




Mother's Day

J.B. Priestley





The following play is a **humorous portrayal** of the status of the mother in a family. Let's read on to see how Mrs Pearson's family reacts when she tries to stand up for her own rights.

Humorous: Causing laughter





Mr. Pearson



Mrs. Pearson

Characters

MRS ANNIE PEARSON

GEORGE PEARSON

DORIS PEARSON

CYRIL PEARSON


MRS FITZGERALD

The action takes place in the living-room of the Pearsons' house in a London suburb.

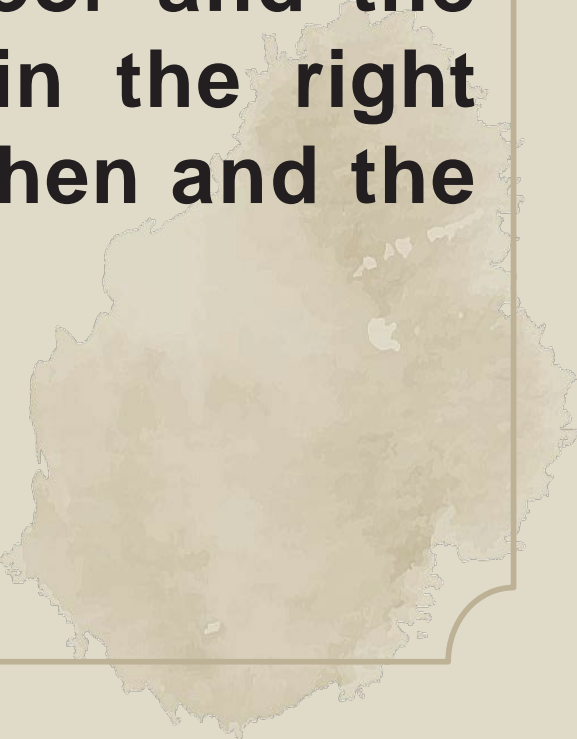
Time: The Present




Mrs. Fitzgerald



Scene: The living-room of the Pearson family. Afternoon. It is a comfortably furnished, much lived-in room in a small suburban semi-detached villa. If necessary only one door need be used, but it is better with two — one up left leading to the front door and the stairs and the other in the right wall leading to the kitchen and the back door.





There can be a **muslin**- covered window in the left wall and possibly one in the right wall, too. The fireplace is **assumed** to be in the fourth wall. There is a settee up right, an armchair down left and one down right. A small table with two chairs on either side of it stands at the centre.

Muslin: A very thin cotton fabric


Assume: To accept to be true





Two tea-cups

When the curtain rises it is an afternoon in early autumn and the stage can be well lit. Mrs Pearson at right, and Mrs Fitzgerald at left, are sitting opposite each other at the small table, on which are **two tea-cups** and saucers and the cards with which Mrs Fitzgerald has been telling Mrs Pearson's fortune.



Mrs Pearson is a pleasant but worried-looking woman in her forties. Mrs Fitzgerald is older, heavier and a strong and **sinister** personality. She is smoking. It is very important that these two should have sharply contrasting voices— Mrs Pearson speaking in a light, **flurried** sort of tone, with a touch of suburban **Cockney** perhaps; and Mrs Fitzgerald with a deep voice, rather Irish perhaps.

Sinister: bad, ominous

Flurry: swirling tone

Cockney: Rough language from east of London




MRS FITZGERALD: [collecting up the cards]
And that's all I can tell you, Mrs Pearson. Could be a good fortune. Could be a bad one. All depends on yourself now. Make up your mind—and there it is.



MRS PEARSON: Yes, thank you, Mrs Fitzgerald. I'm much **obliged**, I'm sure. It's wonderful having a real fortune-teller living next door. Did you learn that out East, too?

Oblige: necessary to do




MRS FITZGERALD: I did. Twelve years I had of it, with my old man rising to be Lieutenant Quartermaster. He learnt a lot, and I learnt a lot more. But will you make up your mind now, Mrs Pearson dear? Put your foot down, once an' for all, an' be the mistress of your own house an' the boss of your own family.

MRS PEARSON: [smiling **apologetically**] That's easier said than done. Besides I'm so fond of them even if they are so thoughtless and selfish. They don't mean to be...


Apologetically: regretfully





MRS FITZGERALD: [*cutting in*] Maybe not. But it'd be better for them if they learnt to treat you properly...

MRS PEARSON: Yes, I suppose it would, in a way.

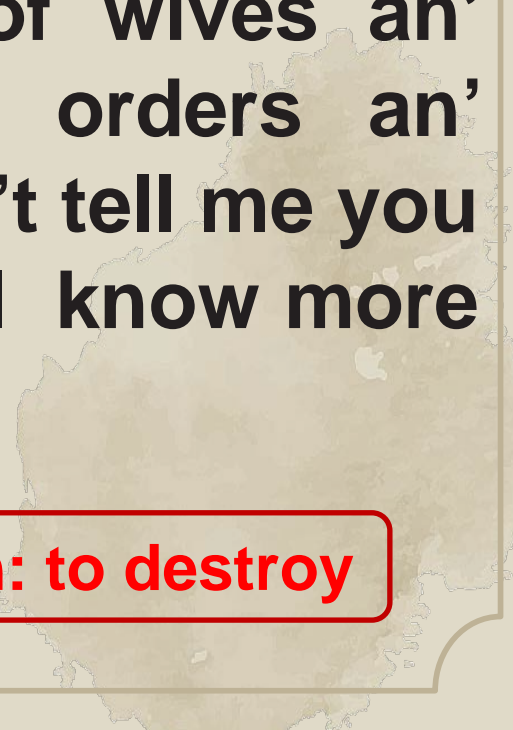




MRS FITZGERALD:

No doubt about it at all. Who's the better for being spoilt—grown man, lad or girl? Nobody. You think it does 'em good when you run after them all the time, take their orders as if you were the servant in the house, stay at home every night while they go out enjoying themselves? Never in all your life. It's the **ruin** of them as well as you. Husbands, sons, daughters should be taking notice of wives an' mothers, not giving 'em orders an' treating 'em like dirt. An' don't tell me you don't know what I mean, for I know more than you've told me.


Ruin: to destroy






MRS PEARSON: [dubiously] I— keep dropping
a hint...

MRS FITZGERALD: Hint? It's more than hints
your family needs, Mrs
Pearson.






MRS PEARSON: [dubiously] I suppose it is. But I do hate any unpleasantness. And it's so hard to know where to start. I keep making up my mind to have it out with them but somehow I don't know how to begin. [She glances at her watch or at a clock] Oh— **good gracious!** Look at the time. Nothing ready and they'll be home any minute and probably all in a hurry to go out again. [As she is about to rise, Mrs Fitzgerald reaches out across the table and pulls her down.]

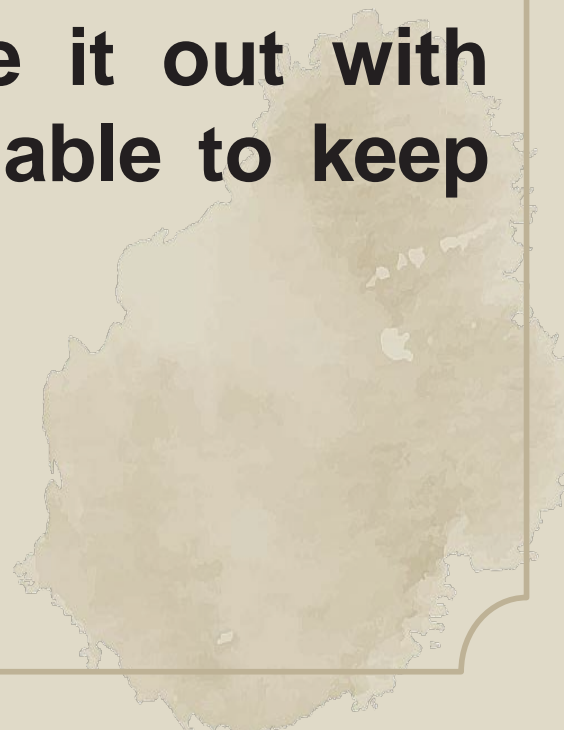


Good gracious: an exclamation to show surprise



MRS FITZGERALD: Let 'em wait or look after themselves for once. This is where your foot goes down. Start now. [She lights a cigarette from the one she has just finished.]

MRS PEARSON: [*embarrassed*] Mrs Fitzgerald— I know you mean well— in fact, I agree with you — but I just can't— and it's no use you trying to make me. If I promise you I'd really have it out with them, I know I wouldn't be able to keep my promise.







MRS FITZGERALD:

Then let me do it.

MRS PEARSON:

[flustered] Oh no— thank you very much, Mrs Fitzgerald— but that wouldn't do at all. It couldn't possibly be somebody else — they'd resent it at once and wouldn't listen — and really I couldn't blame them. I know I ought to do it— but you see how it is? [She looks apologetically across the table, smiling rather miserably.]






MRS FITZGERALD: [coolly] You haven't got the idea.
[*bewildered*] Oh—I'm sorry—I thought
you

MRS PEARSON: asked me to let you do it.

MRS FITZGERALD: I did. But not as me—as you

MRS PEARSON: But—I don't understand. You couldn't be
me.



MRS FITZGERALD: [*coolly*] We change places. Or—
really — bodies. You look like me. I look like
you.


MRS PEARSON: But that's impossible.

MRS FITZGERALD: How do you *know*? Ever tried it?


MRS PEARSON: No, of course not...


MRS FITZGERALD: [*coolly*] I have. Not for some time but
it still ought to work. Won't last long, but
long enough for what we want to do. Learnt it
out East, of course, where they're up to all
these tricks. [*She holds her hand out across
the table, keeping the cigarette in her mouth*]
Gimme your hands, dear.

MRS PEARSON: [*dubiously*] Well—I don't know—is it
right?



MRS FITZGERALD: It's your only chance. Give me your hands an' keep quiet a minute. Just don't think about anything. [Taking her hands] Now look at me. [They stare at each other. Muttering] Arshtatta dum—arshtatta lam—arshtatta lamdumbona...






[This little scene should be acted very carefully. We are to assume that the personalities change bodies. After the spell has been spoken, both women, still grasping hands, go lax, as if the life were out of them. Then both come to life, but with the personality of the other. Each must try to adopt the voice and mannerisms of the other. So now Mrs Pearson is bold and **dominating** and Mrs Fitzgerald is nervous and **fluttering**.]

Dominate: to control

Flutter: Quick up and down movement





MRS PEARSON: [now with Mrs Fitzgerald's personality] See what I mean, dear? [She notices the cigarette] Here—you don't want that. [She snatches it and puts it in her own mouth, puffing **contentedly.**]

[Mrs Fitzgerald, now with Mrs Pearson's personality, looks down at herself and sees that her body has changed and gives a scream of fright.]



Contentedly: with satisfaction

MRS FITZGERALD: [with Mrs Pearson's personality] Oh— it's happened.

MRS PEARSON: [**complacently**] Of course it's happened. Very neat. Didn't know I had it in me.

MRS FITZGERALD: [alarmed] But whatever shall I do, Mrs Fitzgerald? George and the children can't see me like this.

MRS PEARSON: [grimly] They aren't going to— that's the point. They'll have me to deal with— only they won't know it.

Complacently: Showing satisfaction



MRS FITZGERALD: [still alarmed] But what if we can't change back? It'd be terrible.


MRS PEARSON: Here— steady, Mrs Pearson — if you had to live my life it wouldn't be so bad. You'd have more fun as me than you've had as you.

MRS FITZGERALD: Yes— but I don't want to be anybody else...

MRS PEARSON: Now— stop worrying. It's easier changing back— I can do it any time we want...

MRS FITZGERALD: Well— do it now...






MRS PEARSON: Not likely. I've got to deal with your family first. That's the idea, isn't it? Didn't know how to begin with 'em, you said. Well. I'll show you.

MRS FITZGERALD: But what am I going to do?

MRS PEARSON: Go into my house for a bit—there's nobody there—then pop back and see how we're doing. You ought to enjoy it. Better get off now before one of 'em comes.



**Chuckle: to
laugh quitely**


MRS FITZGERALD: [nervously rising] Yes— I suppose that's best. You're sure it'll be all right?

MRS PEARSON: [**chuckling**] It'll be wonderful. Now off you go, dear.

Mrs Fitzgerald crosses and hurries out through the door right. Left to herself, Mrs Pearson smokes away — lighting another cigarette — and begins laying out the cards for patience on the table.

Burst: suddenly

After a few moments Doris Pearson comes **bursting** in left. She is a pretty girl in her early twenties, who would be pleasant enough if she had not been spoilt.]




DORIS: [*before she has taken anything in*]
Mum — you'll have to iron my yellow
silk. I must wear it tonight. [*She now
sees what is happening, and is
astounded.*] What are you doing? [*She
moves down left centre.*]

[*Mrs Pearson now uses her ordinary voice,
but her manner is not fluttering and
apologetic but cool and incisive.*]

Astound: surprised and shocked





MRS PEARSON: [not even looking up] What
d'you think I'm doing—
whitewashing the ceiling?

DORIS: [still astounded] But you're smoking!

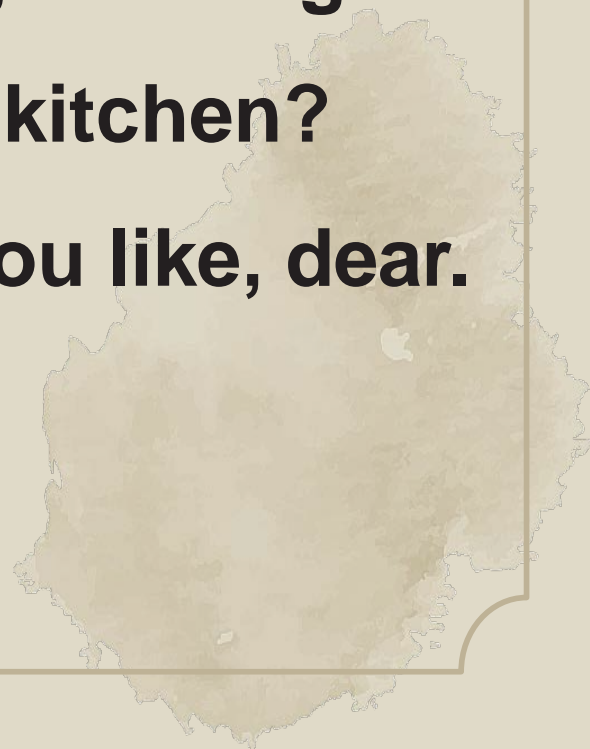
MRS PEARSON: That's right, dear. No law
against it, is there? But

DORIS: I thought you didn't smoke.

MRS PEARSON: Then you thought wrong.

DORIS: Are we having tea in the kitchen?

MRS PEARSON: Have it where you like, dear.
[angrily]





DORIS: Do you mean it isn't ready?

MRS PEARSON: Yours isn't. I've had all I want. Might go out later and get a square meal at the Clarendon.

DORIS: [hardly believing her ears] Who might?





MRS PEARSON: I might. Who d'you think?

DORIS:[staring at her] Mum— what's the matter with you?

MRS PEARSON: Don't be silly.

DORIS:[indignantly] It's not me that's being silly —and I must say it's a bit much when I've been working hard all day and you can't even bother to get my tea ready. Did you hear what I said about my yellow silk?

Indignantly: With anger







MRS PEARSON: No. Don't you like it now? I never did.

DORIS: [indignantly] Of course I like it. And I'm going to wear it tonight. So I want it ironed.

MRS PEARSON: Want it ironed? What d'you think it's going to do—iron itself?

DORIS: No, you're going to iron it for me... You always do.





MRS PEARSON: Well, this time I don't. And don't talk rubbish to me about working hard. I've a good idea how much you do, Doris Pearson. I put in twice the hours you do, and get no wages nor thanks for it. Why are you going to wear your yellow silk? Where are you going?

DORIS: [*sulkily*] Out with Charlie Spence.

Sulkily: sadly, seriously





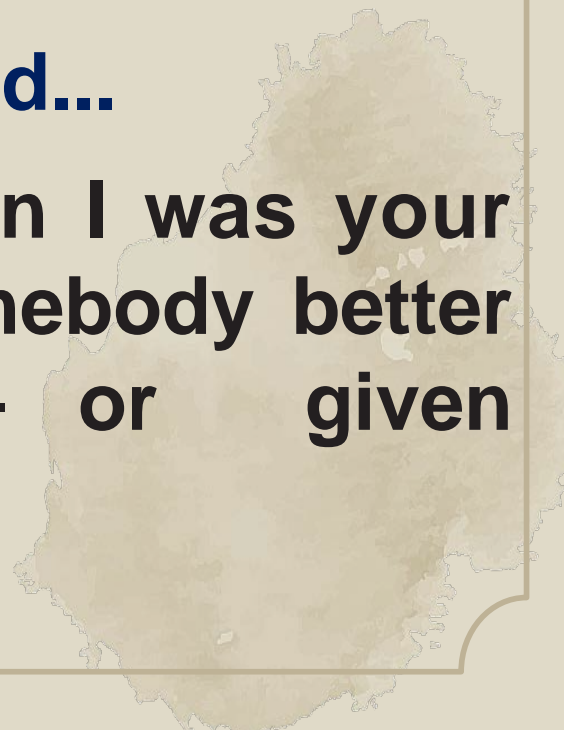
MRS PEARSON: Why?


DORIS: [wildly] Why? Why? What's the matter with you? Why shouldn't I go out with Charlie Spence if he asks me and I want to? Any objections? Go on—you might as well tell me...

MRS PEARSON: [severely] Can't you find anybody better? I wouldn't be seen dead with Charlie Spence.

DORIS: Buck teeth and half-witted...

MRS PEARSON: He isn't... When I was your age I'd have found somebody better than Charlie Spence—or given myself up as a bad job.





DORIS: [nearly in tears] Oh— shut up!
[Doris runs out left. Mrs Pearson **chuckles**
and begins putting the cards together.
After a moment Cyril Pearson enters left. He is
the **masculine counterpart** of Doris.]

Chuckle: to laugh silently

Masculine: manlike

Counterpart: Peer or of equal post and rank





CYRIL: [**briskly**] Hello— Mum. Tea ready?

MRS PEARSON: No.

CYRIL: [moving to the table; annoyed] Why not?

MRS PEARSON: [coolly] I couldn't bother.

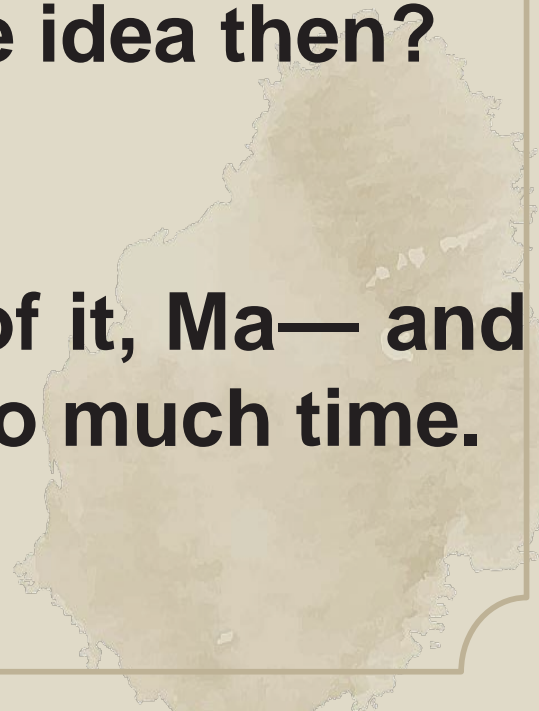
CYRIL: Feeling off-colour or something?


MRS PEARSON: Never felt better in my life.

CYRIL: [aggressively] What's the idea then?

MRS PEARSON: Just a change.

CYRIL: [**briskly**] Well, snap out of it, Ma— and get cracking. Haven't too much time.





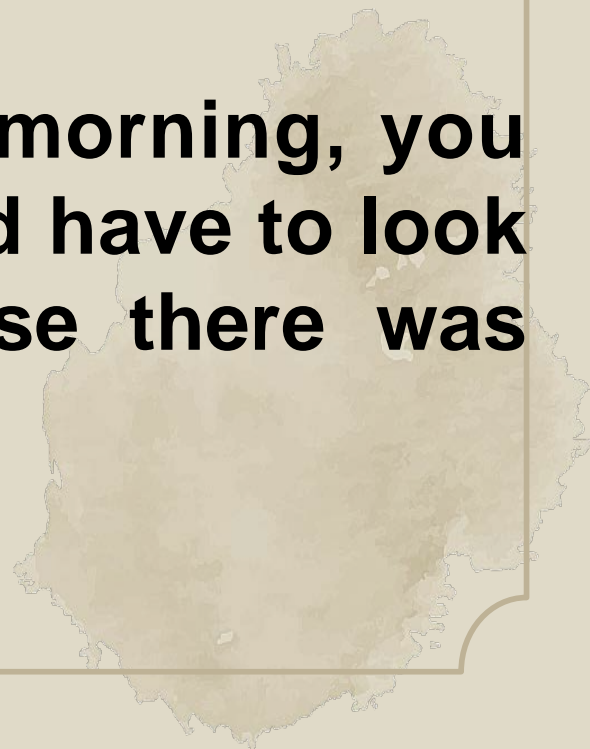
[Cyril is about to go when Mrs Pearson's voice checks him.]

MRS PEARSON: I've plenty of time.

CYRIL: Yes, but I haven't. Got a busy night tonight. [moving left to the door] Did you put my things out?

MRS PEARSON: [coolly] Can't remember. But I doubt it. [moving to the table; protesting] Now—look.

CYRIL: When I asked you this morning, you promised. You said you'd have to look through 'em first in case there was any mending.






MRS PEARSON : Yes— well now I've decided I don't like **mending**.

CYRIL: That's a nice way to talk— what would happen if we all talked like that?

MRS PEARSON: You all do talk like that. If there's something at home you don't want to do, you don't do it. If it's something at your work, you get the Union to bar it. Now all that's happened is that *I've* joined the movement.

Mend: to repair





CYRIL: [**staggered**] I don't get this, Mum.
What's going on?


MRS PEARSON: [**laconic** and **sinister**]
Changes.


[Doris enters left. She is in the process of dressing and is now wearing a wrap. She looks pale and red-eyed.]

Stagger: surprised and shocked

Laconic: using very few words

Sinister: Bad, evil, Ominous





MRS PEARSON: You look terrible. I wouldn't wear that face even for Charlie Spence.

DORIS: [moving above the table; angrily] Oh— shut up about Charlie Spence. And anyhow I'm not ready yet— just dressing. And if I do look terrible, it's your fault— you made me cry.

CYRIL: [curious] Why— what did she do?

DORIS: Never you mind.





MRS PEARSON: [rising and preparing to move to the kitchen] Have we any **stout** left? I can't remember.

CYRIL: Bottle or two, I think. But you don't want stout now.

MRS PEARSON: [moving left slowly] I do.

CYRIL: What for?

Stout: Strong





**MRS PEARSON: [turning at the door] To
drink—you clot!**

**[Mrs Pearson exits right. Instantly Cyril and
Doris are in a huddle, close together at left
centre, rapidly whispering.]**

You Clot: A stupid person

Huddle: come close together






DORIS: Has she been like that with you, too?


CYRIL: Yes— no tea ready— couldn't care less...

DORIS: Well, I'm glad it's both of us. I thought I'd done something wrong.

CYRIL: So did I. But it's her of course...

DORIS: She was smoking and playing cards when I came in. I couldn't believe my eyes.



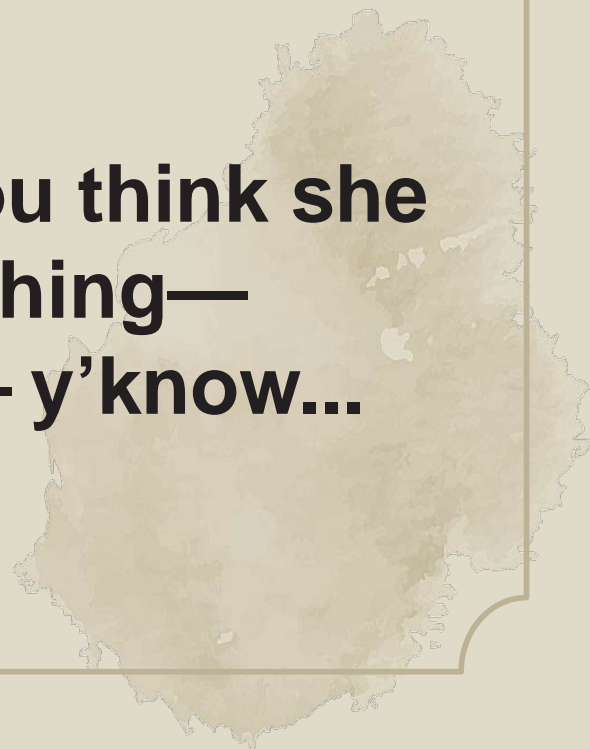



CYRIL: I asked her if she was feeling off-colour and she said she wasn't.

DORIS: Well, she's suddenly all different. An' that's what made me cry. It wasn't what she said but the way she said it— an' the way she *looked*.

CYRIL: Haven't noticed that. She looks just the same to me.

DORIS: She doesn't to me. Do you think she could have hit her head or something— y'know — an' got— what is it?— y'know...





CYRIL: [*staggered*] Do you mean she's
barmy?

DORIS: No, you fathead. Y'know—
concussion. She might have.

CYRIL: Sounds far-fetched.

DORIS: Well, she's far-fetched, if you ask me.
[She suddenly begins to giggle.]

CYRIL: Now then— what is it?

Barmy: Silly



DORIS: If she's going to be like this when Dad comes home... [*She **giggles** again.*]

CYRIL: [*beginning to **guffaw***] I'm staying in for that— two front dress circles for the first house...

[Mrs Pearson enters right, carrying a bottle of stout and a half- filled glass. Cyril and Doris try to stop their guffawing and giggling, but they are not quick enough. Mrs Pearson regards them with **contempt**.]

Giggle: to laugh repeatedly with no control

Guffaw: To laugh loudly

Contempt: Strong feeling of dislike



MRS PEARSON: [coldly] You two are always talking about being grown-up— why don't you both try for once to be your age? [She moves to the settee and sits.]

CYRIL: Can't we laugh now?

MRS PEARSON : Yes, if it's funny. Go on, tell me. Make me laugh. I could do with it.

DORIS: Y'know you never understand our jokes, Mum...

MRS PEARSON: I was **yawning** at your jokes before you were born, **Doris**.


DORIS: [almost tearful again] What's making you talk like this? What have we done?

MRS PEARSON: [**promptly**] Nothing but come in, ask for something, go out again, then come back when there's nowhere else to go.

CYRIL: [aggressively] Look— if you won't get tea ready, then I'll find something to eat myself...

Yawn: to open mouth wide open

Promptly: excitedly



MRS PEARSON: Why not? Help yourself. [She takes a sip of stout.]

CYRIL: turning on his way to the kitchen]
Mind you, I think it's a bit thick. I've been working all day.

DORIS: Same here.

MRS PEARSON: (calmly) Eight hour day!

CYRIL: Yes— eight hour day — an' don't forget it.

MRS PEARSON: I've done my eight hours.

CYRIL: That's different.

DORIS: Of course it is.




MRS PEARSON: [calmly] It was. Now it isn't. Forty-hour week for all now. Just watch it at the weekend when I have my two days off.

[Doris and Cyril exchange alarmed glances. Then they stare at Mrs Pearson who returns their look calmly.]

CYRIL: Must **grab** something to eat. Looks as if I'll need to keep my strength up. [Cyril exits to the kitchen.]

DORIS: [moving to the settee; anxiously] Mummy, you don't mean you're not going to do anything on Saturday and Sunday?

Grab: to hold suddenly and roughly



MRS PEARSON: [airily] No, I wouldn't go that far. I might make a bed or two and do a bit of cooking as a favour. Which means, of course, I'll have to be asked very nicely and thanked for everything and generally made a fuss of. But any of you forty-hour-a-weekers who expect to be waited on hand and foot on Saturday and Sunday, with no thanks for it, are in for a **nasty** disappointment. Might go off for the week-end perhaps.

Nasty: Very bad





DORIS: [*aghast*] Go off for the week-end

MRS PEARSON: Why not? I could do with a change. Stuck here day after day, week after week. If I don't need a change, who does?


DORIS: But where would you go, who would you go with?

MRS PEARSON: That's my business. You don't ask me where you should go and who you should go with, do you?

DORIS: That's different.

Aghast: Surprising, Shocking






MRS PEARSON: The only difference is that I'm a lot older and better able to look after myself, so it's you who should do the asking.

DORIS: Did you fall or hit yourself with something?

MRS PEARSON: [coldly] No. But I'll hit you with something, girl, if you don't stop asking silly questions. [Doris stares at her open-mouthed, ready to cry.]

DORIS: Oh— this is awful... [She begins to cry, not **passionately**.]





MRS PEARSON: [coldly] Stop **blubbering**.
You're not a baby. If you're old enough
to go out with Charlie Spence, you're
old enough to behave properly. Now
stop it.


[George Pearson enters left. He is about fifty,
fundamentally decent but **solemn**, self-
important, **pompous**. Preferably he should be
a heavy, slow-moving type. He notices Doris's
tears.]

Blubber: to cry in a noisy way

Solemn: Serious

Pompous: Self-importance





GEORGE: Hello— what's this? Can't be anything to cry about.

DORIS: [through sobs] You'll see.

[Doris runs out left with a sob or two on the way. George stares after her a moment, then looks at Mrs Pearson.]


GEORGE: Did she say 'You'll see'...?

MRS PEARSON: Yes.

GEORGE: What did she mean?

MRS PEARSON: Better ask her.





[George looks slowly again at the door then at Mrs Pearson. Then he notices the stout that Mrs Pearson raises for another sip. His eyes almost bulge.]

GEORGE: Stout?

MRS PEARSON: Yes.

GEORGE: [amazed] What are you drinking stout for?

MRS PEARSON: Because I fancied some.



Bulge: to stick out than normal




GEORGE: At this time of day?


MRS PEARSON: Yes— what's wrong with it
at this time of day?

GEORGE: [**bewildered**] Nothing, I suppose,
Annie— but I've never seen you do it
before...

MRS PEARSON: Well, you're seeing me now.

GEORGE: [with heavy distaste] Yes, an' I don't
like it. It doesn't look right. I'm
surprised at you.



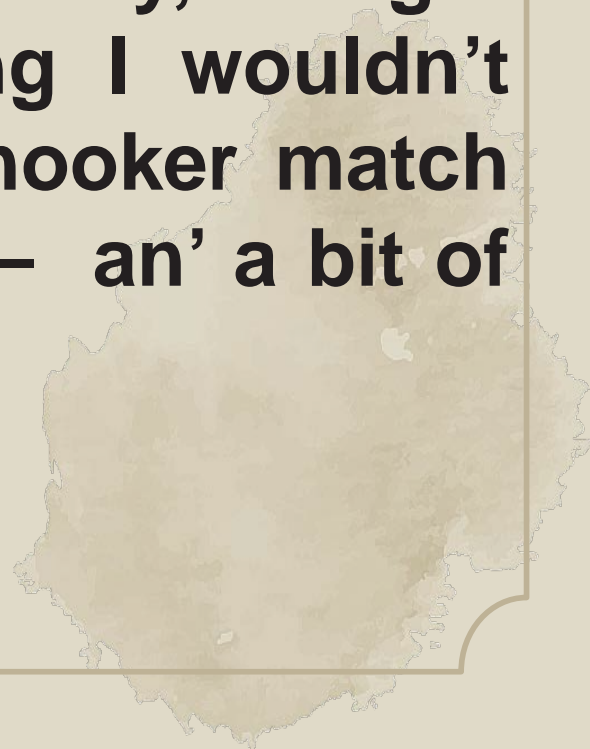


MRS PEARSON: Well, that ought to be a nice change for you.

GEORGE: What do you mean?

MRS PEARSON: It must be some time since you were surprised at me, George.

GEORGE: I don't like surprises— I'm all for a steady going on— you ought to know that by this time. By the way, I forgot to tell you this morning I wouldn't want any tea. Special snooker match night at the club tonight— an' a bit of supper going. So no tea.



MRS PEARSON: That's all right. There isn't any.

GEORGE: [astonished] You mean you didn't get any ready?

MRS PEARSON: Yes. And a good thing, too, as it's turned out.

GEORGE: [**aggrieved**] That's all very well, but suppose I'd wanted some?

MRS PEARSON: My goodness! Listen to the man! Annoyed because I don't get a tea for him that he doesn't even want. Ever tried that at the club?

Aggrieved: Pained, sorrowful





GEORGE: Tried what at the club?

MRS PEARSON: Going up to the bar and telling 'em you don't want a glass of beer but you're annoyed because they haven't already **poured** it out. Try that on them and see what you get.

GEORGE: I don't know what you're talking about.

MRS PEARSON: They'd laugh at you even more than they do now.






GEORGE: [indignantly] Laugh at me? They don't laugh at me.

MRS PEARSON: Of course they do. You ought to have found that out by this time. Anybody else would have done. You're one of their standing jokes. Famous. They call you Pompy-ompy Pearson because they think you're so slow and **pompous**.

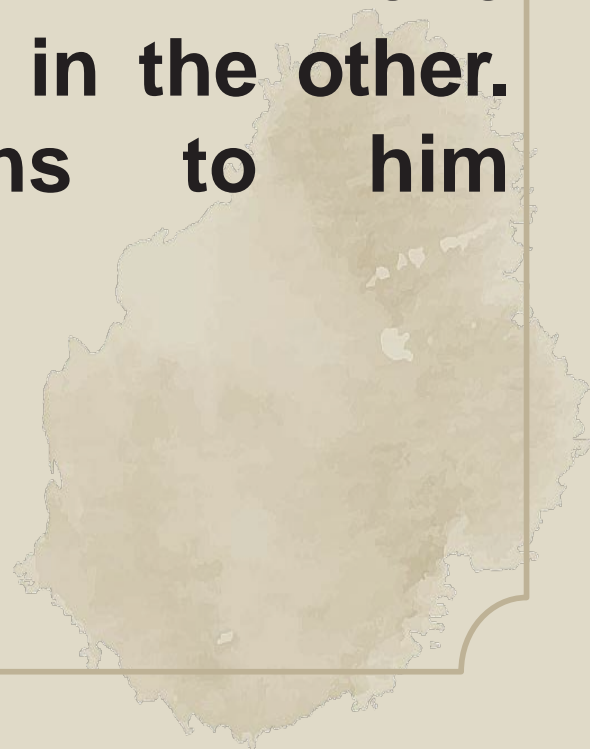
GEORGE: [horrified] Never!






MRS PEARSON: It's always beaten me why you should want to spend so much time at a place where they're always laughing at you behind your back and calling you names. Leaving your wife at home, night after night. Instead of going out with her, who doesn't make you look a fool...

[Cyril enters right, with a glass of milk in one hand and a thick slice of cake in the other. George, almost dazed, turns to him appealingly.]






GEORGE: Here, Cyril, you've been with me to the club once or twice. They don't laugh at me and call me Pompy-ompy Pearson, do they? [Cyril, embarrassed, hesitates.] [Angrily] Go on—tell me. Do they?

CYRIL: [embarrassed] Well—yes, Dad, I'm afraid they do.

[George slowly looks from one to the other, staggered.]







GEORGE: [slowly] Well—I'll be— damned!

[George exits left, slowly, almost as if somebody had hit him over the head. Cyril, after watching him go, turns **indignantly** to Mrs Pearson.]

CYRIL: Now you shouldn't have told him that, Mum. That's not fair. You've hurt his feelings. Mine, too.

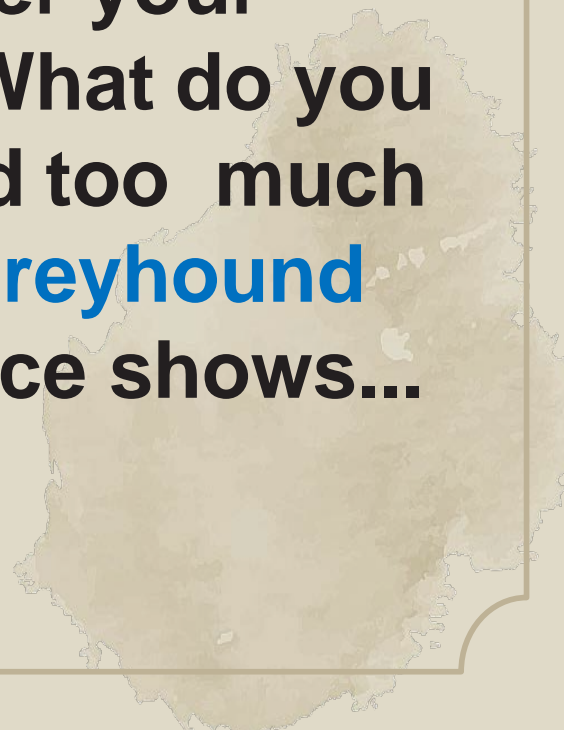





MRS PEARSON: Sometimes it does people good to have their feelings hurt. The truth oughtn't to hurt anybody for long. If your father didn't go to the club so often, perhaps they'd stop laughing at him.

CYRIL: [gloomily] I doubt it.

MRS PEARSON: severely] Possibly you do, but what I doubt is whether your opinion's worth having. What do you know? Nothing. You spend too much time and good money at **greyhound** races and dirt tracks and ice shows...






CYRIL: [sulkily] Well, what if I do? I've got to enjoy myself somehow, haven't I?

MRS PEARSON: I wouldn't mind so much if you were really enjoying yourself. But are you? And where's it getting you? [There is a sharp hurried knocking heard off left.]

CYRIL: Might be for me. I'll see.

[Cyril hurries out left. In a moment he re-enters, closing the door behind him.]





MRS PEARSON: It's that **silly old bag** from next door— Mrs Fitzgerald. You don't want her here, do you? [sharply] Certainly I do. Ask her in. And don't call her a silly old bag either. She's a very nice woman, with a lot more sense than you'll ever have.

[Cyril exits left. Mrs Pearson finishes her stout, smacking her lips. Cyril re-enters left, ushering in Mrs Fitzgerald, who hesitates in the doorway.]

Silly old bad: an ugly ill tempered old woman





MRS FITZGERALD: Come in, come in, Mrs Fitzgerald.

[moving to left centre; anxiously] I—
just wondered— if everything's— all
right...

CYRIL: [sulkily] No, it isn't.

MRS PEARSON: [sharply] Of course it is. You
be quiet.

CYRIL: [indignantly and loudly] Why should I
be quiet?

MRS PEARSON: [shouting] Because I tell you
to— you silly, spoilt, young piecan.



MRS FITZGERALD: [protesting nervously]
Oh— no— surely...


MRS PEARSON: [severely] Now, Mrs Fitzgerald, just let me manage my family in my own way —please!

MRS FITZGERALD: Yes— but Cyril...

CYRIL: [sulky and **glowering**] Mr Cyril Pearson to you, please, Mrs Fitzgerald. [Cyril **stalks off** into the kitchen.]

Glower: angry, Annoyed

Stalk out: to walk with anger

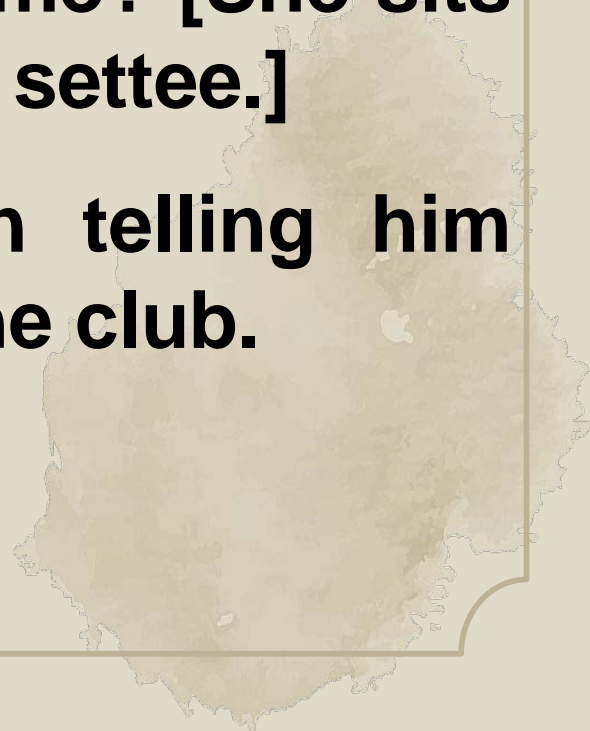



MRS FITZGERALD: [moving to the settee; whispering] Oh — dear— what's happening?

MRS PEARSON: [calmly] Nothing much. Just putting 'em in their places, that's all. Doing what you ought to have done long since.

MRS FITZGERALD: Is George home? [She sits beside Mrs Pearson on the settee.]

MRS PEARSON: Yes. I've been telling him what they think of him at the club.





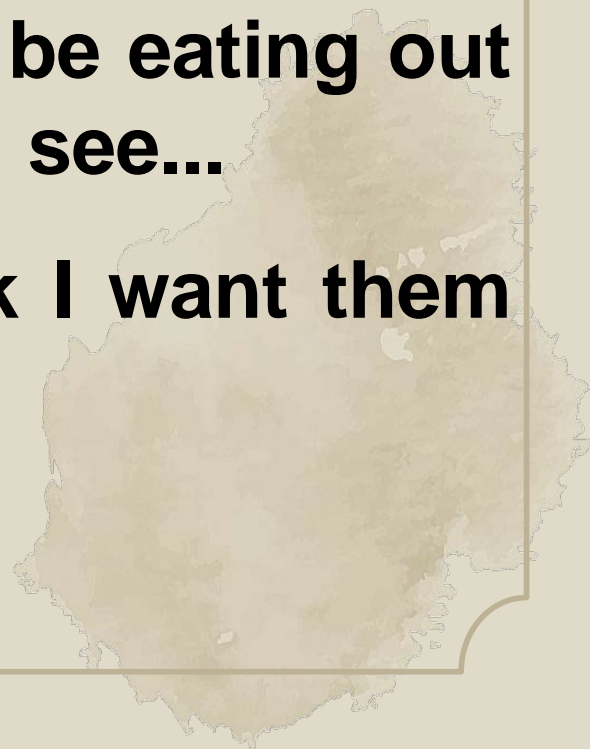
MRS FITZGERALD: Well, they think a lot of him, don't they? MRS

PEARSON: No, they don't. And now he knows it.

MRS FITZGERALD: [nervously] Oh— dear— I wish you hadn't, Mrs Fitzgerald...

MRS PEARSON: Nonsense! Doing 'em all a world of good. And they'll be eating out of your hand soon — you'll see...

MRS FITZGERALD: I don't think I want them eating out of my hand...



MRS PEARSON: [impatiently] Well, whatever you want, they'll be doing it— all three of 'em. Mark my words, Mrs Pearson.

[George enters left glumly. He is unpleasantly surprised when he sees the visitor. He moves to the armchair left, sits down heavily and **glumly** lights his pipe. Then he looks from Mrs Pearson to Mrs Fitzgerald, who is regarding him **anxiously**.]

Glumly: seriously

Anxiously: Nervously

GEORGE: Just looked in for a minute, I suppose, Mrs Fitzgerald?


MRS FITZGERALD: [who doesn't know what she is saying] Well— yes —I suppose so, George.

GEORGE: [aghast] George!

MRS FITZGERALD: [nervously] Oh— I'm sorry...

MRS PEARSON: impatiently] What does it matter? Your name's George, isn't it? Who d'you think you are— **Duke** of Edinburgh?

Duke: A high rank post




GEORGE: [angrily] What's he got to do with it? Just tell me that. And isn't it bad enough without her calling me George? No tea. Pompy-ompy Pearson. And poor Doris has been crying her eyes out upstairs— yes, crying her eyes out.

MRS FITZGERALD: [**wailing**] Oh— dear— I ought to have known...

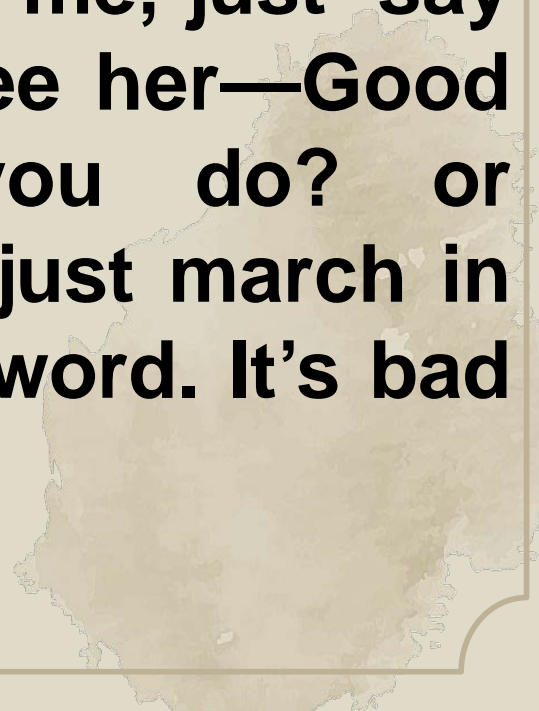
Wail: to weep





GEORGE: [staring at her, annoyed] You ought to have known! Why ought you to have known? Nothing to do with you, Mrs Fitzgerald. Look— we're at sixes and sevens here just now— so perhaps you'll excuse us... [before Mrs Fitzgerald can reply]

MRS PEARSON: I won't excuse you, George Pearson. Next time a friend and neighbour comes to see me, just say something when you see her—Good evening or How d'you do? or something— an' don't just march in an' sit down without a word. It's bad manners...



MRS FITZGERALD: [nervously] No— it's all right...

MRS PEARSON: No, it isn't all right. We'll have some decent manners in this house — or I'll know the reason why. [*glaring* at George] Well?

Glare: Look hardly

GEORGE: [*intimidated*] Well, what!

Intimidate: to feel frightened

MRS PEARSON: [*taunting* him] Why don't you get off to your club? Special night tonight, isn't it? They'll be waiting for you— wanting to have a good laugh. Go on then. Don't disappoint 'em.

Taunt: to make angry and annoyed with some remark

Sixes and sevens: Utterly confused situation

GEORGE: [bitterly] That's right. Make me look silly in front of her now! Go on— don't mind me. **Sixes and sevens!** Poor Doris been crying her eyes out! Getting the neighbours in to see the fun! [suddenly losing his temper, glaring at Mrs Pearson, and shouting] All right— let her hear it. What's the matter with you? Have you gone barmy—or what?

Savagely: Violent, wild

MRS PEARSON: [jumping up; **savagely**] If you shout at me again like that, George Pearson, I'll slap your big, fat, silly face...

MRS FITZGERALD: [moaning] Oh— no— no—
no— please, Mrs Fitzgerald... [Mrs
Pearson sits.]

GEORGE: staring at her, bewildered] Either
I'm off my chump or you two are. How
d'you mean— “No, no— please, Mrs
Fitzgerald”? Look— you're Mrs
Fitzgerald. So why are you telling
yourself to stop when you're not doing
anything? Tell her to stop— then
there'd be some sense in it. [Staring at
Mrs Pearson] I think you must be
tiddly.

Tiddly: Very small



MRS PEARSON: [starting up; savagely] Say that again, George Pearson.

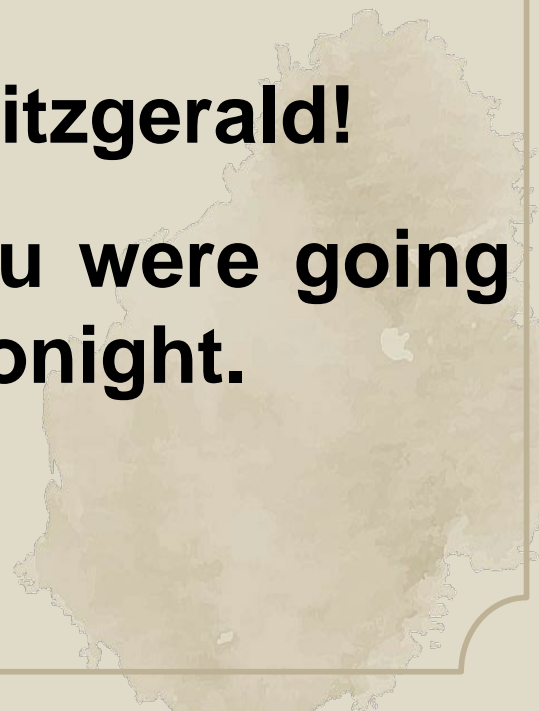
GEORGE: [intimidated] All right— all right— all right ...

[Doris enters left slowly, looking miserable. She is still wearing the wrap. Mrs Pearson sits on the settee.]

MRS FITZGERALD: Hello— Doris dear!

DORIS: [miserably] Hello— Mrs Fitzgerald!

MRS FITZGERALD: I thought you were going out with Charlie Spence tonight.






DORIS: [annoyed] What's that to do with you?

MRS PEARSON: [sharply] Stop that!

MRS FITZGERALD: [nervously] No— its all right...

MRS PEARSON: [severely] It isn't all right. I won't have a daughter of mine talking to anybody like that. Now answer Mrs Fitzgerald properly, Doris— or go upstairs again... [Doris looks wonderingly at her father.]



GEORGE: [in **despair**] Don't look at me. I give it up. I just give it up.


MRS PEARSON: [fiercely] Well? Answer her.

DORIS: sulkily] I was going out with Charlie Spence tonight—but now I've called it off...

MRS FITZGERALD: Oh— what a pity, dear! Why have you?

DORIS: with a flash of temper] Because— if you must know— my mother's been going on at **memaking** me feel miserable—an' saying he's got buck-teeth and is half-witted...

Me making: to
make in reverse

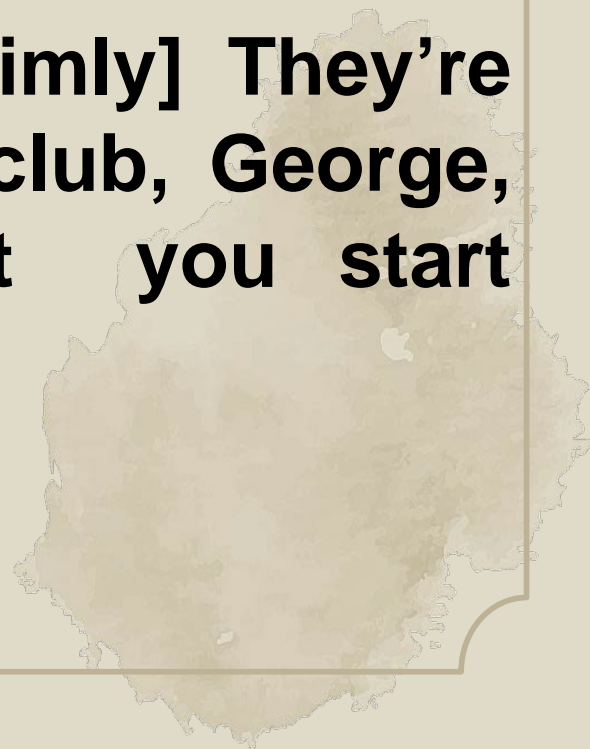


MRS FITZGERALD: [rather bolder; to Mrs Pearson] Oh— you shouldn't have said that...

MRS PEARSON: [sharply] Mrs Fitzgerald, I'll manage my family— you manage yours.

GEORGE: [grimly] Ticking her off now, are you, Annie?

MRS PEARSON: [even more grimly] They're waiting for you at the club, George, don't forget. And don't you start crying again, Doris...



MRS FITZGERALD: [getting up; with sudden decision] That's enough— quite enough.

[George and Doris stare at her bewildered.]

[*to George and Doris*] Now listen, you two. I want to have a private little talk with Mrs Fitz— [*she corrects herself hastily*] with Mrs Pearson, so I'll be **obliged** if you'll leave us alone for a few minutes. I'll let you know when we've finished. Go on, please. I promise you that you won't **regret** it. There's something here that only I can deal with.



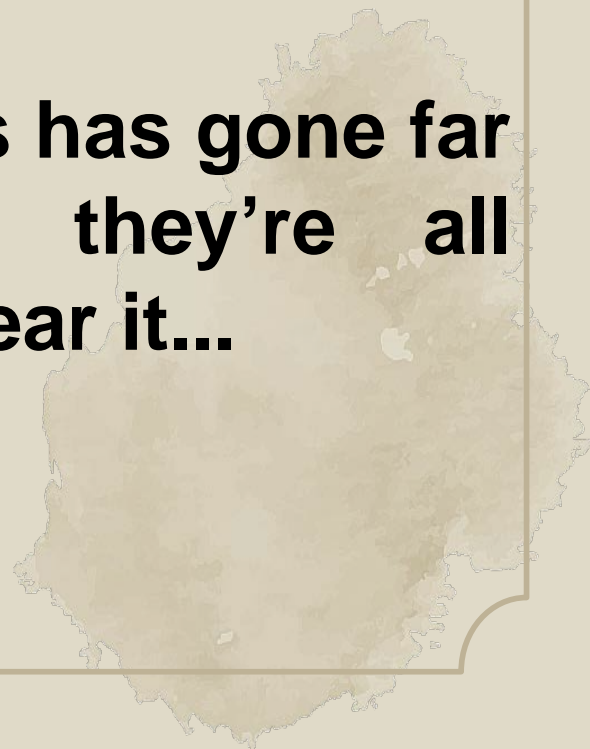
GEORGE: [rising] I'm glad somebody can—
'cos I can't. Come on, Doris.


[George and Doris exit left. As they go Mrs Fitzgerald moves to left of the small table and sits. She eagerly beckons Mrs Pearson to do the same thing.]

MRS FITZGERALD: Mrs Fitzgerald, we must
change back now — we really must...

MRS PEARSON: [rising] Why?

MRS FITZGERALD: Because this has gone far
enough. I can see they're all
miserable—and I can't bear it...





MRS PEARSON: A bit more of the same would do 'em good. Making a great difference already... [She moves to right of the table and sits.]

MRS FITZGERALD: No, I can't stand any more of it—I really can't. We must change back. Hurry up, please, Mrs Fitzgerald.

MRS PEARSON: Well—if you insist...

MRS FITZGERALD: Yes—I do—please—please.

[She stretches her hands across the table eagerly. Mrs Pearson takes them.]



Mutter: Murmer

MRS PEARSON: Quiet now. Relax.

[Mrs Pearson and Mrs Fitzgerald stare at each other. **Muttering**; exactly as before. Arshtatta dum — arshtatta lam — arshtatta lamdumbona...


They carry out the same action as before, going lax and then coming to life. But this time, of course, they become their proper personalities.]




MRS FITZGERALD: Ah well—I enjoyed that.

MRS PEARSON: I didn't. MRS

FITZGERALD: Well, you ought to have done. Now - listen, Mrs Pearson. Don't go soft on 'em again, else it'll all have been wasted...







MRS PEARSON: I'll try not to, Mrs Fitzgerald.

MRS FITZGERALD: They've not had as long as I'd like to have given 'em— another hour or two's rough treatment might have made it certain...


MRS PEARSON: I'm sure they'll do better now— though I don't know how I'm going to explain...







MRS FITZGERALD: [severely] Don't you start any explaining or apologising— or you're done for.

MRS PEARSON: [with spirit] It's all right for you, Mrs Fitzgerald. After all, they aren't your husband and children...





MRS FITZGERALD: [impressively] Now you listen to me. You admitted yourself you were spoiling 'em— and they didn't appreciate you. Any apologies— any explanations— an' you'll be straight back where you were. I'm warning you, dear. Just give 'em a look— a tone of voice— now an' again, to suggest you might be tough with 'em if you wanted to be— an' it ought to work. Anyhow, we can test it.







MRS PEARSON: How?

MRS FITZGERALD: Well, what is it you'd like 'em to do that they don't do? Stop at home for once?

MRS PEARSON: Yes— and give me a hand with supper...

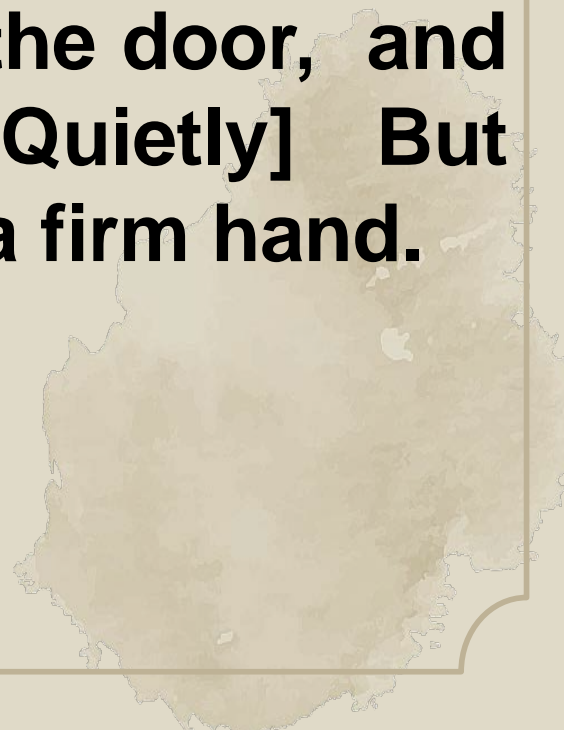
MRS FITZGERALD: Anything you'd like 'em to do— that you enjoy whether they do or not?





MRS PEARSON: [hesitating] Well—yes. I— like
a nice game of rummy— but, of
course, I hardly ever have one—
except at Christmas...

MRS FITZGERALD: [getting up] That'll do
then. [She moves towards the door left
then turns] But remember— keep
firm— or you've had it. [She opens the
door. Calling] Hoy! You can come in
now. [Coming away from the door, and
moving right slightly. Quietly] But
remember— remember— a firm hand.



[George, Doris and Cyril file in through the doorway, looking **apprehensively** at Mrs Pearson.]

I'm just off. To let you enjoy yourself.

[The family looks anxiously at Mrs Pearson, who smiles. Much relieved, they smile back at her.]

DORIS: [anxiously] Yes, Mother?

MRS PEARSON: [smiling] Seeing that you don't want to go out, I tell you what I thought we'd do.

Apprehensively: With worry and doubtfully

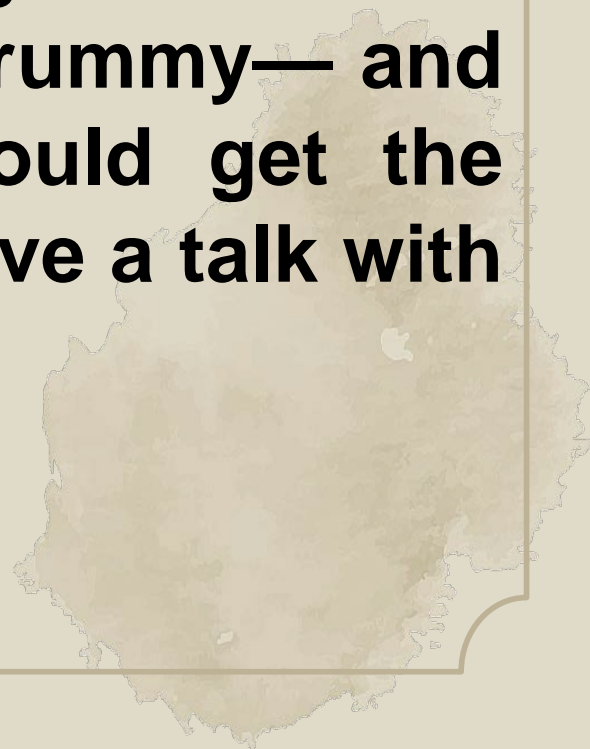



MRS FITZGERALD: [giving a final warning]
Remember!

MRS PEARSON: [nodding, then looking
sharply at the family] No
objections, I hope?

GEORGE: [humbly] No, Mother— whatever
you say...

MRS PEARSON: [smiling] I thought we'd have
a nice family game of rummy— and
then you children could get the
supper ready while I have a talk with
your father...





GEORGE: [firmly] Suits me. [He looks challengingly at the children.] What about you two?

CYRIL: [hastily] Yes— that's all right.


DORIS: [hesitating] Well— I...

MRS PEARSON: [sharply] What? Speak up!

DORIS: [hastily] Oh— I think it would be lovely...

MRS PEARSON: [smiling] Good-bye, Mrs Fitzgerald. Come again soon.





MRS FITZGERALD: Yes, dear. 'Night all— have
a nice time. [Mrs Fitzgerald exits left and the
family **cluster** round Mother as —
the curtain falls.

Cluster: to come together and make a group

