's only five of us. (*Glancing at Charlie*) Unless you plan on sticking a skirt on.

(*Charlie glances up from where he has been writing on a notepad all this time, looks at Maggie for a moment and then goes back to writing.*)

Joyce: Yes well, I thought I would take the role of Catherine of Aragon. She's only in the first two scenes so it means I can direct the rest of the play. (*Pause*) Any objections?

Maggie: We all know better than to object to you Joyce.

Joyce: Lovely (*Joyce scribbles on her paper before looking up at them again*) Now, Anne of Cleaves is a very...complicated part because obviously she was...

Sarah: Divorced because she was a minger!

Joyce: Well it's true that Henry wasn't physically attracted to Anne but they remained friends after their marriage was dissolved so...in a way it wasn't quite the disgrace some people think it was and I (*looking around at the group*) thought in that case...

Maggie: (*Raising her hand*) I'll do it.

Joyce: (*Sighing in relief*) Oh thank god! (*Quickly*) I mean if you're sure Maggie?

Maggie: Not a problem. (*Laughing*) I've got one of those "non-conventional" faces.

(*Sarah sniggers and Jane glares at her.*)

Joyce: (*Writing on her paper*) Yes well that's that sorted. (*Looking up at the group*) Now, Jane Seymour, recorded as Henry's great love and who's loss was his greatest heartache. Lucy, I thought you would be perfect for this.

(*Charlie looks up from his pad.*)

Lucy: Me?

Joyce: Yes, you performed so beautifully as our Snow White.

Lucy: Well I...

Joyce: It's not a great deal to learn.

Lucy: Oh I don't mind that.

Joyce: But of course, you will be Henry's great love.

Lucy: Oh!

Joyce: And I know how you feel about...newcomers...so I had a thought.

Lucy: Yes?

Joyce: While we're rehearsing and you are getting used to him being here, I thought you could practise not looking at him.

Sarah: You what?!

Joyce: And then by show time you will be comfortable enough to perform the...romantic scenes.

Sarah: That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard!

Jane: Sarah will you shush?!

Joyce: What do you think of that Lucy?

Lucy: Well...I...has he been asked about this?

Joyce: It's not up to him, I'll run my rehearsals how I want.

Maggie: We'll see.

Joyce: So what do you think? You know you'd be perfect.

Lucy: *(Smiling)* Oh I don't...

Maggie: Go on girl!

Jane: You were very good as Snow White.

Lucy: Oh well...alright.

Joyce: Brilliant!

Sarah: Yea it will be a new form of staging, when Henry and Jane can't look at each other.

Jane: Sarah...

Joyce: *(Writing on her paper)* And with that sorted that leads me to. *(Looks at Sarah)* you.

Sarah: Me! I'm not getting involved in this lunacy.

Jane: *(Warning tone)* Sarah...

Sarah: No! You said I had to leave the house. You never at any point said I had to get involved in anything.

Joyce: Even if you've got the best of the wives?

Sarah: Even if...which wife?

Joyce: Catherine Howard.

Sarah: She was executed, wasn't she?

Joyce: Yes, but that's because she dared to defy the rules of being married to the king and even on her execution day she still defied him by saying she would rather be the wife of her lover than of a king.

Maggie: Lover?! That's a bit strong for you Joyce.

Joyce: *(still talking to Sarah)* She was a vivacious young woman and she was determined that even being married to a king was not going to stop her from being with the man she loved.

Sarah: Well...

Joyce: She humiliated him and having her executed was the only way he could level the playing field, that's how much of an impact she had.

Sarah: Really?

Joyce: Oh yes, so what do you think?

Sarah: I.... suppose I could do it.

Joyce: *(Cheerfully)* Wonderful! *(Scribbles on her clipboard before looking up at Jane)* Now Jane, how do you feel about Catherine Parr? She was Henry's last wife and therefore outlived him.

Jane: Oh you know me Joyce, I'll happily take survival.

Joyce: *(Excited)* Oh marvellous!

Maggie: Not to rain on your parade but we are still one short. We still need someone to play Anne Boleyn.

Joyce: Well I had an expression of interest, but she said (*glances at her watch*) she may be a bit late.

Maggie: Who'd be happy to play that evil woman?

Joyce: Well...

(Louise's voice is heard out in the corridor.)

Louise: Yea I know babe.

Maggie: You're kidding!

Joyce: She's always very keen.

Maggie: She's a floozy.

Joyce: We don't judge Maggie, is that not what we said when we started F.A.T.S?

Maggie: Yea but...

Joyce: And we need an Anne.

Maggie: (*Sighing frustrated*) Fine!

Louise: (*Still in the corridor*) I'll have to go babe I'm here, I'll see you later. Love you. (*kissing sound*)

(Louise enters from the stage right door. She is a woman in her 30s/40s but is dressed far too young for her age with an elaborate hair style and heavy make-up. She carries a large handbag in a bright colour. She walks over and slams her handbag on the table.)

Louise: No one get me a chair?!

Maggie: I wasn't aware your legs were broken.

Louise: I can't lift them. (*Showing Maggie her newly painted nails*) I've just had my nails done.

Maggie: So that's why your late.

Louise: I did tell Joyce I had an appointment, didn't I Joyce?

Joyce: Yes, yes you did Louise.

(Louise stands there for a few moments impatiently tapping her foot.)

Louise: Well?!

Maggie: Well, what?

Louise: I need a chair.

Maggie: (*Indicating*) They are over there.

Louise: (*Snatching up her bag*) Right that's it, I don't need this!

Maggie: (*Sarcastically*) Oh no, don't go please!

Joyce: I'll get you a chair down Louise.

Maggie: You'll do no such thing!

Joyce: (*Meaningfully at Maggie*) We still need an Anne.

Maggie: (*Sighing*) Fine! Charlie would you grab.... madam here a chair?

(*Without saying anything Charlie gets up and takes down a chair and putting it in a space by the table.*)

Louise: Ta Charlie (*looking at Maggie*) Nice that someone has some manners.

Joyce: (*Quickly going on with nervous laughter*) Yes well...as I said to you on the phone Louise we are going to be performing a production of *The Wives of Henry the 8th*.

Louise: And there is going to be a man playing Henry?

Joyce: Yes that's right.

Maggie: I should have known.

Louise: Something to say?

Maggie: Nothing, you just always seem to get keener when men are involved.

Louise: Can I help it if Joyce things I'm perfect for the part?

Maggie: (*Muttering*) More parts of her than others.

Louise: (*Turning to her*) You what?

Maggie: Nothing.

Joyce: Anyway Louise, I'd like you to play Anne Boelyn...please.

Louise: She's the one who died isn't she?

Joyce: Well three of them died Louise.

Louise: But she had her head cut off didn't she?

Joyce: That's right.

Louise: But I don't want to be killed. Who was that nice one...the one Henry loved who died?

Joyce: That would be Jane Seymour.

Louise: I'll play her then.

Joyce: I'm afraid all the other parts have been distributed.

Louise: (*Standing and looking at the group*) So who's Jane then? (*Lucy slowly raises her hand*) Oh Lucy won't mind swapping will you Lucy?

Lucy: Oh well I...

Joyce: (*Firmly*) Louise I have made the decision about casting.

(*Louise slowly turns her attention on Joyce.*)

Louise: Oh is that right?

Joyce: *(Slightly nervous)* Y...yes.

Maggie: I told you Joyce, she's no good for Anne Boelyn. She's not got what it takes.

Louise: *(Turning on Maggie)* How dare you!? Everyone talking about how amazing my wicked queen was.

Maggie: Yea but there's a difference between pantomime and something as serious as this and with this bloke being trained at R.A.D.A...

Louise: *(Looking at Joyce)* He's from R.A.D.A?

Joyce: That's right.

Louise: Well...I should hate to let the rest of the group and our newcomer from R.A.D.A down. *(She smiles at Joyce)* I'll play your Anne.

Joyce: Thank you Louise, it's much appreciated. *(Scribbles on her paper)* Well then our next F.A.T.S production...

Louise: Do we have to call it that?

Joyce: What?

Louise: F.A.T.S, I mean it's so...yuck!

Joyce: Well the members of the group did vote at the first meeting of the organisation.

Louise: Well where was I when that happened?

Maggie: Probably doing something very important, like having something painted, filed or waxed.

(Louise turns and gives Maggie an evil look.)

Louise: What I am saying is...that may have been the decision at the time, but times have changed. Is F.A.T.S really the kind of image we want to be sending to our audience?

Maggie: Our audiences have been coming along just fine with the name as it is.

Joyce: Did you have an alternative suggestion Louise?

Louise: Well, what about instead of Female we just said Women?

Maggie: W.A.T.S, sounds like part of the plumbing. Oh, the wats blocked again I'll have to get a plumber in.

(Sarah sniggers and Louise shoots her a dirty look.)

Joyce: Well we should vote in the interest of fair play. All those in favour of changing the name *(Louise raises her hand enthusiastically but no one else moves)* All opposed *(Everyone else raises their hand and Louise drops hers)* The opposed have it.

Louise: *(Sulking)* Fine.

Joyce: As I was saying, the F.A.T.S *(Louise sighs loudly)* production is now fully cast.

Maggie: Aren't we missing someone?

Joyce: Pardon?

Maggie: Well we're currently a Henry down.

Joyce: *(Laughing)* Oh yes of course, *(glancing at her watch)* well he should be here by now.

Louise: There was no one in the car park when I arrived.

Maggie: *(Getting up and walking over into the kitchen)* Well this is a fine start, late for the first meeting.

Joyce: He is new to the area so he may have gotten lost.

Maggie: *(From kitchen)* Or he can't be bothered.

Joyce: Maggie he's not like that.

Maggie: *(coming out of the kitchen with a tray of cups)* Oh so you have met him then?

Joyce: Of course, he was having a drink in the pub and we got talking about theatre. He seemed very keen to join us.

Maggie: *(Carrying the tray to the table)* They all seem keen at first.

Joyce: *(slightly stern)* Maggie I wouldn't have invited him here if I thought...

(Alistair's loud voice is heard off stage right.)

Alistair: I don't care, you are my agent. You work for me!

Joyce: That will be him now.

Maggie: Sounds delightful.

(Alistair enters the room; he is a man in his 40s dressed in a white shirt and black smart trousers and shoes. He has his hair delicately styled and wears a long coat. He is carrying a phone which is plugged into a handsfree headset. He enters the room still talking very loudly on the phone.)

Alistair: Ginny I do not care what he said or what I signed, that dressing room was an absolute joke and I am not setting foot on set with that man again until the rectify the situation.

Joyce: *(Moving towards him)* Alistair, so nice of you to...

Alistair: *(Holding his hand up in front of Joyce's face to silence her)* What was that? No...no...I have told you all of this before...I do not give a toss what he's threatened the man is entirely incompetent with no idea of vision... *(Pauses listening before scoffing)* Oh well anyone can win a Bafta these days.

Maggie: *(Moving over to stand by Joyce)* Do you mind? we are trying....

Alistair: *(Sticking his finger in the ear the headphone isn't in and walking away from them)* Say that again Ginny the signal is dire here. *(Pause)* Well obviously I didn't did I and quite frankly I very much doubt you sent it to them or I'd have heard by now *(Pause, angrily)* Oh so I'm an idiot am I?!

Maggie: *(Muttering)* Well if the shoe fits.

Joyce: Shhhh!

Alistair: Ginny I warned you when I graciously gave you this job that I would not tolerate incompetence. If you can't do your job then I will find someone else who can! *(Hangs up the phone and disconnects the earpiece before turning to look at Maggie and Joyce and smiling)* Sorry about all that, show business you know how it is.

Maggie: *(Disapproving)* No.

Alistair: Oh...no I suppose you wouldn't. *(Moving to Joyce and shaking her hand)* Joyce so lovely to see you again.

Joyce: I'm...glad you could make it Mr Langston.

Alistair: Oh please Joyce, call me Alistair, after all we are one big family in the theatre aren't we?

Sarah: Fairly dysfunctional family if you ask me.

Alistair: (*Peering round Joyce at Sarah*) What?

Joyce: (*Quickly regaining his attention*) I do hope nothing was wrong?

Alistair: Oh no, just my idiotic agent failing to do the simplest of things despite being told a thousand times. I mean I told my sister when I hired her.

Maggie: (*Shocked*) That was your niece on the phone?

Alistair: Yes, more fool me. I used to say never work with relatives but I let her talk me into it and now its all gone to hell.

Joyce: Yes...well I suspect their loss is our gain.

Alistair: (*Smiling*) Quite right Joyce and I know you are all thrilled to have me here.

Maggie: (*Muttering walking away from him*) Not the word I'd use.

Joyce: Yes...well why don't I introduce you to everyone.

Alistair: Ah yes, my supporting cast.

Joyce: I prefer to think of everyone as co-stars.

Alistair: (*Laughing*) Alright Joyce, if you say so.

Joyce: Well...I will be playing Catherine of Aragon.

Alistair: A director treading the boards.... I'm not sure I approve.

Joyce: Well its only a small role and we found ourselves short.

Alistair: I suppose that's alright.

(*Alistair moves over to the table and Louise gets to her feet quickly taking his hand.*)

Louise: (*Smiling in a flirty manner*) I'm Louise, your Anne Boleyn.

Maggie: (*Muttering*) Oh brother!

Alistair: (*Kissing her hand*) A pleasure my dear Anne.

Louise: (*Confused*) No I'm Louise.

Alistair: It's a little habit of mine my dear. I refer to my...co-stars by their character name. It helps me to picture them in the role. (*Smiling flirting*) Not that I need much help here.

Louise: How do you mean?

Alistair: Why you embody the seductive beauty of Anne herself my dear.

(*Louise giggles girlishly as she turns and sits down again.*)

Joyce: Well...we also have Jane (*she indicates Jane who stands*) who is playing Catherine Parr.

Alistair: (*Pushing past Joyce and taking Jane's hand*) Ah yes, the caregiver, you suit it well dear lady.

Jane: (*Embarrassed*) Oh well I...thank you.

(*Alistair goes to kiss Jane's hand but she turns and moves aside indicating Sarah.*)

Jane: This is my daughter Sarah.

Sarah: (*Looking up at him not standing*) Alright.

Alistair: I see...and you are?

Sarah: Sarah, she just said.

Alistair: No I mean...

Joyce: Sarah is playing our Katherine Howard.

Alistair: (*Looking at Joyce*) Really? (*Looking back at Sarah looking her up and down before turning back to Joyce*) Well you are the director.

Sarah: (*Defensively*) What's that supposed to mean?

Alistair: Nothing, nothing at all.

Sarah: (*Getting up*) No you...

(*Joyce quickly ushers Alistair past Sarah while Jane talks to her in whispers before Sarah sits down in again in a sulk.*)

Joyce: And this here is Lucy, she's...

Alistair: As if I needed telling. (*He moves to Lucy*) The innocent beauty of Jane Seymore.

(*As Alistair gets within a few steps Lucy gets to her feet.*)

Lucy: I should...see to the tea.

(*Lucy turns and runs into the kitchen.*)

Alistair: How odd?

Joyce: Lucy is a little shy.

Alistair: I see.

Maggie: I'm surprised its not a pattern you're used to.

Alistair: (*Looking over at Maggie*) What?

Maggie: Women running from the room when you approach.

(*Charlie sniggers and Alistair shoots him a dirty look.*)

Alistair: (*To Charlie*) I don't think we've been introduced.

Joyce: Oh this is Charlie, he is the genius behind our lighting and sound.

Alistair: I've always found 'techies' to be a prickly sort. I trust you're not like that.

Charlie: *(Fixing his stare)* Not at all.

(A moment of tense silence before Maggie walks over behind the back of Charlie's chair and reaches out her hand to Alistair.)

Maggie: I'm Maggie, Anne of Cleaves.

Alistair: *(Startled)* Oh *(Taking her hand and shaking it)* Yes of course.

Maggie: Problem?

Alistair: No, not at all.

Joyce: *(Moving back to her place and taking out a pile of papers)* Well now that that's all sorted perhaps you could all take a script and we could start with just a readthrough.

Alistair: *(Glancing at his watch)* Actually Joyce, I've got to be somewhere do you mind if we do this another time?

Maggie: *(Tensely)* This is the rehearsal time.

Alistair: Of course I wouldn't normally, I just have someone visiting me from London and I completely forgot. *(Looking at Joyce with a smile)* You don't mind do you. Just this once?

Joyce: Well I suppose...

Alistair: Great! I really owe you one!

(Alistair turns for the door.)

Joyce: *(Calling)* Alistair! *(He turns and looks at her as she takes up a pile of papers)* Your script and rehearsal schedule.

Alistair: *(Laughing)* Oh yes of course! *(Walking over and taking them from her)* Sorry what an idiot. *(Turning back for the door)* Right see you.

(Alistair leaves.)

Jane: Well...

Maggie: Yes...

Sarah: What a...

Joyce: Right, well then I suppose we'll continue without Alistair. You're alright to read in aren't you Charlie?

Louise: Actually Joyce, if we're not going to have Henry here can't we call it early?

Joyce: Well I...

Jane: We can start fresh and ready for the next rehearsal.

Joyce: I suppose so.

Sarah: *(Leaping to her feet)* Great! *(Jane shoots her a look)* I mean, yep we'll be ready for the next one.

Joyce: *(Handing out the papers)* Well if you all take your scripts and schedules I will see you all on Wednesday.

Louise: *(Snatching her papers)* Great, see you then!

(Louise exits)

Jane: *(Taking papers for her and Sarah)* We'll be sure to be on time Joyce.

Joyce: I appreciate that.

(Jane and Sarah exit.)

Joyce: *(To Maggie)* I should get this cleared away.

Maggie: You scoot off, you set out, I'll lock up.

Joyce: Well if you're sure.

Maggie: Positive, go on.

Joyce: Well I'll leave the other documents with you.

Maggie: I'll make sure they're all distributed.

Joyce: Thank you *(taking up her things, looking around a little deflated)* Well I'll see you Wednesday.

(Joyce walks over to the door.)

Charlie: Joyce! *(Joyce turns to him as he walks over and offers her his folder)* Could you look this over? It's all the sound cues and lighting plot.

Joyce: You've written them up already?

Charlie: Well, I wanted to make sure everything went....smoothly.

Joyce: *(Taking the folder)* Oh Charlie you are brilliant! I will give it a look over and we'll chat Wednesday?

Charlie: *(Nodding)* Perfect.

(Joyce turns and leaves the room. Charlie turns back towards the table as Lucy emerges with the kettle and looks around a little startled.)

Lucy: Everyone gone?

Maggie: We.... Alistair had to be somewhere so Joyce ended early *(Maggie hands her the papers and takes the kettle)* You get off home, we'll clear up here.

Lucy: I don't mind...

Maggie: I know you don't but we're fine, go on.

(Lucy takes her papers and walks over and gathers her things. Maggie turns and takes the kettle back into the kitchen.)

Lucy: *(Calling)* I'll see you Wednesday then?

Maggie: Aye, see you then.

Lucy: *(Turning to Charlie)* I suppose you'll be there Wednesday?

Charlie: *(Enthusiastically)* Oh yes! *(Corrects himself)* I mean just to make sure Joyce is happy with the lights and sound and... *(Looks up into her eyes)* everything.

Lucy: Well I'll see you then.

(Lucy turns and walks over and out of the room.)

Charlie: Yea...see ya.

(Maggie comes back out of the kitchen and starts to stack the cups on the tray not looking at Charlie.)

Maggie: So what do you make of that then?

Charlie: *(Smiling still looking where Lucy went out)* Perfect.

(Maggie looks up and notices the direction he's looking in before walking over and standing right behind him.)

Maggie: Really? Because if you ask me I thought he was a complete arse!

(Charlie turns, startled.)

Charlie: What? Oh yea, you're right. Total idiot.

Maggie: *(Shaking her head and laughing)* Come on, get the chairs stacked so we can get home.

Charlie: *(Starting to stack the chairs)* So, you reckon its going to go ok?

Maggie: Put it this way, if our King Henry isn't careful then heads are going to roll!

(Lights Fade)

End of Scene One

Scene Two

(The lights come back up, it is now Wednesday. The table has been moved stage right. Maggie is stood stage right with Sarah up on a stool while she delicately pins material to her. Louise and Jane are sat in chairs stage right below the kitchen doorway. Lucy and Charlie have just emerged from the kitchen with a tray of tea things.)

Lucy: *(Placing the tray on the table)* Tea's ready.

Sarah: Finally.

Maggie: *(Standing and placing her hand on her shoulder)* Not you, this fabric isn't fixed yet.

Sarah: Oh come on Maggie, I'm gasping.

Maggie: *(Sighing)* Charlie can you get Sarah a.... *(she looks up at Sarah expectantly)*

Sarah: White tea, three sugars.

Charlie: *(Preparing the drink)* No problem.

Maggie: You want to be careful with all that sugar.

Jane: I've tried telling her that.

Sarah: *(Turning to her mother)* Oh don't start.

Maggie: Will you stay still?!

Louise: Can we start now?!

Maggie: It's a little difficult to start without a Henry.

Louise: Oh...yea...

(Joyce enters holding her mobile in one hand.)

Joyce: Well I can't reach him.

Maggie: *(Muttering)* Very professional.

Louise: Can we not just start now Joyce?

Joyce: Yes well I suppose... *(More authoritative)* Yes we will. Charlie?

Charlie: *(Looking at her)* Yes?

Joyce: You don't mind reading in do you?

Charlie: Oh well I... *(Joyce smiles at him in a pleading way)* Yea sure.

Joyce: Good! Then we'll get started on Henry's scene with Jane Seymour. Lucy, if you and Charlie could just take positions here *(indicates)*.

Lucy: Oh, yes that's fine.

(Charlie and Lucy gather up their scripts and move to the correct position.)

Joyce: Now its page 42 I believe... *(flipping through the pages of her own script)* Yes. Now this bit is actually quote from a letter that Henry wrote to Jane but I want to stage it as though you are talking to her face to face. Building the intimacy... *(Sarah sniggers)* of the relationship through words. So Charlie if you stand here *(positions him facing Lucy half a metre from her)* and I just want you to read the words and react to them the way you feel is natural.

Charlie: I'll give it a go.

Joyce: Marvellous! *(Joyce moves and sits down)* Whenever your ready.

Charlie: Right *(He clears his throat and shuffles uncomfortably for a moment before looking at the script and speaks in a wooden voice)* My dear friend and mistress...

(Sarah sniggers.)

Joyce: Shhh!

Charlie: *(Still in the wooden voice)* The bearer of these few lines from thy entirely devoted servant will...

Joyce: One moment, Charlie do you think you can give it a little more emotion?

Charlie: It's not even my part!

Joyce: I know, I know and you are doing wonderfully but I just want to get a clear idea of how it will sound...if you don't mind.

Charlie: Alright, I'll try.

Joyce: Great!

(Charlie takes a deep breath and glances once at the page before looking into Lucy's eyes.)

Charlie: My dear friend and mistress, The bearer of these few lines from thy entirely devoted servant will deliver into thy fair hands (*he reaches out and takes Lucy's hands*) a token of my true affection for thee, (*He pulls Lucy towards him*) hoping you will keep it for ever in your sincere love for me.

Advertising you that there is a ballad made lately of great derision against us, which if it go much abroad and is seen by you, (*Charlie releases one of Lucy's hands and strokes the side of her face*) I pray you to pay no manner of regard to it.

For the things ye lacked I have minded my lord to supply them to you as soon as he can buy them. (*Charlie pulls Lucy into him before using his free hand to tilt her chin upwards*) Thus hoping shortly to receive you in these arms, (*Charlie leans in to kiss her*) I end for the present your own loving servant and sovereign...

Alistair: (*Off*) Of all the stupid places to park!

(*The group shocked turn to look towards the door as Alistair comes in.*)

Alistair: I mean surely you don't need to park right in the... (*Notices the group looking at him*) Something wrong?

Joyce: (*Getting up*) Well, you are a little late.

Maggie: Half an Hour.

Alistair: Oh I know, I text you this afternoon, emergency last min meeting.

Joyce: (*Looking at her phone*) Oh, well I don't seem to have...

Alistair: Don't get me started, I mean the mobile signal around here is just appalling.

Maggie: The rest of us seem to manage perfectly fine.

Alistair: Anyway (*removing his coat and dumping it on the nearest chair*) No harm done. (*To Charlie*) Don't suppose I can get a coffee?

Joyce: Actually...

Charlie: (*Downcast still looking at Lucy*) No, its fine. (*Moves over to the tray*)

Alistair: So, where are we?

Joyce: We were just going to work on your scene with Jane Seymor, page 42.

(*Charlie walks into the kitchen.*)

Alistair: Ah Marvellous!

Joyce: And although it's a letter I'd like...

Alistair: (*Moving to Lucy*) Yes, yes I think I get the idea.

Joyce: Oh right, well when you're ready.

(*Alistair moves into position and Lucy turns so her back is to him.*)

Alistair: My dear friend and mistress... (*Notices Lucy has her back to him*) Ahem! I think we should at least be looking at each other.

Joyce: Lucy is a little shy so we thought we'd start the scene like this and then change the blocking later.

Alistair: What rot! Whoever heard of an actress being shy?!

Louise: *(Standing)* I can take her place.

Joyce: *(Firmly)* No! *(correcting herself)* No, I believe this way will help build the scene, give it layers.

Alistair: *(Disbelieving)* If you're sure.

Joyce: So, from the beginning.

(Over the next speech Alistair proceeds to walk around behind Lucy standing in front of her. Each time she turns away from him but he still persists.)

Alistair: My dear friend and mistress, The bearer of these few lines from thy entirely devoted servant will deliver into thy fair hands a token of my true affection for thee, hoping you will keep it for ever in your sincere love for me.

Advertising you that there is a ballad made lately of great derision against us, which if it go much abroad and is seen by you, I pray you to pay no manner of regard to it.

For the things ye lacked I have minded my lord to supply them to you as soon as he can buy them.

(As Lucy goes to turn away again Alistair catches her hand)

Joyce: Alistair...

(Alistair keeps going taking both Lucy's hands and making her keep facing him.)

Alistair: Thus hoping shortly to receive you in these arms, I end for the present your own loving servant and sovereign *(He kisses Lucy on the cheek)* Henry. *(He lets go of Lucy's hands)* There, that wasn't so hard was it?

(Lucy looks at him for a few moments shocked before turning and running from the room.)

Jane: *(Getting up and going after her)* Lucy wait!

(Jane & Lucy exit.)

Alistair: Was it something I said?

Joyce: That wasn't what I asked for.

Alistair: But you will admit the scene worked.

Joyce: Well in a way...

Alistair: There you go, no harm no foul.

Maggie: No Harm! *(She walks over to Alistair squaring up to him)* You have got some nerve sunshine!

Alistair: If she wants to be an actress, she needs to be able to deal with these things.

Maggie: That's as maybe but it's not your job to make her.

Alistair: She'd never survive in the professional world.

Maggie: Well I've got news for you mate, we're not professionals. We're amateurs.

Alistair: Yes, that much was obvious.

Maggie: I beg your pardon?!

Joyce: (*Moving between them*) Right, why don't we take a break and then we'll move onto the next scene.

Maggie: (*Narrowing her eyes at Alistair*) I'll make sure Lucy is ok.

(*Maggie turns and storms from the room.*)

Alistair: Well really, some people!

(*Lights fade.*)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three

(*The lights come up, it is now a few days later. The whole group are sat around the table as Joyce (the only one standing) is pointing at some diagrams on the table.*)

Joyce: ...so for the change between Catherine of Aragon being cast out and Anne Boleyn transitioning in were going to have the lights change from the light blue to the deep red to show the change in nature of their relationship and then from there...(*Alistair lets out a sigh*) Is there a problem Alistair?

Alistair: Well no offence Joyce...

Maggie: (*Muttering*) Which no doubt means there will be plenty taken.

Alistair: But surely all the technical stuff can wait until later in the day. I mean we are actors so we should be up on our feet, going through the scenes and getting the essence of our characters and their relationships.

Sarah: Oh brother!

Alistair: And that is what will make the show will it not?

Joyce: Oh well...I suppose we could go through this another time... (*looking at Charlie*) You don't mind do you Charlie?

Alistair: Of course he doesn't (*to Charlie*) You have something to keep you occupied don't you?

Charlie: I...yea I could...

Alistair: That's settled it then.

Joyce: Well I suppose we could go through...

Alistair: (*Getting up*) Perfect!

Joyce: (*Taking up a piece of paper*) Right so its Henry and Anne of Cleaves today.

Alistair: Oh.

Maggie: Problem?

Alistair: I thought we'd work with Anne Boelyn today (*moving to Louise*) as we haven't really worked closely together.

Louise: (*Giggling*) Oh well I don't mind.

Joyce: (*Firmly*) The schedule is set for the scenes with Anne of Cleaves and that is what we are working on.

Alistair: *(Turning to Joyce)* But surely we...

Joyce: I have worked on the schedule very carefully.

Alistair: *(Stuffily)* Oh well yes, of course.

Maggie: *(Getting up)* Perfect.

(Alistair and Maggie move away from the table as the group move the table and chairs back and Joyce takes up her script flipping through it.)

Joyce: Oh so we are going from page...65.

Alistair: *(Puts down his script)* Right.

Joyce: You're...off script already?

Alistair: Of course, it's the only way to ensure we get that...professional polish.

Joyce: Yes...quite, well when you're ready.

(Maggie nods and opens her mouth to start speaking but Alistair instantly goes into an over the top ranting speech.)

Alistair: This vile and hideous thing before me! She shall never stand as my queen. She shall never taint the holy image of England's monarchy with her ugliness and...

Joyce: Alistair.

Alistair: I, as king would never have agreed to...

Joyce: *(More firmly)* Alistair!

Alistair: *(Sighing)* What is it Joyce?

Joyce: Well its just, that's not in the script so I was just wondering...

Alistair: Oh I know, I wrote it in.

Joyce: You did?

Alistair: Well...Henry did hate Anne, I mean come on. If you get a picture of a woman and she looks like a goddess and arrives and looks like *(he flaps his hand towards Maggie)* you are going to be angry, betrayed.

Joyce: While I do agree that there was some animosity from Henry, as is in the scene. He does warm towards her through her diplomatic response to their annulment, something he had not really seen with his wives thus far. Some would say she changed him in a small way.

Alistair: *(Scoffing)* Well I'm sorry Joyce but wherever you dug this script from the writing is just appalling.

Joyce: *(Bristling)* Actually, I wrote this script myself.

Maggie: And no one else has a problem with it.

Alistair: *(Shocked)* Really?! *(Looking around at the group for a moment before shrugging)* Fine! I shall disregard my speech.

Joyce: Thank you, so shall we go on?

Maggie: Right, (*looks over her page*) Pleaseth your most excellent majesty to understand that, though this case must needs be most hard and sorrowful unto me, for the great love which I bear to your most noble person...(*she look at Alistair*) noble person...

Joyce: Alistair...it's your line.

Alistair: Oh, no it's not. I took it out

Joyce: You took it out?

Alistair: It just doesn't fit with the way I see the character.

Maggie: You can't do that!

Alistair: Maggie, I know you may not see the vision of Henry as I do but...

Joyce: Alistair, I appreciate your input but removing that line means Maggie's makes no sense.

Maggie: I can't respond 'my lord your compliments of my person do me great flattery and while I cannot know you as a husband you are nevertheless a most kind, loving and friendly father and brother'.

Joyce: She can't say that if you don't provide the compliment to her.

Alistair: Well we could just take that line out as well.

Joyce: I would rather it stayed in. After all it provides a further dimension to their relationship.

Alistair: Look Joyce, I appreciate that you have gone to great lengths to explore the complex relationships but I'll be honest, the play drags...

Joyce: Oh.

Alistair: And surely you want to retain only the parts of the piece that bring intrigue and drama and have the audience on the edge of their seats (*glances at Maggie disdainfully*) rather than dedicating important stage time to those who are clearly don't put in the dedication.

Maggie: (*Angrily*) Meaning what exactly?!

Alistair: Oh don't get my wrong my dear, your costumes I'm sure are perfectly adequate for what we need but as for your performance, when compared with the rest of us...it's sub-par.

Maggie: I beg your pardon!

Joyce: Alistair it's not really for you to...

Alistair: I call it as I see it Joyce.

Maggie: Oh do you? Do you really? Well guess what? I call things as I see them too but as there are people here whom I consider friends and don't appreciate the kind of language I would use would I 'call you as I see you'. I think I shall take my adequate costumes and sub-par performance home.

(*Maggie storms to the table and snatches up her things.*)

Joyce: Maggie...

Maggie: I'm sorry Joyce but I am leaving here before I do or say something I am going to regret. (*She walks to the door*) I will see you Friday!

(*Maggie storms from the room slamming the door and Charlie immediately follows her.*)

Alistair: Well...clearly some people can't take criticism.

End of Scene Three

Scene Four

(The lights come up on the same scene a few hours later. The room is tidied and Joyce is sat alone looking a little weary. After a moment of silence Alistair emerges from the upstage left door whistling. On seeing the room empty he stops.)

Alistair: Oh...everyone gone?

Joyce: Yes they wanted to head home.

Alistair: Well that is a shame.

Joyce: Oh?

Alistair: I was going to offer them the chance to get me a drink.

Joyce: Buy you...

Alistair: You know, pick the brains of a real professional.

Joyce: Oh I see.

Alistair: But I guess it was not to be tonight...

Joyce: *(Standing)* Actually Alistair, there was something I wanted to talk to you about.

Alistair: Oh?

Joyce: Why don't you sit down?

Alistair: Sounds very cryptic Joyce. *(sitting down, in a jokey tone)* You're not firing me are you?

Joyce: No, no...

Alistair: I should think not.

Joyce: But there was something I wanted to discuss with you, about the group as a whole and how things are going.

Alistair: Joyce, don't say another word I know exactly what you're going to say.

Joyce: You do?

Alistair: Of course, I mean first with Lucy and then with Maggie it was obvious what the issue is.

Joyce: It is?

Alistair: Yes and I want to say I am sorry.

Joyce: You are?

Alistair: Of course I am.

Joyce: Well that's marvellous!

Alistair: Expecting a group of amateurs to be able to work to my professional standards. I should not have been so hard on them.

Joyce: I don't...

Alistair: Obviously they all need work, Maggie especially.

Joyce: Maggie...

Alistair: But rest assured Joyce I am happy to dedicate myself to them and to you (Taking Joyce's hands) to make sure that this shambles of a production pulls through to being the best it can be.

Joyce: I...thank you.

Alistair: Think nothing of it (*Standing*) now why don't we head over to the pub and talk over some of those changes I've put in.

Joyce: I don't...

Alistair: Trust me Joyce, this will be the best production you've ever been a part of by the time I'm through with it. (*Feels his pockets*) Oh I've left my phone in the loo. I'll be right back and then we'll get going.

Joyce: I...

Alistair: (*Walking over to the bathroom*) This will be perfect Joyce, you'll see...

(*Alistair disappears into the bathroom,*)

Joyce: Yes...Perfect.

(*Joyce starts to put away the chairs she and Alistair were sitting on. After a moment Maggie pops her head around the door. Joyce looks towards her.*)

Joyce: Maggie?

Maggie: (*Coming in*) I wanted to say sorry.

Joyce: What?

Maggie: For storming out earlier (*Walking over to her*) It's just that man...

Joyce: Oh I understand.

Maggie: All the same, this show is important to you and I should have...

Alistair: (*Re-entering the room*) Honestly, sometimes I think I'd forget my head... (*Notices Maggie*) Maggie.

Maggie: Alistair. (*Turning to Joyce*) Well I will see you on Friday Joyce.

(*Maggie turns to leave.*)

Alistair: Maggie wait. (*Maggie turns to look at him*) I've said it to Joyce and now I'd like to say it to you...

Maggie: (*Turning to look at him, arms folded*) Oh yes?

Alistair: I'd like to apologise for the way things unfolded today.

Maggie: (*Shocked*) You what?

Alistair: Yes I should have realised it wasn't the right way to approach things.

Maggie: Oh, well, I'm glad you understand that.

Alistair: I mean when dealing with ama...

Joyce: *(Quickly walking over and grabbing his arm)* Would you look at the time? We should hurry if we want to get that drink.

Maggie: Drink?

Alistair: Yes, Joyce and I are going to discuss some potential cha...

Joyce: *(Dragging Alistair out)* Character development for Henry and we want to make sure we don't miss last orders. You don't mind locking up do you?

Maggie: No but...

Joyce: Great! I'll see you Friday.

(Joyce & Alistair leave.)

Maggie: *(Confused)* Yea sure, see you then.

(Maggie shakes her head before turning back and turning off the lights before leaving.)

End of Scene Four

Scene Five

(The lights come up a few weeks later. Maggie is stage left with Sarah on a stool being fitted for a costume. Joyce is stood by the table looking up at Jane who is stood looking out as though at an audience. Charlie is also sat at the table working on a sketch.)

Jane: Although the distance of time and account of days neither is long nor many of your majesty's absence, yet the want of your presence, so much desired and beloved by me, maketh me that I cannot quietly pleasure in anything until I hear from your majesty...

Joyce: If I could pause you there Jane.

Jane: *(Sighing wearily)* It's still not right is it?

Joyce: Its getting there Jane it really is but I just need you to 'heat it up' a little.

Jane: I don't know...

Joyce: Well while Henry was old and very ill and Katherine was not much more than a nursemaid to him at this point, she did still love him a great deal.

Jane: Oh I see.

Joyce: So if we could hear some of that in your speech.

Sarah: It would be easier to act like she liked him if he wasn't a total...

Maggie: Shush you!

Sarah: Well its true! I mean I've never known such an arrogant, obnoxious, self-serving...

Joyce: Alright Sarah, we get the point.

Sarah: Wouldn't say it if it weren't true.

Joyce: *(Turning back to Jane)* But putting all that aside Jane, do you think you could give it a little more...

Jane: Heat?

Joyce: I'd appreciate it greatly.

Jane: Well...I'll try.

Joyce: Splendid! *(Walking back to her original position)* Now, lets try from the middle.

(Jane takes a deep breath and starts to speak with a little more emotion.)

Jane: Thus love maketh me in all things to set apart mine own convenience and pleasure, and to embrace most joyfully his will and pleasure whom I...

(Loud giggling is heard off stage.)

Jane:...whom I...

(The giggling continues.)

Joyce: What on earth is that?!

Maggie: As if we need to ask.

(Alistair and Louise enter the room from the main door talking and laughing with each other. It is obvious both are tipsy.)

Maggie: Nice of you to join us.

Alistair: *(Ignoring Maggie and walking over to Joyce)* Joyce! I am so very sorry we are late.

Joyce: Oh well that's...

Louise: *(Moving to join Alistair, taking his arm)* It's my fault you see.

Maggie: *(Muttering)* I can well believe that.

Louise: *(Shooting Maggie a dirty look)* We've been working on our scene and I completely lost track of the time.

Joyce: *(Slightly happier)* Oh well that's wonderful.

Alistair: We must show you our work Joyce.

Joyce: *(Looking at Jane)* Oh well I was working with...

Jane: It's alright Joyce. *(Sits down.)*

(Charlie gets up and heads for the kitchen.)

Alistair: I'll take a black coffee.

(Charlie pauses and turns and looks angrily at Alistair before sighing.)

Charlie: I'll bring a tray out.

(Charlie exits into the kitchen. Alistair and Louise discard their coats and bags onto nearby chairs before taking up positions in front of Joyce.)

Joyce: Right well ready when you...

(Alistair turns and walks away from Louise before turning to look at her while Joyce is speaking and then cuts across her.)

Alistair: My mistress and friend: I and my heart put ourselves in your hands,

(Alistair walks over and takes Louise's hands)

Begging you to have them suitors for your good favour

(Alistair pulls Louise into him)

And that your affection for them should not grow less through absence. For it would be a great pity to increase their sorrow since absence does it sufficiently

(Alistair lets go of Louise's hands and slides his up her arms and to her shoulders)

And more than ever I could have thought possible reminding us of a point in astronomy, which is, that the longer the days are the farther off is the sun, and yet the more fierce.

(Alistair turns Louise by the shoulders so she is facing Joyce and positions himself behind her, whispering in her ear)

So it is with our love, for by absence we are parted, yet nevertheless it keeps its fervour

(Alistair slides his arms around Louise's middle)

At least on my side, and I hope on yours also

(Using his hands on her waist he turns Louise back to face him)

Assuring you that on my side the ennui of absence is already too much for me:

(He leans in to whisper in her hear but at the same time looks over her shoulder at Joyce, speaking with a more 'erotic' tone to his voice.)

And when I think of the increase of what I must needs suffer...

Joyce: *(Getting to her feet)* Yes well I think that's enough.

Louise: *(Turning from Alistair)* But we hadn't finished.

Maggie: I dread to see the climactic moment.

Joyce: Obviously I am glad the two of you have done so much work on this scene but...

Alistair: Something wrong?

Joyce: I think we may tone down the...romantic...

Maggie: That's not what I'd call it.

Joyce: ...element of the scene.

Louise: But everyone knows Henry was into her.

Joyce: Yes but I believe the words in this case can speak for that relationship without have to add so much of the...physical element.

Alistair: But surely the actions speak louder than words.

Joyce: But we don't want to deafen our audience do we?

Louise: Oh I get it. *(To Alistair)* She's concerned the fuddy duddys of the village won't like it.

Joyce: I am merely concerned that this kind of...erotic viewing may not be what they had in mind when coming to see one of our plays.

Alistair: Surely a director is entitled to produce a play as they see fit without being held to ransom by their audience.

Joyce: But this isn't how I produced it.

Alistair: I...no I suppose not...of course we were only trying to help.

Joyce: And it is greatly appreciated but I think it would be better if you left the staging to me and focused on the words...which you are doing very well with by the way.

Alistair: *(Begrudgingly sighing)* Well you are the director.

Joyce: Yes...but I will give the scene some thought and we'll work on it next week.

Alistair: Not now?

Joyce: You have your scene with Katherine Howard now.

Alistair: Oh yes, the schedule.

Joyce: *(To Maggie)* Can you spare Sarah for a moment?

Maggie: I suppose so. *(To Louise)* I've got your skirt for amendments if you're not too busy your grace.

(Louise sighs huffily and walks over to take Sarah's place on the stool as Sarah walks over to stand with Alistair.)

Joyce: Right so from the top of your scene.

(Sarah smiles and looks Alistair up and down.)

Alistair: Its your line I believe.

Sarah: I was taking a moment. *(Sarah moves towards him)*

I, your Grace *(bowing, mocking him)* make my confession. *(She sniggers)* When I came I was so desirous to be taken unto your Grace's favour, and so blinded by with the desire of worldly glory that I could not see the trap that had been laid for me...*(She steps towards him)* in the bed of an old fool.

Alistair: Is that...

Sarah: *(Laughing and still mocking)* Thomas Culpepper, who by far succeeded you in my affections. *(She proceeds to walk around Alistair looking him over)* He lay with me naked, in such sort as a man doth his wife...an experience that escaped me in our wedding bed.

(Alistair tenses as Sarah goes on.)

Sarah: My only regret and pain was that he could not be mine always. Hidden from your own blind gaze I wrote to him *(She tiptoes to whisper smirking in Alistair's ear)* "It makes my heart to die to think I cannot always be in your company. Yours as long as life endures *(she leans in a little more)* Your Catherine"

Alistair: Joyce is all this really necessary?

Joyce: The relationship between the two needs to be shown for what it was Alistair.

Sarah: A young girl married to a pompous old man who'd not been able to satisfy his wife.

Joyce: Quite.

Alistair: I'm not quite convinced that this girl would be as openly disrespectful.

Joyce: Maybe she did not say as such out loud but by engaging in her extra marital relationships she blatantly disrespecting the king as far as it was possible to do so.

Alistair: I'm still not sure...

Sarah: Aw! Doesn't the king like being mocked?

Alistair: Listen you...

Joyce: Sarah that's quite enough!

Alistair: Thank you Joyce.

Joyce: But the scene will stand as it is, to create the balance between the portrayal of Henry's relationships.

Sarah: Yea, so suck it up and deal with it.

Joyce: Sarah!

Sarah: What?

Alistair: (*Frostily*) Actually Joyce I've just remembered I've got a rather important phone call to make so if you will excuse me.

(*Alistair storms from the room.*)

Joyce: Did you have to?

Sarah: What? If he can't take a little criticism he's in the wrong business.

Louise: You don't know what you're talking about. Alistair was telling me it's not...

Sarah: Louise, when I want your opinion feel free to have me psychologically examined.

(*Louise stares at her a moment before huffily storming out of the room.*)

Sarah: Touchy!

(*Joyce sighs and leans on the table putting her head in her hands as the lights fade.*)

End of Scene Five.

Scene Six

(*The lights come up a week or so later. Alistair is lying across two chairs with Jane kneeling at his side holding his hand. Lucy and Joyce are sat at the table watching as Charlie sits near by scribbling in a notebook. Maggie is stage right with Sarah on the stool, now being fitted with a slightly more elaborate costume. As the lights come up Jane continues as though in the middle of a speech.*)

Jane: My darling, god, the knower of secrets, can judge these words not to be spoken, but most truly impressed on the heart. Much more I omit, lest it be thought I go about to praise myself, or crave a thank which thing to do

I mind nothing less, but a plain, simple relation of the love and zeal I bear your majesty, proceeding from the abundance of the heart...

(Louise's voice is heard in the hall.)

Louise: Well I know babe but the lights on so I'm going to check aren't I...

(Louise walks in and stops looking around at everyone.)

Louise: Oh...I thought we didn't have rehearsal tonight.

Joyce: *(Standing)* Jane couldn't make Wednesday so I agreed to do some swapping around.

Louise: *(Looking at Jane and Alistair holding hands)* I see...

Joyce: I did leave you a message to say we'd be meeting Friday as normal.

Louise: I've not been home today.

Joyce: Oh, I see...well we are almost finished, we've just got the end of this scene.

Louise: I'll stay to watch, if that's alright?

Maggie: *(Muttering)* As though we have a choice.

Joyce: Of course, take a seat.

(Louise sits down and Joyce takes up her own seat again.)

Joyce: When you're ready Jane.

(Jane turns back to Alistair holding his hand and speaking in a sad voice.)

Jane: Even such confidence have I in your majesty's gentleness, knowing myself never to have done my duty as were requisite and meet for such a noble prince, at whose hands I have found and received so much love and goodness, that *(Jane starts to pretend to cry)* with words I cannot express it.

(Jane leans into Alistair's body and pretends to cry for a moment or two before sitting up and looking at Joyce.)

Jane: How was that?

Alistair: *(Sitting up)* How was it? *(Standing and taking Jane's hands helping her up)* That, my dear was superb.

Jane: Oh why thank you.

Alistair: Not at all.

Joyce: Yes that was lovely Jane. *(Taking up her folder)* Right that's it for tonight so it's Henry and Anne B and then Anne C on Friday if that's alright with you, Maggie?

Maggie: Suits me fine.

Joyce: Louise?

Louise: *(In a tight voice)* Fine.

Joyce: Good, well I will see you all on Friday.

(Joyce, Charlie and Lucy start to pack up their things and the chairs.)

Alistair: I think that deserves a celebration, don't you?

Joyce: Celebration?

Alistair: Yes, we've finally made progress with such a crucial scene.

Joyce: I wouldn't say finally.

Alistair: So I think we should go for a drink. What do you say, Jane?

Jane: Oh sorry I've got an early start in the morning.

Alistair: Oh come one won't hurt.

Jane: Maybe some other time.

Alistair: Well...Lucy you'll come...

(Charlie looks round sharply at Alistair, this isn't scene by Alistair or Lucy.)

Lucy: Oh well I...

Alistair: Is that a yes?

Lucy: I'm actually a little tired...sorry.

Alistair: *(Glumly)* Oh *(He looks around at Maggie and Sarah before turning to Joyce)* Joyce! What about you?

Joyce: Another night perhaps.

Louise: *(Getting up)* I'll go with you...if you like.

Alistair: Actually... *(Taking his phone out of his pocket and glancing at it)* Oh that's my agent now, I'll have to take this *(Moves quickly towards the door)* I'll see you all Friday.

(Alistair exists)

Maggie: I didn't hear a phone ring.

Joyce: I suppose he must have it on vibrate.

Louise: Or maybe he just didn't want to make things awkward for Jane.

Jane: Me?

Louise: *(Moving towards her)* Don't play coy with me, you were all over him like a rash.

Joyce: It's part of her scene Louise.

Jane: Yes, that's right.

Louise: Well isn't that convenient. The divorcee gets to spend the last scene handling the leading man....

Jane: I just hold his hand.

Louise: Who she's clearly obsessed with.

Jane: I most certainly am not.

Louise: But then again having a divorce behind you I suppose throwing yourself at men becomes natural.

Jane: Now you....

Sarah: You're one to talk!

(Sarah gets down off the stool and walks over to Louise.)

Louise: The grown ups are talking now Sarah...

Joyce: Louise I think this is enough now.

Louise: *(To Jane)* I'm warning you, stay away from my man.

Sarah: *(Spluttering with laughter)* Your man! That's a joke!

Louise: *(Turning from Jane)* Excuse me!

Sarah: If people stayed away from any man in this village you saw as 'your man' there'd be no one left.

Louise: How dare you!

Joyce: Sarah...

Maggie: I'd leave it be Joyce.

Sarah: You just shout your mouth of at my mum and she's got no interest in Alistair...he's a knob!

Jane: Sarah!

Sarah: Well it's true. *(To Louise)* It's not my mum's fault you've got a pair of knickers on every washing line in the village!

Louise: *(Shouting)* How dare you!

(Louise reaches forward and grabs hold of Sarah's hair.)

Sarah: *(Shouting)* Get off me!

(Sarah retaliates by grabbing Louise's hair and the two shuffle across the room pulling on each other's hair as the head for the main door.)

Maggie: Sarah don't you dare rip your costume!

(The two ladies disappear through the doors.)

Charlie: Shouldn't we...do something?

Maggie: Be my guest.

Jane: Surely they will stop before....

(A loud crash is heard off stage. Everyone on stage looks panicked and runs for the main door.)

End of Scene Six

Scene Seven

(The lights come up a few days later. The ladies are sat in the middle of the room in a circle with one empty chair. Sarah and Louise are sat opposite each other down stage giving each other evil looks.)

Joyce: Right, now we are here to ensure all of this silliness gets sorted out because we are only weeks from show time and I can not have you two fighting like a pair of cats in the street.

Sarah: I'm sure Louise is used to it.

Jane: Shhhhh!

Joyce: Now obviously I have no control over your personal life Louise or *(she glances at Jane)* anyone else's but we do like to keep rehearsals a happy... *(glances at Sarah)* and safe environment to work in. So first things first, I would like you both to apologise to each other.

Sarah: I'm not...

Jane: *(In a warning tone)* Sarah.

(Sarah looks at her mother's warning expression before looking back at Louise and sighing loudly.)

Sarah: Sorry.

Joyce: Good...now Louise?

Louise: Oh...well I suppose I'm sorry too.

Maggie: *(Sarcastically)* Very heartfelt.

Joyce: Good, now that's sorted we can...

Alistair: *(Off)* My dear friend and mistress...(Alistair enters the room and sees them all sat there) Oh this looks ominous.

Joyce: *(Surprised)* Alistair...you're early.

Alistair: Yes well the stage waits for no man.

Maggie: Really because it's waited for you for a long time before now.

Alistair: Are we just doing lines this evening then?

Joyce: No we will be moving on to the rehearsal but I wanted to have a chat about our...relationship as a cast.

Alistair: Relationship? I don't quite follow you.

Joyce: Well obviously you have your own personal life and that's your own affair but given what has happened recently I would prefer it if you kept them out of rehearsal.

Alistair: Joyce, I greatly admire your tactful way of putting things but I haven't the faintest idea what you are talking about.

Maggie: She means if you are going to fool around with cast members try to stick to just one.

Joyce: Maggie!

Maggie: Well you were taking all day.

Alistair: Well I'm shocked.

Joyce: I know Maggie can be a bit...to the point.

Alistair: No I mean, I can't believe I've mis-led you all.

Joyce: Mis-led?

Alistair: Well I make it a point never to get involved with fellow cast members, makes for an unbearable situation if things go wrong don't you think.

Joyce: Yes.

Louise: But I thought...

Alistair: Walking over to her...oh my dear Louise, you are enchanting as an actress.

Maggie: (Muttered) I wouldn't go that far.

Alistair: And I believe I am privileged to play opposite you but our relationship outside of being friends and co-stars has never left that stage.

Louise: Oh...I see... (*laughs airily*) Yes well that was what I thought all along.

Alistair: Good, I should hate to make things awkward between you all.

Maggie: (Muttered) Bit late.

Alistair: If I thought for one moment I had I should of course have to leave.

Joyce: No! (*Calming herself*) I mean no I am sure we can all agree it was just a silly mis-understanding and we are all perfectly happy to continue. (*looking at the group*) Right....Louise?

Louise: Yes...yes of course.

Joyce: Jane?

Jane: Fine by me.

Joyce: Lucy?

Lucy: (*Quietly*) Yes.

Joyce: Sarah?

Sarah: Suppose So (*catching her mother's warning eye*) I mean yes.

Joyce: Maggie?

Maggie: At this stage I see little point in contesting.

Joyce: Marvellous! (*Moves her chair to one side*) Right so which scenes were we doing this evening?

(*The Group begin to move the chairs back as the lights fade*)

End of Scene Seven

Scene Eight

(The lights come up, it is now opening night. The tables have been moved to one side by the kitchen and set in front of the wall with mirrors on them. Sarah and Louise are sat at the mirror doing their make up. Maggie is in full costume and assisting Lucy into hers. Charlie is pottering around with a clipboard and pen checking things off. As the lights come up Joyce comes into the room, in full costume with a mobile in her hand talking into it.)

Joyce: I know this is my third message but we really could do with knowing where you are so could you please phone me back as soon as you get this, thank you.

(Joyce hangs up the mobile.)

Maggie: Still no word?

Joyce: Nothing, I've tried home and mobile, no sign of him. *(Joyce looks at her watch)* ten minutes to go, where is he?

Maggie: Bloody toe rag!

Joyce: *(Shocked)* Maggie!

Maggie: Well I'm sorry Joyce but to pull a stunt like this on opening night, its just not acceptable!

(Louise goes to pick up the eyeliner on the make up desk but Sarah takes it first.)

Louise: Erm I was going to use that.

Sarah: Yea well now you're not.

Louise: Don't you have any basic manners.

Sarah: Trust me Lou, no amount of eye liner is going to save that face.

Louise: *(Getting to her feet)* I beg your pardon!

Sarah: *(Also getting up)* Your heard!

(Maggie darts over and stands between them.)

Maggie: Now then you two that is quite enough of that thank you!

Joyce: *(Walking over to them)* Please girls, I know tensions are running a bit high with Alistair's...disappearing act but we have to remain calm and...

(The main door behind Joyce opens and Jane walks in, in normal clothes.)

Joyce: OH THANK GOD... *(Turns and sees its Jane, slightly deflated)* Oh Jane...still no sign?

Jane: *(Shaking her head)* Nothing, I've been round the building a few times.

Maggie: Well what do you want to do Joyce?

Joyce: Well...we'll give him five more minutes and then I'll...go out and tell the audience we'll have to cancel.

Sarah: I can't bloody believe he's done this!

Maggie: I can.

Joyce: Maggie, I can do without the 'I told you so's' just for this moment.

Maggie: Sorry Joyce.

Sarah: But she is right though.

Jane: (*Warning Tone*) Sarah...

Joyce: No, no Sarah and Maggie are both right...he let us down and that's...my fault.

Maggie: Don't talk so daft Joyce.

Jane: You weren't to know he'd pull a stunt like this.

Maggie: It's not your fault the man's a...

Joyce: Yes thank you Maggie. (*Looking around at them*) It's you I feel most sorry for. All of the effort you've put in and now we...

Alistair: (*Off*) Yea no I know David, yea it's great news. Alright I'll see you then.

(*All the women turn to the door as Alistair walks in carrying a bottle of champagne and plastic cups.*)

Alistair: (*Cheerfully*) Ladies.

(*Maggie and Sarah storm over to him.*)

Maggie: Where the bloody hell have you been?!

Sarah: Do you have any idea...

(*Joyce walks over and fends them off.*)

Joyce: Yes thank you ladies, why don't you both finish getting ready?

(*Maggie and Sarah turn and walk away from Alistair giving him evil looks as they door.*)

Joyce: Alistair, obviously I am relieved you are here but where have you been?

Alistair: Awfully sorry Joyce but I was up in London for an audition and well I've just had marvellous news.

Joyce: Oh?

Alistair: I got the part!

Joyce: Well that's...lovely...

Alistair: (*Indicating the champagne*) So I thought we'd have a drink to celebrate.

Joyce: Well maybe when the show...

Alistair: I mean it will have to be a quick one...

Joyce: (*Turning from Alistair*) Oh I'm sure.

Alistair: I have to be on a train in an hour.

(*Joyce stops dead walking and all of the group turn to look at him.*)

Joyce: I beg your pardon?

Alistair: Well they need me to start right away, they've had a drop out last minute and that's how I got the audition.

(All of the women move towards Alistair from their locations.)

Maggie: Please tell me you're joking!

Jane: We have curtain up in five minutes!

Sarah: What the hell are you playing at?!

Louise: We have worked hard for months and you're just walking out?!

Alistair: Well...yes I mean...this is a paid job...*(laughing)* you wouldn't expect me to stay would you?

Maggie, Jane, Sarah & Louise: YES!

Joyce: Alistair...you made a commitment....to us....to the show.

Alistair: *(Laughing)* Joyce...it's just a community production...hardly worth all this upset.

(Joyce stares at him for a moment before running from the room in tears.)

Maggie: Joyce wait!

(Maggie runs out after her followed by Jane & Sarah. Louise walks over to Alistair.)

Louise: I shouldn't stick around if I were you, because if you are here when we get back...things will get VERY unpleasant.

(Louise walks out and Lucy walks over to Alistair.)

Lucy: Please...can't you stay? I mean you can get a later train...can't you?

Alistair: Well...no the company have booked my ticket.

Lucy: But this is important.

Alistair: To you maybe but not to me.

Lucy: What?

Alistair: I was here until something better came along...that's all.

Lucy: But you...

Alistair: Quite frankly you were lucky I came at all.

(Lucy stares at him for a moment before also leaving the room.)

Alistair: Well really I don't know what all the fuss is about. *(Walking over and putting the champagne on the table)* Well you'll have a drink to celebrate my success won't you Charlie boy?

(Walking around so he is stood behind Alistair with his back to the door)

Charlie: Not important.

Alistair: What?

Charlie: You said that this show was not important.

Alistair: *(Laughing and turning to face him)* Well be serious mate...

Charlie: I'm not your mate.

Alistair: Look, I get they're upset but this is my career.

Charlie: You don't get to decide what is and isn't important to people.

Alistair: Oh come on...

(Lucy walks into the room but both men don't notice her.)

Charlie: We have put up with your arrogant postulating behaviour since the very beginning.

Alistair: Now wait just a minute.

Charlie: Because Joyce said 'he's a professional, we can rely on him'.

Alistair: Well that's...

Charlie: And after everything we have put up with from you, you do not get to decide that this show isn't important enough for you to wait a few hours just to finish opening night.

Alistair: You can't...

Charlie: You do not get to come in hear and hurt my family and people I care about.

Alistair: *(laughing)* Oh I see...this is about little Lucy isn't it?

Charlie: I've been part of this society for years, I care about all of them.

Alistair: Believe what you want mate but if you have been hear for all those years and not had the guts to tell that girl how you feel then you are more pathetic than she is.

(Charlie steps forward and grabs Alistair by the collar.)

Charlie: Unless you want to arrive in London in a shoe box I would leave....now.

(Charlie turns shoving Alistair to one side so he moves slightly towards the door. Once Alistair catches his balance he turns back to look at Charlie for a moment of tense silence.)

Alistair: I've got a train to catch anyway.

(Alistair storms out of the room past Lucy who then walks over to Charlie.)

Lucy: That was such a sweet thing to say.

Charlie: Yea well he's had it coming a long time.

Lucy: Did you mean it?

Charlie: What?

Lucy: About caring about...all of us?

Charlie: Course I did, I never anything I don't mean.

(Lucy walks over to him.)

Lucy: So I guess it's all over.

Charlie: Not yet its not.

Lucy: But how can we...

(The rest of the group walk back into the room.)

Maggie: He's gone then?

Charlie: Yes he's gone.

Maggie: Good, I could swing for that little toe rag!

Charlie: Doubt that would help Auntie Maggie.

Maggie: Maybe not but it would make me feel better.

Sarah: And me...

Joyce: I suppose I should make an announcement to the audience.

Maggie: We'll do it together, this shouldn't just be on you.

(The women turn and head for the door.)

Charlie: You don't have to cancel.

(The women turn to look at him.)

Charlie: I'll take Alistair's role.

Maggie: You?

Charlie: Why not? I've been at every rehearsal; I know the script inside out and if it means the show goes on then...

Joyce: But what about the lights and sound?

Charlie: I'll get Hugh to do it *(to Joyce)* providing you're happy to go without the follow spot?

Joyce: Charlie I'd be happy to go without my front teeth! But are you sure?

Charlie: I never say anything I don't mean Joyce.

Joyce: Marvellous! Ok I will go and make an announcement there'll be a short delay.

Charlie: I'll let Hugh know about it promotion.

Maggie: I'll make sure your costume's ready.

Sarah: Way to go Charlie!

Jane: You've saved the day!

Charlie: All in a days work.

Maggie: Come on, come on we'd better get a move on. The show must go on after all.

(Joyce and Charlie quickly dart out of the room as the lights fade.)

End of Scene Eight

Scene Nine

(As the lights come up, Charlie is stood still partially in costume over by the table pouring Alistair's bottle of champagne into plastic cups. There is the sound of clapping coming from through the main door. After a moment Lucy walks in.)

Lucy: They are all singing your praises out there.

Charlie: *(Turning to look at her)* Yea well I'm not really one for the limelight. I only did it to make sure that the show could go on.

Lucy: *(Walking over to him)* And we all greatly appreciate it.

(Charlie shrugs)

Lucy: Do you never take a compliment?

(Charlie shrugs again and Lucy laughs)

Lucy: *(Spotting the Champagne)* Oooo, someone's splashing out.

Charlie: Well I figured Alistair should at least make some contribution to tonight's proceedings.

Lucy: *(Laughing)* It seems the drinks are on Alistair for a change.

Charlie: Precisely.

(Charlie finishes pouring the drinks and puts the bottle down.)

Lucy: *(Turning for the door)* I should tell the others the bubbly is ready.

Charlie: *(Stepping towards her)* Before you do...

Lucy: *(Turning to him)* Yes?

Charlie: I was wondering that now you're out of rehearsals for a while...

Lucy: Yes?

Charlie: If you'd like to go for a drink some time?

Lucy: *(Stepping towards him)* I'd like that.

Charlie: *(Shocked)* Really?! *(Correcting himself)* I mean, yea that's great.

Lucy: *(Reaching out and taking his hand)* Great.

(The two move closer to kiss just as the rest of the group come bustling in loudly talking to each other and Lucy and Charlie let go of each other's hands.)

Joyce: An absolute triumph!

Maggie: Never had so many compliments.

Louise: I knew all along that Charlie was perfect for that role.

Maggie: You what?!

Louise: Well...I knew on the inside.

Maggie: Mmm Hmmm

Sarah: *(On spotting Charlie & Lucy)* Oh here you are.

Lucy: *(Turning to them)* Yes we were preparing a few after show drinks *(Indicates the champagne)* Courtesy of Alistair.

Maggie: Ah, marvellous!

(Maggie walks over to the table and proceeds to hand out the drinks.)

Maggie: Joyce...

Joyce: Thank you, oh I feel like I'm in the West End.

Louise: I wouldn't go that far.

Maggie: Do you want your bubbly or not?

Louise: Alright, alright. I was only joking.

(Maggie hands Louise, Jane and Lucy champagne before pausing and looking at Sarah.)

Sarah: What?

Maggie: Well technically you are under...

Sarah: Oh no come off it! I put up with...I mean I was part of the show from start to finish. I deserve just as much bubbly as anyone.

Maggie: Its your call Jane.

Jane: Well...maybe a small one.

(Maggie takes up one of the other cups and pours a bit from Sarah's into it before handing it to her. She then turns to Charlie and offers him the fuller cup.)

Maggie: Extra I think for the man of the hour.

Charlie: Oh I didn't...

Joyce: Nonsense! *(Walking over to him)* You really came through for us Charlie.

Maggie: Looks like we've got a permanent actor in you now.

Charlie: I don't know...

Sarah: Are you mad?! Did you hear the applause out there I mean you were... *(Correcting herself)* Ok...you know I guess.

(Charlie takes the cup from Maggie.)

Charlie: Well I have to say...I did enjoy it.

Joyce: And I have to say it was a thrill to have you involved Charlie, I mean away from the lighting desk.

Charlie: Hugh is going to be busy it seems.

Joyce: In fact, ladies...and gentleman I believe this calls for a toast (*the groups gathers round her*). To Charlie, the man who saved the day and allowed our show to go on. (*Raising the cup*) to our Henry.

Ladies Together: To our Henry.

(The group raise their cups together and laugh as they start to drink. The lights fade.)

End of Scene Nine

The End