

Present Laughter
Audition monologues

1

Garry: Listen to me, my dearest Daphne. You're not in love with me—the real me. You're in love with an illusion, the illusion that I gave you when you saw me on the stage. Last night I ran the risk of breaking that dear young illusion for ever—but I didn't—It's still there. I can see it in your eyes but never again—never never again—moments like last night—that's all I can dare to hope for now—that's why I'm so lonely sometimes, so desperately lonely, but I have learned one bitter lesson in my life and that lesson is to be able to say goodbye—*[Daphne protests "But Garry"]* Let me go on—Shh! *[reciting the poem theatrically]* “We meet not as we parted/We feel more than all may see;/My bosom is heavy-hearted/And thine full of doubt for me. One moment has bound the free.” *[Daphne protests again "But Garry"]* Quiet! “That moment has gone forever,/Like lighting that flashed and died,/Like a snowflake upon the river,/Like a sunbeam upon the tide,/Which the dark shadows hide—” There now, that was Shelley. Don't you think it's beautiful?

2

Garry: Very well, Morris, I'm not going to ask you one more question, I'm not even going to bellow at you, much, but that all depends upon whether or not you annoy me. I am however going to make you see one thing clearly, and it is this. You and Hugo and Monica and Liz and I share something of inestimable importance to all of us, and that something is mutual respect and trust. God knows it's been hard won. We can look back on years and years of bitter conflict with ourselves and with each other. But now, now that we're all middle-aged we can admit, with a certain mellow tranquility, that it's been well worth it. Here we are, five people closely woven together by affection and work and intimate knowledge of each other. It's too important a “setup” to risk breaking for any outside emotional reason whatsoever. Joanna is alien to us. She doesn't really belong to us and never could. Hugo realizes that perfectly well, he's nobody's fool and to do him justice he has never tried to force her on us. But don't believe for a minute that Joanna isn't a potential danger, because she is! She's a hundred percent female, exceedingly attractive and ruthlessly implacable in the pursuit of anything she wants.