CAROLINE

LOTTY. I know it would be a stretch for us both.
ROSE. Corresponding with someone we know nothing of. We've gone too far already.
LOTTY. Rose.
ROSE. And all of this talk of money. Please. It has, indeed, been grand dreaming of this. But no further.
LOTTY. But, Rose.
ROSE. *(Taking a stand.)* I have made up my mind, Mrs. Wilton.
LOTTY. Lotty. If it's only the money, then I have an idea.
ROSE. It is not only the money.
LOTTY. I thought perhaps if we advertise for traveling companions …
ROSE. Companions?
LOTTY. Ladies. There must be dozens of ladies in our situation who would enjoy sharing such a holiday. Not that we'd want dozens, of course. But another couple, say, would certainly ease the burden.
ROSE. Please … we really mustn't discuss this here. It's wrong. I feel as if we're plotting.
LOTTY. But we are! Plotting our escape! Have you lost something?
ROSE. One of the schoolchildren somehow misplaced his boots and stockings during services. *(Lotty laughs.)*
LOTTY. "Put thy shoes from off thy feet, for this is holy ground."
ROSE. Angus O'Shea is no Moses. As any number of schoolgirls will tell you.
LOTTY. Rose …
ROSE. You've taken leave of your senses, Mrs. Wilton.
LOTTY. Don't say that!
ROSE. Start with your nest egg. What if there is an actual need?
LOTTY. This is an actual need.
ROSE. I don't want to hear any more.
LOTTY. But Rose … if we don't go forward … well … *(Inspired.)* …we will be depriving two perfectly innocent traveling companions of their holiday. Two good, unhappy ladies like ourselves. Perhaps in even greater need than ourselves. *(Rose considers.)*
ROSE. *(Strongly.)* You are a bully, Mrs. Wilton!
LOTTY. Meet me at the club on Wednesday for tea.
ROSE. Yes. No!
LOTTY. We can compose our advert.
ROSE. Mrs. Wilton!

LOTTY. Lotty, Rose. You really must call me Lotty.
ROSE. We are not placing an advertisement, because we are not responding to Mr. Wilding.
LOTTY. But I have.
ROSE. What?
LOTTY. I have sent him my nest egg, as a deposit.
ROSE. *(Stunned.)* Lotty.
LOTTY. It is done, Rose. The castle is ours! *(Thunder. They look heavenward.)* Have you told your husband?
ROSE. Of course not.
LOTTY. We should tell them. Even Moses asked permission.
ROSE. *(Near tears.)* Please stop talking about Moses.
LOTTY. You're right. It's more like David and Goliath. Rose. All I'm asking for is your faith. *(Mellersh calls from outside.)*
MELLERSH. *(Offstage.)* Charlotte!
LOTTY. Gad! It's Goliath. Wednesday! *(She starts to exit.)*
ROSE. *(Lost.)* Husbands, Lotty! *(Lotty stops.)*
LOTTY. What?
ROSE. Husbands.
LOTTY. Yes. Isn't it terrible. But who could resist an invitation to heaven? *(Imagining.)* "Two ladies seek other ladies who appreciate … " *(Blend to Scene 5.)*

Scene 5

The home of Caroline Bramble. A table, three chairs, a coat rack with coats and umbrellas. Caroline enters, reading from the Times.

CAROLINE. " … seek other ladies who appreciate wisteria and sunshine." *(Lotty and Rose sit attentively. Caroline wears a loose, colorful silk négligée. Her youthfulness shines through a weary air. She prepares a glass of aspirin powder and lights a cigarette, clearly hung over.)*
LOTTY. We were so pleased to receive your reply, Lady Bramble. Although we never expected that our advertisement would attract someone … such as yourself.
CAROLINE. Oh?
ROSE. We've read about you often in the newspapers, Lady

CAROLINE

Bramble. Your life seems so … full.
CAROLINE. *(With chilly aloofness.)* Yes.
ROSE. You do realize that the castle is very quiet and remote.
CAROLINE. I hope so. Is there a telephone?
LOTTY. No.
CAROLINE. Good.
ROSE. Mrs. Wilton was telling me, in fact, Lady Bramble, of something she read about your dancing on tables.
CAROLINE. In Paris.
ROSE. Really.
LOTTY. You must be very tired. *(Explaining herself.)* Whenever I see moderns such as yourself I always see a certain … weariness. Modernity being such a shifty beast.
CAROLINE. *(Uncertain.)* Yes. Have you received many replies to your advertisement?
ROSE. To our surprise, I'm afraid, only two.
LOTTY. The other is from a Mrs. Clayton Graves. Do you know her, Lady Bramble?
CAROLINE. I don't believe so.
LOTTY. You know so many people.
CAROLINE. That's just it, I'm afraid. Mother insists on my knowing everyone, or at least on everyone she knows knowing me. She fancies herself a "patroness of the arts," which for her simply means the chance to give parties. An opportunistic group, artists. They never miss a party. Always grabbing and making eyes. Now she's collecting writers, the sorriest lot yet. Trying to create what's lacking in their own lives. Do you know any writers?
LOTTY. No. *(They look to Rose, who looks away.)*
CAROLINE. I'm in great need of an escape right now. From all of it.
LOTTY. We are of like minds, then, Lady Bramble. Mrs. Arnott and myself are escaping too!
ROSE. Lotty.
CAROLINE. Escaping? *(Joking.)* You aren't "wanted women," are you?
LOTTY. *(Laughing.)* Oh, Lady Bramble! We're not wanted at all! We're just in need of a holiday, that's all. And I believe the castle will be the perfect place.
CAROLINE. Yes. It seemed so to me as well. I had replied to the original advertisement, actually, but was answered that someone had already placed a deposit.
LOTTY. I do hope we haven't spoiled your plans, Lady Bramble.

CAROLINE. Oh, I really didn't care. A month alone had seemed appealing. But strange surroundings and simple company may prove most acceptable.
ROSE. *(Smoothly.)* We may pale in comparison with your usual acquaintances, Lady Bramble, but I assure you that Mrs. Wilton and myself are by no means "simple."
CAROLINE. *(Unusually uncertain.)* Oh, I never meant that you were. What I meant was …
LOTTY. No grabbing!
CAROLINE. *(Relieved.)* Precisely. What I really meant, I suppose, is that you aren't … men.
LOTTY. *(Smiling.)* Yes.
ROSE. *(Not smiling.)* That is true.
CAROLINE. With men it would be impossible to be as … unrestricted as I'd like. *(She stretches, revealing a silky chemise.)*
ROSE. Unrestricted?
CAROLINE. Part of what intrigued me about your advertisement is that it would be quite a novelty, really, to be among lady friends. I haven't many.
LOTTY. Oh?
ROSE. And why do you think that is, Lady Bramble?
CAROLINE. Perhaps at the end of April you could tell me. Should I join you. *(Thunder.)* Isn't this rain a nuisance?
LOTTY. *(Feeling a kinship.)* Oh, yes!
CAROLINE. May I offer you a cognac?
ROSE. It is eleven in the morning, Lady Bramble.
CAROLINE. Yes. *(With a hint of sadness.)* May I ask you something?
LOTTY. Of course, Lady Bramble.
CAROLINE. Were your husbands lost?
ROSE. Lost?
CAROLINE. In the war.
LOTTY. Well, no, Lady Bramble.
ROSE. Our husbands have not been lost at all, Lady Bramble.
CAROLINE. *(Relieved.)* Oh! Isn't that funny? You look like widows! Had I seen you on a street corner, I would have been inclined to give you a donation.
ROSE. *(Beginning to boil.)* Lady Bramble …
CAROLINE. I should like to join you at the castle, then.
LOTTY. Grand! *(Rose scowls.)*
CAROLINE. *(Aware of Rose.)* And, should we find that things