

GAINSBOROUGH

A C T I

SCENE I

PEGGY One, two, three and four.  
I wish we could dance at Ranelagh..  
One, two, three and four.

MOLLY Why wish for something we'll never do?

PEGGY One, two, three and four.

ENTER MRS GAINSBOROUGH

MRS. G. (fussily) Peggy! What are you doing?

PEGGY Practising my dancing.

MRS. G. Upsetting the room - Look at those chairs - what disorder - You forget the Duchess of Devonshire is coming this morning to sit for her portrait - She will visit this room on her way to the studio - Help me put everything back in its place.

PEGGY Yes, Mother.

MRS. G. (Stops in her work to address Molly) And you, Molly.. Put by your work and stop being sulky. We know what is best for your future.

MOLLY Yes, mother.

MRS. G. (To Peggy) Tell James to be at the door and wait for the Duchess.

PEGGY Yes, mother.

MRS G. (Gathering up things to be taken out) Now I must see the cook, nothing but worry and work. (EXIT)

MOLLY Nothing but worry and tears, that is my lot.  
(Begins to cry)

PEGGY Don't cry, dear Molly.



MOLLY How can I help it. It's now two days since father forbade me to see my Johann. Oh Peggy, what shall I do? I love him so much.

PEGGY Have patience and all will end well.

MOLLY But father's so obstinate, mother is worse. They will never agree to our marriage.

PEGGY Then, if you both love each other - -

MOLLY Then what?

PEGGY You will follow the dictates of your hearts.

MOLLY That we will!

JAMES ENTERS mysteriously, surreptitiously looking round.

JAMES Miss Peggy, please watch to see if anyone's coming.

PEGGY But why so mysterious?

JAMES Shush - I've something for Miss Molly. (Gives Molly a note)

MOLLY A note from my Johann!

JAMES Be careful, if master finds out he'll dismiss me at once.

MOLLY I'll be careful, I promise. Oh, how can I thank you.

JAMES It's a pleasure to help such young lovers. (EXIT)

PEGGY Well, what does he say?

MOLLY He loves me, he loves me! he loves me!

PEGGY I knew that - what else?

MOLLY He says he must see me. He's watching the house. The moment that mother goes out and father's safely at work in his studio, I'm to give him a sign to come in. Oh Peggy, how happy I am!

PEGGY It's madness.



MOLLY I know and don't care, Tra-la-la-la, Tra-la-la-la

PEGGY Oh Molly be quiet. Suppose mother comes, she'll wonder why you're so gay.

MOLLY Ha, ha, I'll now be all sadness with pleasure.

MRS G. ENTERS, very upset.

MRS G. Really, this is too much

MOLLY)  
PEGGY)  
MRS G. What, what, what?

MRS G. Bills, bills and more bills. Letters demanding payment by return. Letters of threat; Oh, what shall we do?

PEGGY But father said a few days ago that he'd pay them all and settle....

MRS G. (Breaking in) But he hasn't, and now, I fear, he'll refuse, A new craze has obsessed him.

MOLLY)  
PEGGY)  
MRS G. What is it this time?

MRS G. Miss Foyle and her harp.

MOLLY Is father intending buying it?

MRS.G. Yes, and she wants sixty pounds. A monstrous price, while these bills go unpaid.

MOLLY But father loves music.

MRS G. But why must he always be buying and collecting musical instruments, spending the little money we have. It's high time I stopped him, else he'll end in prison for debt.

PEGGY Don't worry. Father cannot fail. He's a genius.

MRS. G. Yes, perhaps, but oh, so impractical. All our future just now depends on the Duchess. If he would only please her all London would follow the Empress of Fashion, his fame would then be assured. Instead of which he makes her constantly wait for her sittings while he wastes his time painting - Oh horror! Miss Foyle, if you please.

MOLLY



MOLLY)  
PEGGY)  
MRS.G.

How dreadful!

But worse is to come. Her Grace has asked him to vote for Fox, for whom she is canvassing.

M & P.

And what did he say?

MRS G.

I'm afraid he intends to refuse.

PEGGY

Well done father.

MRS. G.

(Turning on her angrily) You've no sense. We must all persuade him to vote for Fox to please his great client and patron or else in her anger she may refuse him sittings, and ruin his future.

Knocking heard at front door.

MRS G.

Who can that be?

MOLLY

Some hungry looking strangers.

MRS.G.

Oh Lud! They look like bailiffs. What shall we do?

JAMES

(Entering) Several men asking for master.

VOICES

(outside) Gainsborough.

MRS.G.

Don't let them in.

VOICES

(outside) Gainsborough.

JAMES

Mercy! They're already in the hall.

VOICES

(outside) Gainsborough.

MRS G.

We're lost. (To Peggy) run and tell father to leave by the back door.

VOICES

(outside) Gainsborough.

MRS G.

I'll receive them.

EXIT JAMES.

VOICES

(outside) Gainsborough.

MRS. G.

This is what comes of marrying an artist.

MOLLY



MOLLY I wouldn't mind.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

MRS.G. Did I say that I did?

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

The men enter - They are musicians, friends and colleagues of Gainsborough.

MRS G. What do you want?

MUSC. We want to see Mr. Gainsborough.

MRS. G. But you can't.

A MUSC. The Prince has sent us. (They wink at each other)

MRS G. Oh! (Puzzled she walks to Gainsborough's door)

ENTER GAINSBOROUGH perusing a book. When he sees them he does not recognise them at once.

GAINS. At your service, Gentlemen.

A. MUSC. Sir (stepping forward)

GAINS. But, Gentlemen, this is a pleasant surprise. Margaret, these are all young musicians and colleagues. Let us have some ale brought in.

MUSC. Hoorah!

GAINS. To what do I owe this friendly invasion?

MRS. G. And I thought you were clients.

MUSC. (Winking at each other) Ha ha ha. The Prince has requested us to invite you to help him choose the Queen of the Ball at the Maskerade at Ranelagh to-night.

GAINS. (Winking likewise) I thank you, but I cannot accept, my wife does not approve of these entertainments: ask Reynolds.

MRS.G. No, Tom. You had better accept.



GAINS. (Feigning surprise) Margaret! Well if it must be so, let us drink to the Prince.

MUSC. And we drink to you, sir.

Knocking outside and voices calling.

CANVASSERS. (outside) Vote for Fox. Down with Wray.

JAMES (entering with a rush) Oh, oh, the Beadle and his officers, Oh, oh!

GAINS. (Sternly) Let them in; and you Margaret, order some more ale, and bring me a bottle of brandy. Gentlemen, I count on your help.

MUSICIANS. You have but to command.

MRS. G. Oh, what a morning!

JAMES is suddenly precipitated into the room. The Beadle and canvassers all rather tipsy enter in a body.

BEADLE Make way for Sir Thomas Tolley, Bart. Alderman of Westminster.

ALL Alderman of Westminster.

Sir T. Tolley is ushered in and starts off with a speech.

SIR T. A-ahem - we come to you on behalf of the Duchess of Devonshire.

CANV. On behalf of Her Grace of Devonshire.

SIR T. We come to you on behalf of the oppressed nations of Europe.

CANV. We live.

SIR T. Asia.

CANV. And die.

SIR T. Africa - America.



CANV. For Charlie.

SIR T. To solicit your vote for the Right Honourable Charles James Fox.

CANV. We live and die for Charlie.

MUSC. Who will always be the polyphomist of politicians.

SIR T. What's that you say?

GAINS. Gentlemen, Gentlemen.

MUSC. Fox, the gamut of accord -

BEADLE He ain't a gamon on a cord -

SIR T. 'Tis a insult. Come out and fight.  
BEADLE

GAINS. Gentlemen. Gentlemen.

MUSC. Bullies - sly foxes.

CANV. Come out and fight.

A fight nearly insues. The whole Gainsborough family unite in stopping it.

GAINS. Gentlemen. Gentlemen. A good English ale that unites us all Under the Table.

ALL Ha ha ha, Under the Table.

SIR T. Unites us all under the table. (Falls)

CANV. He's had an apoplexy.

MUSC. Not he - he's only drunk.

GAINS. Sir Thomas is overcome, you'd better carry him home.

They prepare to carry out Tolley, as this being'done the Beadle soliloquizes -

BEADLE The country is going to the dogs.



- MUSC. (jovially) The dogs.
- BEADLE Since the Tories came in power.
- MUSC. (winking at each other) It will, if Fox gets in.
- BEADLE (not taking any notice) Look at this man. His father could have drunk two bottles full without turning a hair, and he - he's knocked over with scarce half a bottle.
- MUSC. Down among the dead men -
- EXIT CANVASSERS carrying Tolley.
- BEADLE (In exit processions) The country is going to the dogs.
- MUSICIANS also take leave of all shaking hands and linking arms.
- MUSC. The dogs.
- EXIT GAINSBOROUGH.family alone.
- MRS. G. Oh, I got such a fright. I thought they had come to arrest you.
- GAINS. For what?
- MRS. G. For not paying those bills.
- GAINS. Oh, those, They all will be paid in due time.
- MRS. G. I have heard that before.
- GAINS. (smiling) And possibly, you may hear it again.
- MRS. G. But one day you'll regret spending money on musical instruments.
- GAINS. But Margaret dear, it pleases my fancy!
- MRS. G. It's not fair to us all.
- MOLLY Please father.
- PEGGY Please, mother.

Knock at the door.



MRS. G. It's the Duchess.

GAINS. I've someone before her.

ENTER JAMES.

JAMES Miss Foyle, sir.

GAINS. Ask her to go up to the studio.

MRS. G. Tom, please send her away.

GAINS. I must finish her portrait.

MRS. G. You cannot keep Her Grace waiting.

GAINS. Her Grace and I are such old friends, she will understand.

MRS. G. Oh, you would tax anyone's patience.

PEGGY Please, father.

MOLLY Please, mother.

MRS. G. At least, promise Her Grace your vote for Fox.

GAINS. Not on your life! (EXITS, laughing heartily)

PEGGY (aside) Bravo! father!

MRS. G. (fussily impatient) Peggy, get me my bonnet, I will go to the market myself this morning. EXITS, after adjusting bonnet etc.)

MOLLY At last, now I can see my Johann!

PEGGY But how?

MOLLY I'll call James and keep him here, while you let Johann in.

PEGGY makes distasteful movement. MOLLY rushes to her.

Please Peggy, do help me.

PEGGY (Giving in) Yes, of course.

MOLLY (Kissing Peggy as she exits and rushing to door)



James, James!

JAMES (enters) Did you call, Miss?

MOLLY Yes. (Looking towards window) Look it's raining.

JAMES (singing) Always raining  
Here in London  
Fog and rain  
Rain and fog,

Give me the country.

MOLLY (interrupting) Yes James. But, dear me, Mr. Fischer in the meantime will catch his death of cold in the rain, please ask him in.

JAMES Not allowed. Master's orders.

MOLLY He won't know. He's busy painting. Mother is out.

FISCHER and PEGGY enter.

FISCHER And I - am here!

MOLLY (flinging herself towards him) Johann!

JAMES Lord a 'mercy!

(Quartett)  
JAMES You must go, sir, and at once!

MOLLY But it's raining!

PEGGY --- pelting!

FISCHER --- Furchtbar!

JAMES I can't help that, I have orders!

MOLLY Not so loud!

PEGGY softer!

FISCHER piano!

MOLLY We will protect you, dear James!

PEGGY Take all the blame too!



JAMES ---

Rascals!

FISCHER

Help us!

Here's a guinea for your trinket.

JAMES(puts guinea to one eye) One eye still sees youPEGGY

Roughish James

MOLLY

--- Roughish James.

FISCHER gives James a second guinea.JAMES

Now I'll chance it, but be quick.

ALL

Hoorah for James!

MOLLY

I'll guard the front door, and you to Peggy) the back

ALL

Dear, dear James!

JAMES

Foolish, foolish James!

PEGGY and JAMES EXIT - bye plays)FISCHER

(Taking Molly in his arms) Oh how lovely to hold you  
 again to my heart,  
 To see your sweet soul shine through your eyes,  
 To feel your dear lips - kiss - so soft - kiss -  
 so tender - kiss -  
 My angel, my darling, mein Liebling  
 Tell me you love me.

MOLLY

I love you, I love you!

FISCHER

Tell me, that no one can ever part us.

MOLLY

No one Johann, I am yours, all yours - kiss -

FISCHER

I feel I could fight the whole world.

MOLLYNo, just father and mother, persuade them to give us  
 their consent.FUSCHER

Impossible, your mother wants you to marry a Duke or  
 a Lord - Your father - someone who has no opinions  
 at all. He ordered me out of the house because I  
 argued with him that Handel was greater than Bach.



MOLLY But what did you tell him?

FISCHER That his knowledge of music was nil.

MOLLY Lud! No wonder. But you can mend this. Tell him now that perhaps he was right.

FISCHER Oh no, he was wrong. Handel is greater than Bach.

MOLLY Well, compromise and say Handel is equal to Bach.

FISCHER What! and betray my artistic convictions.

MOLLY (almost crying) Ah! You don't love me!

FISCHER Molly!

MOLLY Bach is far more important to you than I am.

FISCHER Not Bach - but the truth.

MOLLY Oh bother the truth. Why should I suffer for it?

FISCHER That is my point: As we cannot persuade your parents to give their consent, let us elope!

MOLLY Elope? How can I? No, no, it's not right.

FISCHER Then you don't love me.

MOLLY I do, I do.

FISCHER Think how exciting it is to elope - Moonlight - The world is asleep. You softly descend by the stairs - Each step brings you nearer and nearer to me - You reach the front door - You open it gently - I am waiting. You are in my arms - We run to the carriage.

MOLLY Oh Johann. (Throws herself excitingly into his arms)

PEGGY (rushing in breathlessly) Hide - quickly - mother.

MOLLY We are lost!

FISCHER Where can I hide?

MOLLY Under the sofa!

FISCHER I can't, it's too low!



JAMES (rushing in) We are caught. Please protect me. Tell the mistress I've been all this time in the kitchen. (Exit)

PEGGY (trying to squeeze Fischer under sofa) Push him in!

MOLLY It's no use.

MRS. G. (outside) James, James (bursting in) This is disgraceful. The front door wide open and James not there. What's been going on here?

PEGGY Nothing. James, I think, is in the kitchen.

MRS. G. In the kitchen, Huh! The Duchess is due to arrive, and....

PEGGY (at the window) Oh mother, the Duchess has just driven up.

MRS. G. Oh what shall I do? James, James, I am glad the rain made me - James - return.

James enters.

JAMES Madam. (aside) Lords a'mercy.

MRS. G. Quick the front door.

James sees quickly that Mrs. G. has no idea what has happened, and at once becomes the good servitor.

JAMES Yes ma'am. (Just about to exit)

MRS. G. Wait, I'll go with you to receive Her Grace.

James bows deeply at the door, and Mrs. G. sweeps out.

MOLLY Don't move.

Fischer sneezes.

PEGGY Oh, don't sneeze.

FISCHER Can't help it. This dust....(gurgles)

MOLLY I am fainting!

FISCHER Courage, my darling!



- PEGGY (quietly arranging the room) Balcony scene, with Romeo comfortably sneezing under the chair.
- MRS. G. (leads the way with gracious mien) This way, Your Grace.
- DUCHESS (entering like a whirlwind) Oh, good people, I'm tired, pumped out, exhausted, dead!
- MRS. G. Your Grace. (brings forward chair)
- DUCHESS Oh thank you. I've been canvassing amongst the Covent Garden porters, kissing the babes of tradesmen, begging, blustering, beseeching, all for Mr. Fox.
- MRS. G. (offering port and biscuits) A little port.
- DUCHESS Oh, thank you.
- MRS. G. Molly tell your father Her Grace has arrived.
- MOLLY I, mother? (falters) (Peggy helps her out)
- PEGGY I'll do it (runs off)

The Duchess notices the two girls byeploys, is amused.

- MRS. G. You are doing a great work.
- DUCHESS Elections are always exciting. Meeting strange people. Seeing a little of their lives, so grey - striving and struggling - I wonder for what.
- MOLLY For love.
- MRS. G. Molly!
- DUCHESS (amused) No, she's perhaps right, but few of us possess it for long.

Enter Peggy rather scared.

Ready for me?

- PEGGY Father begs Your Grace to wait a few minutes.
- DUCHESS Can't he ever be punctual - It's very annoying!
- MRS. G. I am sorry Your Grace.



PEGGY He's almost finished the portrait.

DUCHESS Whose?

PEGGY Miss Foyle's.

DUCHESS What the harp player?

MRS. G. Yes.

DUCHESS Quite pretty.

MRS. G. But a nuisance.

PEGGY Conceited.

MOLLY Ill mannered.

MRS. G.) We dislike her intensely.

MOLLY ) She's not worth the canvas

PEGGY ) not even the paint.

DUCHESS Well, that's some consolation for his having kept me waiting.

MRS. G. I'll go and get rid of her at once. (exit)

DUCHESS (to Molly) And now come and sit here by me.

MOLLY (hesitatingly) H'm.

DUCHESS Don't be so shy.

MOLLY (hedging) I can't walk - my - my shoe hurts me so.

DUCHESS Your shoe! I know how painful that can be, but come, Peggy will help you to hop over here on one foot. I'll soon find out what there is wrong with your shoe.

MOLLY Oh, Your Grace, I am only too certain you will.

Molly hops with Peggy's help to the couch disclosing Fischer's boot.

DUCHESS (looking at Fischer's boot and laughing heartily) Now I see the cause of your trouble. It 's not the shoe, it's the boot.

MOLLY Y-yes-it's my father's. He leaves them about all over the house.



FISCHER (sneezes) (the girls are petrified)

DUCHESS But how very interesting. The boot seems to have caught cold!

MOLLY I'm fainting!

PEGGY Oh, faint, and have done with it. (On her knees to Duchess)  
Oh please, Your Grace, forgive our deception, we were trying to hide him from mother.

DUCHESS A boot and a cold - but I am anxious to know to whom they belong.

FISCHER (from behind armchair) To Johann Fischer, Your Grace.

DUCHESS But - but - this is delightful. Ha ha ha, the great and elegant Mr. Fischer. The Prince's pet oboe player, hiding under - under - ha ha ha.

Laughing quartett.

MOLLY (After timidly joining in with the others) All this is my fault Your Grace, I feel so ashamed.

DUCHESS My dear, you must not. We all have been through it. It's so lovely! The Spring of our life - be happy my dear, be proud to be loved, and to love. I am entirely on your side.

MOLLY )  
PEGGY ) Oh, thank you, Your Grace.  
FISCHER )

DUCHESS Now tell me your real trouble.

MOLLY My parents are against our marriage.

DUCHESS That is sad, but not hopeless.

FISCHER I fear, Your Grace, it is, and therefore I propose to elope with.....

DUCHESS Tut, tut, Mr. Fischer, certainly not. At least, not until we have tried other ways first.

MOLLY )  
FISCHER ) And if they fail?

DUCHESS Then perhaps; but meanwhile I think I could possibly help you.



MOLLY ) You, Your Grace?  
FISCHER)

DUCHESS But first Mr. Fischer, I must put some questions to you, to see if you really and truly deserve such a darling.

Molly bows smilingly and looks perturbed at Fischer.

FISCHER At your service, Your Grace.

DUCHESS Do you drink?

FISCHER An occasional glass.

MOLLY But remains always sober!

DUCHESS Gamble?

FISCHER A little on horses.

MOLLY He never plays cards!

DUCHESS Your temper?

FISCHER Mildly quarrelsome.

MOLLY He has a kind heart!

DUCHESS Have you ever been married before?

FISCHER) No, never.

MOLLY ) Oh, no.

PEGGY ) Oh, no.

DUCHESS Well then, to summon up. The Jury is for you.

FISCHER)

MOLLY ) Oh, thank you, Your Grace.

PEGGY )

DUCHESS Ah now, let us plan how to get the consent of your father. Ah! now listen! I know what I'll do. You must all come to Ranelagh tonight, as my guests, and there we will give Mr. Gainsborough the surprise of his life.

FISCHER)

MOLLY ) Your Grace!

PEGGY )



(Molly looks perturbed)

For Quartett - next page.

End of Scene 1.



DUCHESS

Gainsborough may be a genius  
but I'm not going to let him  
have it all his own way.

I shall punish him for keeping  
me waiting.

The visitors there will be  
wearing all their orders

You must put on all your  
best frills and furbelows

And walk very sedately  
like this

The Duchess holds herself very erect and takes a step or two and the other imitate her

And I will present you all  
to the Prince

Remember you girls must make  
very low curtses. Like this

The Duchess makes a very  
low curtsy

Like this

I shall tell the Prince of  
your engagement, and he may  
do something very nice for  
you at Ranelagh tonight

Curtses again

MOLLY

Father has no right to  
separate me from Johann

I should like to pun-  
ish him for being cruel  
to Johann

You will make him let  
me marry Johann

That will be too won-  
derful for words

It will be splendid

I shall wear my blue  
and silver

erect and takes a step or two and the other imitate her

It will be as good as  
going to Court

Molly makes her curtsy

Like this

Curtses

FISCHER

He shall not prevent me  
from marrying Molly

If Gainsborough were  
not Molly's Father I  
should challenge him

If your Grace helps us,  
all will be well

Thank heaven I shall not  
have to play in the  
orchestra

I shall wear my court  
uniform

I shall get a new sash  
for it

PEGGY

When I get a lover I shall  
not let Father interfere

Father always gets his own  
way

Hurrah! I may meet a lord  
there

Or even a Duke

I shall wear my green and  
gold

Perhaps I shall impress the  
Prince

Peggy makes a curtsy

Like this

Curtses



## SCENE 2.

## Act I.

GAINS (Painting Miss Foyle's portrait) Another touch will spoil it.

FOYLE How lovely. You must have flattered me.

GAINS It's true to life. The harmonies of light and colour I have made, all help the effect.

FOYLE Ah, and yet it's me. Are you really going to give it me?

GAINS Of course. It's our bargain.

FOYLE What bargain?

GAINS That you would exchange your harp for this portrait.

FOYLE My harp enshrines precious memories.

GAINS Be an angel and don't try to get out of your bargain. Remember that .....

FOYLE (furious) Then it's been my harp which interested you, not myself. How could you be so cruel raising my hopes only to blight them like this (totters towards him)

Sounds at door - Foyle springs away.

MRS. G. If you have not finished your business with Mr. Gainsborough, kindly finish it another time. The Duchess is furious at being kept waiting.

FOYLE I'll go at once.

MRS. G. Thank you. I'll tell the Duchess.

Gainsborough accompanies Mrs. G. to door, exit.

GAINS (returning) What dreams and visions did I suggest?

FOYLE Dreams of love.

GAINS I never spoke a word of love to you.

FOYLE But your every action suggested it. You kissed me on the



FOYLE  
cont'd.      mouth.      Remember the old Folk rythm----

Kiss on the hand  
Yours to cammand.  
Kiss on the cheek  
Your friendship seek  
But to kiss the mouth  
Of Love is the token,  
A plighted troth,  
Ne'er to be broken.

GAINS      A fig for that nursery rythm, which I presume you  
invented yourself.      Are you going to let me have the harp?

FOYLE      Oh, I understand now.      The Duchess is waiting.      What a  
fool I've been.      You are in love with the Duchess.

GAINS      (very angrily)      You are mad.      (rings the bell furiously)  
Please go.

FOYLE      Oh please don't be angry.

GAINS      We will finish this conversation some other time.

FOYLE      Tonight after the Fete at Ranelagh.

GAINS      Perhaps.

FOYLE      Promise me?

GAINS      If you let me have the harp.

FOYLE      I will fetch it at once.

GAINS      (overjoyed) Ah! (rushes towards Foyle) (James enters)  
(Gains changes his manner at once and coolly) Tell Mrs.  
Gainsborough I am ready for Her Grace.

JAMES      Yes Sir. (Exit)

FOYLE      (collecting her things. Sings)

But to kiss the mouth of love is the token  
A plighted troth ne'er to be broken.

The Duchess enters and overhears Foyle.

Kiss me goodbye. (Gainsborough kisses her on the cheek.)  
No, a love kiss. (Gainsborough kisses her mouth and she)



leaves after he has seen her to the door. He turns to find the Duchess in the room).

GAINS Your Grace.

DUCHESS Excuses are useless. I quite understand your delay.

GAINS But Your Grace.

DUCHESS Zounds man. (remembers her promise to Molly and Fischer)

GAINS (noticing change) May we begin?

DUCHESS Not yet. I'm tired from waiting. I will rest for a moment. (sits)

GAINS I'm sorry your Grace.

After a considerable pause in which Gainsborough is busy with easel.

DUCHESS Do you go to Ranelagh tonight?

GAINS Yes Your Grace.

DUCHESS I have invited Molly and Peggy.

GAINS Yes, but----

DUCHESS Oh, I will chaperone them myself.

GAINS You're very kind ----

DUCHESS It will do Molly good. She looks very sad.

GAINS Don't change your expression. Can you keep like that?

DUCHESS (pause) What was I thinking about. (pause) I heard a nightingale last night and I made a poem about it. Would you like to hear it?

GAINS I should. (continues to paint while Duchess sings)

DUCHESS It goes like this.

Oh Nightingale, what love song art thou singing?  
What fervent passion fires thy throbbing strain?  
Does it breathe hope to which thy heart is clinging  
Tell it of joys that ne'er may come again.



DUCHESS (cont'd.)

Is it aluring, poignant, pleading to the one you love?  
Or does it mourn for loneliness profound  
Song so sweet and sad might well a mistress move,  
Or be the dirge for hopes dashed to the ground.

Dear rapturous songster with they music voicing  
Our highest bliss and our most sore distress  
Only Heaven will hear it all rejoicing,  
For there alone, is unalloyed Happiness.

GAINS Your Grace sang so divinely. I listened entranced.

DUCHESS Can I talk now? (laughingly)

GAINS Oh please keep still.

DUCHESS (impishly) Does Miss Foyle keep still?

GAINS No, Yes. NO - Oh what does it matter what she does? But you - You in everything fulfill the artist's ideal. This picture shall enshrine your beauty. Thousands down through the ages, will be thrilled by this portrait of our Queen of Lovliness.

DUCHESS (provokingly) So you think this portrait of yours will become famous?

GAINS Without a doubt. It will be inscribed (impishly) A portrait of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire by an unknown artist.

DUCHESS Modest flatterer.

GAINS I love and worship - Beauty.

DUCHESS Oh you artists. What monstrous excuses you make for your fickleness.

No one girl has Beauty complete  
So for a figure from crown to feet  
A full score-or more - do duty.  
Life must be gay  
Amidst the display  
Of so much beauty.

GAINS Your sarcastic remarks are unjust.

DUCHESS Truth hurts.



GAINS (throwing down his brush) You've spoilt my mood. I cannot paint any more. Let's be gay! (the last sentence must sound like gallow-humour)

DUCHESS Yes! Let's be gay and speak of friend Tolley, and did you give him your promise for Fox.

GAINS Sir Thomas came to my house this morning with a mob of drunken ruffians - and collapsed before he could ask me for anything!

DUCHESS Tell me Mr. Gainsborough, has Pitt offered you a place if your efforts secure Fox's defeat?

GAINS The accusation is preposterous.

DUCHESS Yes, and to think how much worse it will sound when the wits get hold of it. (sings)  
 Charles Fox's great canvas was such a success  
 The Tories sent Gainsborough to make it a mess  
 For though as an artist he's but a pot boiler  
 There's none can surpass him as canvass spoiler.

GAINS I see Your Grace does not allow your flights of fancy to be spoilt by any slavish subserviance to the truth.

DUCHESS Do not forget Mr. Gainsborough that I am a whig canvasser.

GAINS I try not to remember it. Of all my sitters, Your Grace is the only one who has dared to use her patronage to try and influence my vote.

DUCHESS Well, your vote will not decide the election anyhow, Mr. Gainsborough. If you were not so cantankerous with your sitters, you would not have to waste so much valuable time on mere landscape.

GAINS Landscape, Your Grace? Do you truly realize what landscape is?

Landscape - sky and earth unite to form its beauty.

Winter's icy snow.

Spring's breezy showers and summer's sunshine bright  
 are preludes meet for autumn's glow.

When leaves and fruit of georgeous colours vie with  
 richest gems of nature's alchemy,

Thank of the trees, piercing the ambient air.

Man's noblest works, his great cathédral piles, with



GAINS      (cont'd.)

nature's woodland fanes cannot compare  
Where towering trees arch over greenwalled aisles,  
their leafy boughs encroaching on the sky  
To form giant roofs that glow with emerald light,  
where choirs of feathered songsters,  
Sing on high, trilling to Heaven, psalms of pure  
delight.

That - Your Grace - is what landscape means to me.

DUCHESS      (Gainsborough has not noticed her great effect at enth-  
usiastic endorsement of all his beautiful ideas. She now  
goes on cool and collectedly).  
Our ideas on art as well as politics are evidently at  
variance. Despite your preference for trees over humanity  
I should like to proceed now with our sitting. But I will  
look at my portrait first.

GAINS      As you will your Grace.

DUCHESS      (after examining portrait a considerable time) I vow  
that I do not like it as well as I did. There's a  
kind of likeness, but you have made me too serious.  
People will think that it's a portrait of my grandmother.

GAINS      I am afraid that Your Grace has allowed our political  
differences to prejudice your vision. You liked it  
well enough yesterday.

DUCHESS      I know what is wrong with it. It's the Hat. It's too  
heavy for me. I always look better bareheaded. You  
must take it out.

GAINS.      I assure Your Grace, the hat suits you perfectly. You  
thought so yourself.

DUCHESSS      Anyhow I don't now. Remove it.

GAINS      Your Grace may have changed her mind again by the next  
sitting.

DUCHESS      Well, if I do, you can paint it in again.

GAINS      The hat is the keynote of the picture. Eliminate it  
and the design is ruined.

DUCHESS      That is what is wrong about it. My face should be the  
keynote, and you have sacrificed it to the hat. Out  
with the hat.



GAINS which would suit your Grace's style of beauty so charmingly.

DUCHESS Out with the hat. (Gainsborough prepares to paint out the face) Man, the hat shall come out. I insist.

GAINS I'm damned if it shall. (Paints out the face with a stroke of his brush)

DUCHESS Oh, oh, oh, (trying in vain to stop him) You have ruined it. Insolent man. How dare you spoil my picture. You'll now have a spoilt canvas on your hands.

GAINS Not so your Grace. I have a pretty serving maid with a face suitable for the design. I'll insert it and sell the work as a fancy picture.

DUCHESS You petty-fogging limner. (furious) I'll tell all my friends of your abominable rudeness so that none of them sit to you.

GAINS I see that I must fall back upon landscape painting. Even Your Grace's displeasure cannot prevent me from using the woods and pastures, the birds of the air, the sheep, the dogs, cows and horses all as my sitters.

DUCHESS Ah! Mr. Gainsborough. You have forgotten the pigs. I have heard that your pig pictures are masterpieces. You can follow up your triumphs with them. You will find them most complaisant sitters. Whenever I see my piggies at Chatsworth it will remind me of this interview. (Collects her things for departure)

For though as an artist he is but a pot boiler, There's none can surpass him (she suddenly realises the comedy of the situation) (laughs heartily) as canvas spoiler. (slow exit, as Duchess goes out with a most whimsical smile, she by chance drops her handkerchief).

Gainsborough's first impulse is to pick it up and give it to her - He thinks better of it and quietly picks it up and puts it, with a smile into his inner coat pocket.

GAINS If only I could paint her as I see her. (Exit)

There is a noise at the door and James comes clumsily in with the hary followed by Miss Foyle. As James



carries the harp past the Duchess's portrait he drops it in his amazement at the ruined picture. Miss Foyle is upset at the dropping of her harp but also happens to see the cause.--gives way to a passion of curiosity and finally having convinced herself of the ruined picture stifles an inclination to laugh and hurriedly steals out of the room, ignoring James's outstretched hand for a tip.)

End of Scene 2. ACT I.



## ACT II

## Scene 1.

Ranelagh.

Beautiful garden on the river in the distance the lit upn Rotunda. Sounds of music from the Rotunda.

DUCHESS (alone) What a change from the madding crowd at the Rotunda to this haven of silence. The Peace is heavenly. Even the distant music is stilled.

Peace broods o'er this heavenly summer night,  
Here with nature I commune  
I freely breathe beneath the tender light  
Of the mysterious ever restful moon.

What joy to leave the madding crowd  
For the country bright and fair  
And idly bask upon a sun-warmed down  
One faithful heart with me my solitude to share.

Lady Betty Foster and a party of ladies in hilarious mood romp onto the stage.

BETTY Good Lud! You here all alone? What have you done with your bevy of followers?

LADY A I vow I heard a serenade.

LADY B You noisy rollikers have frightened the musical swain away.

LADY C Let's unearth him.

LADY D You girls search those trees.

LADY E. Quick, before he comes.

Betty bends down and plays with flower petals.

BETTY  
He loves me  
He don't  
He'll have me  
He won't  
He would if he could  
But he can't  
So he don't



LADY MARCH (also with flower - slower)

He loves me  
 He don't  
 He'll have me  
 He won't  
 He would if he could  
 But he can't  
 So he don't

Ugh, I never tried to tell my fortune but it came out unlucky.

BETTY Who is he, the Prince?

LADIES Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

LADY A Hist, I hear someone coming.

LADY B Masks! (All don their masks)

Gainsborough and his friends all masked and with musical instruments are searching the park for the Duchess. Gainsborough sees her first, gives a sign and they all stop and greet all the ladies, and the Duchess with courtly sweepings of their hats.

GAINS (serenading the Duchess while his friends accompany him on their different instruments)

Most glorious Goddess of the night  
 Thy beauty shown to mortal eyes  
 Inspires a love that dare not rise  
 To one who on Olympian heights  
 Amongst the Gods sits crowned.

But as you've doffed celestial state  
 To tread the earth as woman sweet  
 What wonder if when you I meet  
 My heart your pleasure to await.  
 I lay upon the ground.

DUCHESS (answering from among her ladies)

Moon crowned Diana came to earth  
 To where Endymion sleeping lay  
 Her glory made it bright as day  
 Cupid passed and swayed by mirth  
 He sped two arrows right away.



GAINS

Grant me some hope, and I will strive  
 Thy beauties to immortalise.  
 So paint your smile and sparkling eyes  
 On canvas that you'll seem alive,  
 And your charms will live for ever.

DUCHESS

Cupid's shafts both pierced a heart  
 Diana loved her swain  
 He dared return her love again,  
 For those transfixed by Cupid's darts  
 True lovers must remain.

Chorus - men singing Gainsborough's  
 words, women those of the Duchesses'.

GAINS(alone)

Oh beauteous Goddess, your sweet grace,  
 Emboldens me to raise my eyes,  
 And hope to see a smiling face,  
 When you do bid me rise.

The Prince and His Gentlemen are seen  
 approaching during Gainsborough's solo

PRINCE

(clapping Gainsborough on the shoulder) Bravo, young  
 man. Why, it's our Mr. Gainsborough. I never thought  
 to hear you serenade so deliciously. (Glancing to the  
 Duchess, who has risen) and to some purpose to -  
(Prince passes towards the Duchess) I have come to  
 pay my homage to the Queen of Hearts. (low curtsy from  
 the Duchess. The Prince bends over her)

DUCHESS

(natural voice) Sir, I have a favour to ask.

PRINCE

Your favours are granted before you ask.

DUCHESS

It is that two young friends of mine be invited to the  
 Royal Pavilion, and you Sir to be sponsor to their  
 betrothal.

PRINCE

Since when am I to be the good fairy? T'is a role I  
 have not yet filled.

DUCHESS

Your Royal Highness has always had a tender heart for  
 young lovers.

Prince bows and looks round

Prince invites her to sit by him.  
 Steward comes towards them and asks



the Prince's permission for the dancing to begin.

STEWARD Ladies and gentlemen. Will you now kindly take your places for the Minuet D'Amour. (The Prince dances with the Duchess, Betty with Beechmaster) Ladies and gentlemen.

Gainsborough is with his friends joining in with the instrumentalists. During minuet Miss Foyle appears and starts a scene with Gainsborlogh

FOYLE You have scarcely been near me all the evening.

GAINS. Is that such a hineous sin?

FOYLE I brought my harp to your studio as I promised.

GAINS. Had I known - I would have sent you your portrait.

FOYLE I am not surprised at anything anymore.

GAINS. What do you mean?

FOYLE You are in love.

GAINS. Woman? -

FOYLE You promised me to take me home after the ball tonight.

GAINS I have not refused - as yet.

FOYLE Are you going to dally after the heels of the Duchess?

GAINS. I insist.....

FOYLE (breaking in) Like a discharged flunkey hoping to be re-instated.

GAINS. That you do not speak about the Duchess like that.

FOYLE I saw the blackened face of the portrait this morning.

GAINS. What's that to do with it.

FOYLE I would have thought a lot.

GAINS. What I do and think is no business of yours. (goes away)



FOYLE Oh, I can't bear this any longer! (disappears)

The young men get hold of Gainsborough and push him forward to sing the Mayday song.

Song with mixed chorus and dance.

CHORUS Advance.

GAINS. The dawn will bring the first of May.

CHORUS The first of May.

GAINS. So we shall stay till the rise of the sun.

CHORUS The rise of the sun.

GAINS. Wiling the sil'vry night away.

CHORUS Night away.

GAINS. With mirth and music, dance and song.

CHORUS Dance, all you lads and lassies, dance - Set to partners. Retire. (The men make mistakes)

LAIDES (jeering) Ha ha ha ha ha

They get round FISCHER who takes GAINSBOROUGH'S place while GAINS. goes back to his friends.

CHORUS Advance.

FISCHER Sing out the merry Roundelay.

CHORUS The Roundelay.

FISCHER Away has gone the winter cold -

CHORUS The winter cold -

FISCHER Its sombre garb of drab and gray -

CHORUS Drab and gray -

FISCHER Is covered up with green and gold - Oh, dance, all you lads and lassies. 'Gain set to partners - Retire. (The men do it right)



LADIES Ah, well done.

MEN Ha ha.

ALL Advance. (They crowd round GAINSBOROUGH again)

GAINS. The hawthorne floods the air with scent,  
The nightingale its music shrills.

CHORUS Its music shrills.

GAINS. Each note with poignant passion blent.

CHORUS Passion blent.

GAINS. As every lover's heart it thrills.

CHORUS Dance all lads and lassies. 'Gain set to partners -  
Retire - Advance.

Dance like Roger de Coverley - only  
orchestra - with cries and shrieks.  
Twelve o'clock strikes. Everybody  
including the Prince unmask. Noises  
and shouts from everywhere. Trumpets  
etc. fanfares, bells, fireworks. The  
people sing God save the Prince of Wales.

All God bless the Prince of Wales  
God grant him health and strength,  
The man the farflung empire hails  
As one to whom shall come at length  
The heaviest crown in all the world  
God preserve the Prince  
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah.

Everybody follows the Prince, who with  
the Duchess on his arm leads the way  
off to the Rotunda - all singing 'God  
bless the Prince of Wales!.

GAINSBOROUGH is lost amongst the crowd.  
Miss Foyle is left still searching  
scanning each face to try and find him.  
The Equerry, Lord Eldermere, comes in  
search of GAINSBOROUGH, with him are  
Lord Aspen and Beechmaster.

EQUERRY (seeing Miss Foyle) Miss Foyle, (makes a bow) have you  
seen Mr. Gainsborough?



FOYLE Oh, my lord, there's no speaking to him, since he made the Duchess eat humble pie.

EQUERRY The Duchess - What Duchess?

FOYLE Of Devonshire, of course.

L.ASPEN Godd Lud, How did he manage it?

FOYLE The Duchess wanted her portrait altered.

BEECH. And what happened?

FOYLE Gainsborough would not alter it. The Duchess insisted.

EQUERRY And Gainsborough?

FOYLE He took up his paint brush -

ALL THREE. Yes?

FOYLE And daubed the face in the picture all over with black.

ASPEN Good Lud!

BEECH. Gracious Heavens!

EQUERRY The devil he did.

FOYLE The Duchess screamed blue murder.

EQUERRY I don't believe it.

ASPEN You're bubbling us.

FOYLE It's true every word. He has his pictures on view for the Academy. Nine among them. Make a point of going to his studio tomorrow.

BEECH. Egad, We'll get the Prince to go.

EQUERRY Stab my vitals, won't he laugh when he hears about it.  
(Laughs)

ASPEN The Duchess has never been so flouted (laughs)

FOYLE Flouted!

BEECH. A nine days wonder. (laughs)



ASPEN Quick to the Prince. (runs off laughing)

BEECH. Let's be the first with the news. (laughs, runs off)

EQUERRY In the meantime I must find the culprit.

FOYLE Here he comes and his precious musicians with him.

GAINS. Miss Foyle, I'm sorry that...

Miss Foyle turns smilingly towards him when Equerry interferes.

EQUERRY Mr. Gainsborough, Ha, ha, ha.

GAINS. (Offended) My Lord.

MUSICIANS. (picking a quarrel) My Lord.

EQUERRY Oh, no offence Gentlemen. No offence meant. On the contrary I have been commanded by His Royal Highness to take you ~~Mr.~~ Gainsborough, to the Royal Pavilion. Haste, or we shall be too late.

MUSICIANS. Too late for what?

EQUERRY Ho, ho, Mr. Gainsborough will find out quite soon enough.

All go off GAINSBOROUGH starts to bow his adieu to Foyle, she suddenly covers her side face with her hand, and does not answer his salutation. He finishes his bow quietly and accompanies the impatient Equerry.

FOYLE (alone on stage) Flouted! Her gracious Grace flouted! (laughs - enjoying the scandal she has made).

END OF SCENE I, A C T II.



A C T IISCENE 2. Ranelagh. The Royal Pavilion.End of Supper Party.

The Prince and Gentlemen all very merry. He is singing a rollicking song and they are listening in easy attitudes and joining in with glasses and cheers and singing.

CHORUS Hurrah -

PRINCE The best time of day is the morning  
With the small hours just begun  
And nought to disturb till the dawning  
Which heralds the rising sun.

CHORUS (with Prince)  
In the morning, ere the dawning  
Is the time to sup and drink  
Work has ceased so we may feast  
And with friends our glasses clink.

PRINCE (solo)  
The cares which oppressed us cease troubling  
We sit and make play with our tongues  
Our wit to the surface comes bubbling  
Our voices rise mellow in songs.

CHORUS (with Prince)  
Our grudges and feuds are forgotten  
Or settled by making amends -  
With fire of long standing we cotton  
And hail them from henceforth as friends.

Lord Aspen & Beechmaster enter hurriedly and whisper to the Prince.

PRINCE Gentlemen, a most entertaining piece of news -  
A new scandal around the Queen of Hearts -

ALL What. Georgiana?

MARQUIS We can expect her any moment now.

PRINCE Then, Gentlemen, quick, out with it, before she comes.

BEECH The Duchess sat to Gainsboro'.



CHORUS Gainsboro'.

ASPEN He painted her portrait.

CHORUS Her portrait.

BEECH. But the Duchess didn't like her portrait.

CHORUS The portrait.

ASPEN She told him that he must alter the portrait he'd painted.

CHORUS The portrait he painted.

BEECH Gainsboro' refused!

CHORUS Oh!

ASPEN The Duchess insisted!

CHORUS Yes!

BEECH Gainsboro' said he'd be damned first!

CHORUS Oh!

ASPEN And filling his brush with black paint he daubed it over the Duchess' face!

CHORUS Ha!

PRINCE What? daubed it over Her Grace's face!

BEECH The face in the portrait he means.

CHORUS Oh!

ASPEN The Duchess screamed blue murder!

CHORUS Blue Murder!

ASPEN When she saw her face in the portrait - as black as a spade.

CHORUS A spade?

PRINCE Ha. Ha. Ha.

CHORUS Ha. Ha. Ha.



- PRINCE We shall have to rename her, Queen of Spades.
- CHORUS Queen of Spades, Ha, ha, ha. (long laughter)
- PRINCE But I can't believe it. The Duchess would never demean herself.
- BEECH. But the portrait, black face and all, is in Gainsboro's studios.
- ASPEN Your Royal Highness has merely to go there, and see it for yourself.
- PRINCE Its an extraordinary tale, and yet it accounts for a lot. 'Twill be monstrosly entertaining to watch Her Grace handle the situation.
- EQJERRY (entering and enjoying the commotion) Sir, I have brought Mr. Gainsboro'.
- PRINCE Gentlemen - not a word more now for the present.
- ENTER GAINSBOROUGH.
- The PRINCE rises - all rise.
- PRINCE (jovially to G.) Gentlemen, we welcome Mr. Gainsboro' (All bow)
- GAINS. I thank your Royal Highness for your gracious invitation. Gentlemen! (bows all round)
- PRINCE We do not know what we've let ourselves in for but one thing we do know.
- CHORUS And what's that, sir?
- PRINCE (to G.) We all look to you to make the speech of the evening.
- GAINS. (taken aback) But, Good Lud, Sir, I can't speak.
- PRINCE None of us can.
- CHORUS Oh, oh, oh.
- PRINCE But you're the only man amongst us who dare confess it.



Commotion at door - Enter the Duchess .  
Betty Foster and ladies; Molly and  
Fischer - Molly veiled - Peggy in  
background.

PRINCE Ah! Mr. Gainsborough, now is the moment.  
GAINS. (jovially) I will certainly do my best, sir.

DUCHESS (Solo)  
Gone is winter glooming  
Everything is blooming  
Fields are fresh and green  
Warm the breezes quiver  
Over mead and river,  
Bright with golden sheen.  
All the birds are singing  
Love songs while they're winging  
Each to find its mate.  
For they now are pairing  
None are left despairing  
'Cause they woo'd too late.

GAINS. (sotto) Thank goodness Fischer is hooked at last.  
He won't be able to dangle after my Molly now.

CHORUS  
DUCHESS  
&  
BETTY  
Now the sun is shining  
Let's have no repining  
All is bright and fair.  
Tall the crops are growing  
Gay the flowers are blowing,  
Scenting sweet the air.  
'Tis the time for mating  
What's the use of waiting.  
Go to church and wed  
In this halcyon weather  
Youth and love together  
Share the nuptial bed.

The Duchess presents Molly and Fischer  
to the Prince. Molly wishes to kiss  
his hand but the Prince lifts her up  
to him with the following words.

PRINCE No, no, I shall claim the same privileges as from  
a new made bride.

Molly lifts her veil and Gainsborough  
sees it is his daughter. He is quite  
overcome.



GAINS Gracious! It's Molly!

The Prince kisses Molly and then leads them both round the circle of friends. The Prince comes in front of G. who rises.

PRINCE I have the pleasure of presenting the future Mrs. Fischer to you. We have all abetted the action, so we too must plead forgiveness.

MOLLY (on her knees in front of G.) Forgive us, father.

FISCHER Dearest friend, grant pardon. (G. lifts Molly up and holds her against his breast)

GAINS (big-heartedly) I'll do everything in my power to help you both, (to Fischer) and you will earn my eternal gratitude by making my Molly happy.

A Roundelay is sung.

PRINCE Let us drink a bumper,  
A bumper to the happy pair,  
Give them health and riches  
From now, without a single care.

DUCHESS) (ladies joining in later)  
and) Molly what a beau you've got  
BETTY ) May Fischer a faithful husband prove  
And every cloud in married life  
Be merged at once in Light of Love.

The fanfare at the Rotunda is heard, the steward enters to show everybody to their places.

PRINCE The music in the Rotunda is beginning again. I know that the ladies especially, would not like to miss this part of the performance, therefore, we will all meet again a little later.

The Minuet D'Amour is heard again, with other sounds intermingling - the ladies prepare to leave the Pavilion. Lord Beechmaster and Aspen get into conversation with the Duchess.

BEECHM. Was it not a charming scene. Your Grace need not wear black looks any longer.



- DUCHESS I don't know what you mean, Lord Beechmaster.
- BEECHM. Didn't Gainsborough disfigure your portrait with black, because you asked him to alter it.
- DUCHESS How monstrously amusing.
- ASPEN Why, he said you went on your bended knees to him!
- DUCHESS Someone has been bubbling you my friends. Tell them all it's a stupid lie.
- Molly runs up to the Duchess and Fischer in background.
- MOLLY Oh, thank you, Your Grace, for all you have done for us; father was kindness itself.
- Duchess kisses Molly.
- DUCHESS Lord Eldermere, will you make me your everlasting debtor by kindly showing my two young friends to my box.
- Lord Eldermere exits with Molly and Fischer after elaborate adieu taking.
- DUCHESS (going towards Gainsborough who disengages himself from the gentlemen) I congratulate you on your role of a forgiving father.
- GAINS (jovially) As your Grace vouches for the desirability of my future son-in-law I must needs approve of my daughter's choice.
- DUCHESS How kind you sound. Yet to punish me for my interference, you slander me!
- GAINS (nonplussed) Slander you!
- Betty Foster having stood enough from Aspen who is jokingly spreading the scandal about the Duchess runs over to the Duchess and overhears the last words.
- BETTY Yes infamously. Everyone here is full of it.
- DUCHESS Has the Prince heard?
- Gainsborough is getting angry.



BETTY He's swallowed it all.

GAINS (fiercely) I have not uttered a word against her Grace.

DUCHESS Who can believe it.

BETTY Huh!

GAINS How dare you say that to me?

DUCHESS Dare?

BETTY Huh!

GAINS I demand an explanation.

DUCHESS The only explanation you deserve is a horsewhipping. That she could only cry alack

BEECHM. Unless the Gods give me their aid, I'm henceforth known as Queen of Spades.

Laughter from the Prince's group interrupt them and the Prince comes smilingly towards them.

PRINCE I am glad to find you together. I have been hearing so much about Mr. Gainsborough's wonderful portrait of Your Grace, and that Mr. Gainsborough departing from his usual style, has made black its principal colour.

GAINS Your Royal Highness has been misinformed. Except for the hat there's scarcely any black in the picture.

PRINCE (bursting with curiosity) I must see this most intriguing picture. (to Duchess) Have you any objection Duchess?

DUCHESS (coldly watching Gainsborough) None at all, but as it's unfinished it's for Mr. Gainsborough to say -

PRINCE And you Mr. Gainsborough?

GAINS (bowing) I shall be proud for Your Royal Highness to see it any time you please.

PRINCE Be gad, I'll come tomorrow morning. Will that suit Your Grace?

DUCHESS (pretending indifference but boiling inside) Oh yes, but



DUCHESS

(cont'd) I'm not very much interested in the picture. (Gainsborough very surprised and hurt) Mr. Gainsborough may be very good at pigs and trees but when one wants a real portrait, one goes to Reynolds. (With a grand curtsy full of disdain and abhorrence for G. and forcing a smile for the Prince she sweeps out. - Gainsborough gains his composure very gradually and the Prince enjoys the scene which he himself has provoked.)

Lord Beechmaster who has been watching this curious scene suddenly begins to write again and presents what he has written to the Prince - who is highly amused and half reading and half by memory recites the following to Gainsborough.

PRINCE

(quietly to G.) "Ladies are whimsical creatures. Generally rudest to those they most esteem. Give them time for penitence and they become angels again." A glass of wine is the best solace, so have one with me. (Steward brings wine, etc.)

CHOR.

A glass of wine is the best solace.

GAINS

(mechanically - still quite dazed) Your Royal Highness is goodness itself.

PRINCE

As I presume you would not care to sit next Her Grace in her present mood, I am leaving you to the care of our friends. Gentlemen - the ladies.

CHORUS

The ladies.

Prince exits.

Come back soon. God bless you, sir. We'll miss you, sir. We're a dull lot without you.

ASPEN

The ladies - God bless them.

GAINS

(ironically) The ladies, the ladies. A set of changeable creatures who don't know their own minds for two minutes in succession.

BEECHM.

Ah, you're seeing black looks on ladies everywhere. (laughter)

ASPEN

Now I'll give a toast that will suit you all.



CHORUS Sweethearts?

ASPEN Aye, aye.

CHORUS Tra, la, Tra la, tra, la, la.

G. sits morosely still.

ASPEN Let each one toast his sweetheart. His sweetheart that shall be. Whether she be a lowly maid or maid of high degree.

CHORUS Let each one toast his sweetheart,  
His sweetheart that shall be,  
Whether she be a lowly maid,  
Or maid of high degree

ASPEN It may be she has black eyes,  
Or may be they are blue,  
Each sees in them his love returned  
With adoration true.

CHORUS (Basses) Pompous of porte,  
(Tenors) Or of Humble mien,  
(B) Laughing or flighty,  
(T) Or sober and staid,  
(B) Inclined to rashness,  
(T) Or over afraid,  
(B) Fat as a bullock  
(T) Or graceful and lean,  
(Together) There's a woman one of us thinks his Queen.

Gainsborough gets up suddenly and takes the centre from Aspen, who is highly amused.

GAINS (He drinks to them all)  
Now you may toast your ladies,  
High ladies of degree,  
Not one of them is woman, is woman for me.

CHORUS O ho ho, ho ho, ho ho! -  
GAINS Be she Countess, Duchess or Queen,  
For the girl I admire is the  
Serving maid of England,  
Who comes at your call to give you her aid. (He drinks deeply)

CHORUS The serving maid, Ho ho, Ho ho.  
B. (P)  
Shall we stop him?



CHORUST.(P)

No! Play up to him!

T.

Here's to the serving maid

B.

Here's to the serving maid

GAINS

With smiling face, respectful mien no matter what her work is,

The serving maid keeps tidy and clean

The serving maid of old England.

(playing up to him)B.

Ladies of rank at fete and at ball

T.

Expect you to stand at their beck and call

B.

Till you are nearly worn out with waiting

T.

But the serving maid will wait on you

B.

Bringing you ale of your favourite brew -

T.

Glass after glass without any ado

B.

Till you find your thirst is abating.

T. & B.(together)

The serving maid of England

la, lala,

To the serving maid

Gainsborough throws his glass down and goes out of the pavilion in a blaze of temper - rather unsteadily.

The gentlemen laugh heartily.

(QUICK CURTAIN)

END OF ACT II.



ACT III

## Scene I.

Duchess' Boudoir.

FREDA (Tidying the room etc.) Is Your Grace going to sit for Mr. Gainsborough to-day?

DUCHESS (Uneasily) No, I will not sit to Gainsborough) (Freda looks curiously at her Mistress who is very distressed)

(A knock at the door)

DUCHESS Come in!

FOOTMAN (At the door) A young person, Missus Fischer, desires to wait upon Your Grace.

DUCHESS (Frowns suddenly, then her face lightens) Show Mrs. Fischer up.

FOOTMAN (In meantime has brought a dress and laid it on big chair) I have brought Your Grace your brown dress.

Opening door

Missus Fischer, Your Grace.

DUCHESS (To Freda) Put the dress down, I will ring when I want you.

FOOTMAN Yes Your Grace. (Goes out)

(Molly comes shyly forward)

MOLLY I fear that I come at an inconvenient time, but I felt that I must thank you again for your great kindness to my husband and myself.

DUCHESS Tut, tut, (Kissing her) I was very pleased to help you, though your father disapproved of my action.

MOLLY What makes Your Grace think so?

DUCHESS (After a slight pause) He slandered me last night.



MOLLY (Intensely upset) Your Grace must be mistaken.

DUCHESS Not I. He tells everyone, I went on bended knees to implore him to alter my portrait back to what it was, and he, the great artist, (disdainfully) would not deign to grant my prayers. It's unbearable!

MOLLY I'm sure he never said anything of the kind. (Very earnestly.) It sounds like Miss Foyle.

DUCHESS What?

MOLLY James told me he caught her quizzing the spoilt portrait!

DUCHESS Oh Lud, that minx!

MOLLY We dislike her intensely and think she is capable of anything

(Betty Foster, unannounced, the privilege of an old friend, comes in and hesitates at the door in astonishment)

BETTY Why do you have Gainsborough's daughter here after his vile slanders?

DUCHESS Betty!

MOLLY My father is no slanderer.

BETTY Who else could it have been?

DUCHESS Molly thinks it might have been Miss Foyle!

BETTY Bah! What difference does that make? It only shows him a coward.

DUCHESS Betty!

BETTY (Continues) Putting up the minx to utter slanders he dare not say himself.

MOLLY (Interrupting) It's untrue, untrue, I know my father and you don't.

BETTY (Getting more and more excited) He spoilt the picture, did he not? Yet last night, when the Prince wanted to see it, he made no demur, but egged him on to view it this morning.

MOLLY (Desperately) If he did, the picture will be fully restored when the Prince sees it.



DUCHESS Rubbish, child, it would take him three days to repaint the face. How can he do it in a single morning without a model?

TRIO

MOLLY He knows Your Grace's face so well that he could paint it from memory.

DUCHESS (Aside) I cannot but believe that she is speaking the truth.

BETTY The inventive minx had better be careful.

MOLLY My father could paint Your Grace easily from memory.

BETTY (to Duchess) Who called you Queen of Spades? That name alone is proof of his vile slanders.

DUCHESS You're much too hard on the child.

TRIO

<u>DUCHESS</u>	<u>BETTY</u>	<u>MOLLY</u>
Betty, you are much too hard on the girl, she's really speaking the truth. My good child, you had better go now, I believe you.	Insolent man who called you Queen of Spades that name alone is proof of his vile slanders. The inventive minx.	The picture will be alright. It breaks my heart to contemplate that Your Grace can so misunderstand. Please believe me.

(Molly curtseys to Duchess and runs off sobbing.)

(Betty and Duchess alone, rather embarrassed)

BETTY What are you going to do?

DUCHESS Remain here, I suppose.

BETTY And leave him to show your blackened picture - and explain it - so as to confirm his slanders.



DUCHESS I can't credit Mr. Gainsborough with spreading those scandals about me.

BETTY (angrily) You're infatuated with the fellow.

DUCHESS I'm not.

BETTY Even the great Gainsborough cannot perform miracles and repaint a picture in a couple of hours.

DUCHESS (Contemplatingly)  
If I went early I could prevent him from showing it.

BETTY (Angrily, shortly)  
He would show it, whether you wanted or not.

DUCHESS (Striking a new note)  
He is a gentleman!

BETTY (Impetuously)  
If you believe that - it's no use arguing with you - I'll leave you to your maid you mad creature risking your reputation for an impudent lying paint-dauber.

DUCHESS (Severely)  
Betty, you forget yourself.

BETTY (Bursting with impatience)  
Bah! (Bangs the door open and flings herself out)

(The Duchess rises and goes as if to call her back - then stops)

(The Duchess is full of indecisions)

(At last she makes up her mind to act -)

DUCHESS (Rings her bell)  
(Freda enters)  
Get the costume I wore when I sat to Mr. Gainsborough, be quick-

(Freda rushes off to obey and brings it back almost immediately - with a wave of her head the Duchess dismisses her and sits next to the costume which she pats occasionally.)

DUCHESS

SOLILLOQUY

Should I go?



DUCHESScont'd.

Dare I go?  
 When t'was only last night I struck that grievous  
 blow to his pride -  
 His skill I then decried to the Prince and to them all -  
 Oh, what shall me befall  
 If I go?  
 Ah, me -  
 What can I do to try to call back those wanton words -  
 He thinks I scorn his work -  
 If he but knew  
 I thrill with pride at every fervent stroke he sets  
 on canvas  
 Harmony divine flows from his brush.

(remembering his words)

"Landscape -  
 Sky and earth unite to form its beauty.  
 Think of the trees -  
 Man's noblest works, his great cathedral piles, with  
 Nature's woodland fanes cannot compare -  
 Giant roofs that glow with emerald light -"

How can I ease his smart,  
 For well I know my angry words pierced to his heart!  
 I must go! I shall go!  
 Whatever may befall,  
 For now I feel I know that me he ne'er belied,  
 So I'll curb my pride,  
 No matter what poignant disgrace -  
 The Prince and all I will face by his side -

(SLOW CURTAIN)END OF ACT III SCENE I.



A C T III

SCENE 2. GAINSBOROUGH'S studio. GAINS. in arm-chair with coat off having restless sleep.

ENTER MOLLY and FISCHER, Mrs. G. and PEGGY.

- MOLLY Oh father - (Gainsborough starts up) the Duchess
- GAINS. (Still under the influence of sleep) What's that? Who's there -
- MRS. G. (Going close to him) Oh, Tom do wake up, its terrible!
- GAINS. What's terrible?
- MOLLY I've just seen the Duchess.
- GAINS. Oh! (beginning to understand)
- FUSCHER Her Grace was angry, cross.
- MOLLY Lady Betty was the worst.
- MRS. G. I ought perhaps to have gone myself.
- MOLLY But Mother, you scarce know her.
- MRS. G. (starting a row) Well I'm -
- GAINS. (breaking in) Peace, peace, What said the Duchess?
- MOLLY That you couldn't mend the portrait.
- GAINS. Let her think so - I won't touch it!
- MRS. G. But you must!
- FISCHER Judicious it will be, most wise!
- MOLLY (pleadingly) Please Father. Do put the portrait to rights.
- GAINS. (looking at the portrait) Ha, ha, ha. They shall see the black Duchess.
- MOLLY No. No.
- GAINS. The Queen of Spades.



- MOLLY It was all Lady Betty. She is monstrous; she said I was lying -
- FISCHER (fiercely) Lady Betty is one damn nasty one.
- GAINS. (impressed) (shutting up the portrait) H'm -
- MRS. G. You must put it right, else she'll ruin you.
- GAINS. She has done her best already, Why should I not strike back? Am I a worm to be trampled upon?
- MRS G. But she won't take the picture. Remember the unpaid bills. (She gets up to go to the bell) I shall tell James to say you are ill; and not to let anyone in - (Gainsborough jumps up and rings the bell violently)
- MRS G. (wringing her hands) You will ruin us all!
- ENTER JAMES
- GAINS. The Prince, the Duchess and many other visitors may call this morning - if they do, show them straight up here.
- JAMES Yes Sir. (Exits muttering) God bless my soul, God bless my soul.
- GAINS. (sitting down again) You had better leave me.
- MOLLY Oh, Father -
- GAINS. I wish to be alone.
- FISCHER My dear friend.
- GAINS. (louder) I wish to be alone.
- FISCHER (p) Um Gotteswillen - Scandal - scandal.
- Takes Molly and Peggy as far as door.
- MRS. G. Tom, you must really tidy yourself.
- GAINS. Yes, oh yes. But please leave me now!
- MRS. G. (at the door) If you two hadn't interfered I could have managed him.

ALL EXEUNT. except GAINSBOROUGH.



GAINS.(soliloquy)

Last night she flouted me before them all,  
 Defamed my art!  
 Held me to ridicule!  
 Twitted me with Reynolds!  
 Oh, God, why did she treat me thus?  
 Her words smote me like a whiplash.  
 But her look of disdain was so grand,  
 I could have shouted Bravo!  
 It was just like this -

Starts a pencil study of Duchess

Yes, that's the expression!  
 But one cannot suggest its' full beauty without colour.  
 I have it in the portrait - (Opens the portrait)  
 Ha, ha, ha, ha, What a hideous daub it looks now,  
 My Lady Duchess never suspected 'twas a mere splotter  
 of Lampblack - which a wet rag would remove.  
 Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Stops suddenly struck by a new idea.GAINS.

But, no, I can't leave you to the mercy of that gang  
 of scandal mongers - with their gibes - their sneers!  
 It would be damnable. Zounds, no, I'll remove it.

Collects his implements. During which he cleans and retouches the portrait.

You've conquered many a heart Lady Disdain  
 Left many an aching smart, Lady Disdain  
 For your smile strikes like a ray of tropic sun -  
 A single fervent glance! The mischief's done!

But what divine rapture  
 That sweet smile to capture,  
 A moment's glimpse of Heaven, then its gone!  
 (f) You are beautiful and proud, Lady Disdain,  
 Every head to you is bowed, Lady Disdain,  
 A score of generations in their tomb  
 Have lived and died to raise your single bloom;  
 (p) You wondrous and matchless flower,  
 Just to live your little hour,  
 And then, like them, to fade into the gloom,  
 (f) My poor brush that you despise, Lady Disdain,  
 Preserves your looks for all men's eyes, Lady Disdain,  
 Immortal on this canvas you'll remain  
 Fairest of Queens who did men's hearts enchain.



(p)  
 Every beauty of your face,  
 Your proud and stately grace,  
 Will live through me alone,  
 Lady Disdain.

The Duchess enters and stands  
 uncertainly at the door. Gainsborough  
 is rooted to the spot.

DUCHESS I - am - here -

GAINS. (regaining his poise) Your Grace does me an honour.

DUCHESS (trying to go on) I am here - to sit -

GAINS. After what your Grace said last night -

DUCHESS I never meant it -

GAINS. But why say it?

DUCHESS In self-defence - They forced me to it -

GAINS. (incredulously) Forced the Duchess of Devonshire!

DUCHESS They said you were boasting that I had gone down on my knees to you -

GAINS. And you believed it?

DUCHESS For one brief moment - Could I have come now, if I still believed it?

GAINS. (very upset) The Arch Devils - monstrous to say that of me.

DUCHESS (very quietly) What does it matter now?

JAMES (Entering hurriedly and showing nervousness)  
 His Royal Highness, the - the Prince of Wales.

DUCHESS (Under her breath) Don't show him the portrait.  
 I will say I must give you another sitting before it can be shown.

GAINS. (Also under his breath) Please be calm - it will be alright.

The Court begins to come in - also



Mrs. Gainsborough, Peggy, Molly and Fischer.

The Prince enters very jovially.

PRINCE But this is very delightful. To find the 'Queen of Beauty gracing Mr. Gainsborough's studio -

DUCHESS GAINS. (Bowing) Your Royal Highness.

The Courtiers are peering about. Mr. Gainsborough dexterously turns the portrait away from them.

PRINCE Now we will be able to compare her portrait with the original.

DUCHESS (Smiling) Ah, your Royal Highness, it might be a trial to-day; the picture is still unfinished, and you know what a difference the finishing touches make to a work -

PRINCE (still very amiable) Quite so, Your Grace, but I can make allowances. I am sure Mr. Gainsborough will let me have a peep -

GAINS. Your Royal Highness is sufficient master of the arts to make allowances for any shortcomings -

Gainsborough invites the Prince to come over to the easel on which the picture stands, turned away from the inquisitive eyes of all the rest of the company.

PRINCE (Without any outward sign to his followers speaks) Ah! I see you have introduced some black, Mr. Gainsborough.

All present chuckle with subdued mirth, priming themselves on their subtlety.

Mrs. Gainsborough, Molly, Peggy and Fischer very upset.

PRINCE (Interrupts the Courtiers' unseemly behaviour) But you have used it with masterly effect!



This sentence has a very subduing influence on every one present, and Lady March, during the following scene between the Prince and the Duchess, at last succeeds in getting a full face view of the portrait, Gainsborough turning the easel about playing with them all.

PRINCE

I congratulate you Duchess. Its superb - Never has your friend Reynolds made a more successful portrait. (studies the portrait anew. To Gainsborough)  
You must let me sit to you, for through your masterly forethought

He holds up the rag with which Gains. cleaned the face. Gains. makes an involuntary movement to take it from the Prince.

You have conquered all our hearts and given some of us

Seeing the trepidation and anxiety on the faces of the courtiers

really thrilling palpitations - Ha, Ha, Ha.

LADY MA.

(Aside to Courtiers) The picture is perfect, you have bubbled us all. The Prince will be furious.

LORD A&B.

Damn that Foyle girl.

GAINS.

I am greatly honoured by Your Royal Command - and has you have so graciously approved of the picture perhaps Her Grace will allow me to show it to the rest of the Company -

CHORUS

(exaggeratedly) Oh please, oh please, Your Grace!

The Duchess assents still doubtful of the portrait.

Ah, Ah, (stop dumbfounded)

LADY M.

(insistently to men) Bray, donkeys, bray - (p)

BREKCH

& BASSES.

(f) Wonderful. (p) Damn that Foyle girl. (f) superb.

LADY M.

(To women) Bray, donkeys, bray - (p)

TEN

Glorious indeed -



LADIES Devastating, extatique, unique -

TEN Won't we catch it yet -

LADY M. Bray donkeys, Bray -

ALL (trying to outvie each other) "Tis wonderful,  
super extatique, unique -

PRINCE (holds up his hand for silence) And now we must not  
keep the Duchess from her sitting any longer - We  
never thought to see such beauty so truthfully  
depicted, and the background of trees is superb. The  
only things I miss Your Grace, are those little  
famous piggies you were speaking so feelingly about -

DUCHESS Your Royal Highness, I'm so proud of my portrait,  
just as it is, but, nevertheless - I'll endeavour  
to persuade Mr. Gainsborough to paint one little  
fellow in, for your special benefit!

Smilingly she curtseys.  
Prince laughs joyfully.

PRINCE Your Grace is truly bewitching.

He bows and kisses her hand EXITS.

All the others bow and get out the best  
way they can.

The Duchess taps A and B on the  
shoulders with her fan as they slink  
out.

Mrs. G. (very happy) Molly, Fischer,  
and Peggy in turn leave the studio.

Gainsborough and Duchess alone -

DUET.

GAINS. Grant me some hope and I will strive  
Thy beauties to immortalize,  
So paint your smile and sparkling eyes  
On canvas, that you'll seem alive,  
And your charms will live forever.



DUCHESS

Diana loved her swain,  
He dared return her love again  
For those transpired by Cupid's darts,  
True lovers must remain -

GAINS.

(On his knees) You came to save me from the result  
of my own rudeness and folly - My divinity and  
guardian Angel -

He kisses her hand.

The Duchess touches his head.

SLOW CURTAIN.

END OF OPERA.