

"Gainsborough's Duchess"  
by  
Albert Coates

The Dark Scene.

PDV2 G1-4d4a  
Words by  
C. Reginald Grundy.

Mrs G. Searching among the pictures, having heard of the quarrel between Gainsborough and the Duchess, apprehensive of what had happened to the picture and hoping that it was finished, so as to sell it and pay off the Creditors' bills. Peggy comes in silently and puts her hand on Mrs G's shoulder....

Mrs G. Screams and mistaking Peggy for Gainsborough, says, "I've moved nothing Thomas, I came to see if the room wanted cleaning"....

Peggy "You need'nt tell any fibs, mother, It's only me",

Mrs G. "You wicked girl, stealing up to me on that way and making me think you were your father, (Peggy throws herself down in the great chair) oh, where, oh where has she gone?"

Peggy. (in a child's voice) Leave her alone and she'll come home carrying her tails....

Mrs G. (interrupting) Wake up, you ninny, I'm speaking of the Duchess,

Peggy Well, she went home,

Mrs G. I mean her portrait, you idiot...It's disappeared,

Peggy. Perhaps father sent it home,

Mrs G. No, no, I have tried to steal up and get a peep at it, but your father never gave me the chance till I heard him, as I thought, leave the house ten minutes ago...oh where, oh where has it gone...

(Molly appears silhouetted upon the open door, horse-pistol pointing at them, dressed as a burglar)...

Mrs G. Ah- Look, look, there is nothing to steal here Mr Burglar, only two lone women, without even their clothes on...If you're a gentleman you will instantly go (retire?)

Molly. (gruffly) I am not - a - gentleman-

Peggy. Why it's only Molly...

Mrs G. You wretched girl - frightening your poor mother in this way -

Molly. (teases Peggy into a romp) Ha, Ha Ha (imitating burglars)

Peggy jumping up and starts a regular romp with Molly -

(Duet) Molly

Peggy

Ha Ha ha ha I am a burglar bold -

Come to collect your gold

(both) Silver plate and gold give me them quickly

(over)

Mrs G. Hush, the servants will hear you  
 (Molly)  
 Ha ha ha ha, they'll think we're  
 practising our redotto  
 Do'nt linger in bed else I'll  
 let fly, with a bullet of lead

(Peggy)  
 Ha ha ha ha  
 Don't linger in bed  
 Else I'll let fly  
 With a bullet of lead (breaks off)  
 (Peggy)

Mrs G. I insist, I insist, stop, stop,  
 (Molly)  
 Ha ha ha ha And if perchance  
 I miss -  
 (both)

We want more lights...  
 (Peggy)

Miss you with the bullet

I'll take my knife and slit you down the gullet....

Shouts and laughter running about and lighting the Candelabras, Mrs G.  
 protesting..Peggy in climbing up a ladder to light the candles, falls and  
 the picture is suddenly disclosed...they scream thinking Peggy must be hurt,  
 but Molly suddenly realizes they have found the picture..

Molly. (realizing that the picture is ruined) Oh Lud, What has father done to the  
 Duchess -

Mrs G. It's ruined - ruined -

<u>Trio</u>		
Mrs G.	Molly	Peggy (the frivolous one)
And now the Duchess will never forgive him	Oh Lud, Lud, What has father done to the Duchess	He'll have to paint in another face, perhaps my face....
The Duchess will take her patronage away from him	Oh Lud	I wonder if the costume will suit me (tries it on) a hat and a table-cloth, shaping it to fit her)
We shan't be able to keep up this house, we shall have to leave London	Thats not a bit like a skirt, it looks like a tent	I've worn a hat and dress just like these and they suited me wonderfully..
Your father has ruined himself, and all of us	Have you? - Ah, I remember it you looked like a farthing rush-light under a candle-extin- guisher...	You jealous minx, you always envied me this dress because all your beaux then flocked to me, whenever I wore it...

(they gesticulate, shouting vociferously at each other)

Mrs G. (nearly sobbing) Do stop your silly chatter, girls, your father has ruined  
 himself and all of us and you can do nothing better than to talk about your  
 dresses.

Peggy Hist....Someone has come in.

Mrs G. It's your father (in a panic)

(over)

Peggy. No, I know his footsteps,

Molly. Perhaps its a burglar...I'll let fly with my pistol..its full of small shot..  
Won't it tickle up his legs..

Miss Foyle (enters) Oh!\*

Mrs G. (toneless) Oh - Why did'nt you fire - (to Miss Foyle) What are you doing  
in my house at this time of night?-

Miss F. Mr Gainsborough invited me to his study - I did not anticipate meeting you!-

Mrs G. I do not expect that you did - my poor innocent girls, this is no place for  
you - you had better leave us -

Molly. No, no -

Peggy. We ar'nt schoolgirls, mother,

Molly. We'll stay and see this out - ( Miss Foyle) Your innuendos are outrageous -  
(Gainsborough enters)

Miss F. Because I've come here at your invitation Mrs G. is bringing odious  
accusations against me..

G. You dear foolish woman - always placing wrong conclusions on anything you  
don't understand - This visit has nothing to do with love or intrigue -  
'Tis a matter of business - Miss Foyle sold me the Harp this morning - and  
kindly arranged to deliver it to me tonight..

Mrs G. Where is the harp?

G. Bring in the harp, Joe,

Joe Aye, aye sir -

Mrs G. (aside) I forgot that cursed harp

G Thankyou Joe, goodnight.

Mrs G. No - wait - He must not leave the harp

G. But Margaret, dear

Mrs G. You can't afford it - the Duchess has thrown back her portrait on your hands  
Look - spoilt - ruined (Miss Foyle most interested spectator)

G. But Margaret dear -

Mrs G. You would let the children and me starve rather than leave a single fancy  
of your own ungratified -

Molly. - Oh Mother - don't give us the horrors - Its really quite funny -

(over)

Mrs G. What do you know about it Miss -

Peggy. We've made a humorous poem about it a l'Espagne -

This is the harp that Miss Foyle played

Molly. this is the artist that wanted the harp that Miss Foyle played

Peggy. this is the bargain the artist made that wanted the harp that Miss Foyle played

Molly. this is the Duchess whose temper was frayed by wanting to sit to the artist who made a bargain for the harp that Miss Foyle played...

Mrs G. Stop - stop - for heavens sake, stop - it drives me distracted..

Peggy. There's a lot more verses still -  
this is the portrait whose progress was stayed by the Duchess irate, whose temper was frayed by waiting to sit to the artist who made a bargain for the harp that Miss Foyle played -

Molly. This is the brush that with hideous black - sprayed the face in the portrait -

G. Hush !!-

Mrs G. I can add another verse -  
These are the bills that will never be paid -

G. ( jocularly) Come and show me these demnable bills -

Miss Foyle. Was ever woman treated so - first accused of being your father's mistress - and then kept dangling here, while they find a pretext -

Molly. (breaking in) there might be other pretexts - who was it said "kiss me goodbye" !-

Miss F. (flaring up) you detestable little eavesdropper !-

Peggy. (to Molly) Don't stay here to be sworn at by a disreputable woman like that -  
(Mr & Mrs Gainsborough come down stage to the two girls)

G. Come children to bed with you -  
(the girls run to their father with kisses etc)  
( while they are kissing their mother G. manages to speak to Miss Foyle)

G. I'll come to you in the retiring room behind the orchestra box, after the concert  
( Miss Foyle preens herself slightly)

Miss Foyle. I thank you all for the kind entertainment that you have given me...  
(prepares to depart) ( with a curtsey) Goodnight -

Molly & Peggy one after the other jump in front of Miss Foyle with exaggerated curtseys taught them by the Duchess, Miss Foyle is forced to reciprocate, which amuses G. very much, much to Miss Foyle's annoyance - Miss Foyle at last bounces out - Laughter and dancing, while the  
Curtain descends.