

ACT 1
Scene 1GAINSBOROUGH

- 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 Than, 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 - Fa la 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 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. (breaks in) But he hasn't, and now, I fear, he'll refuse, A new craze has obsessed him.
- MOLLY
PEGGY 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 a 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
PEGGY How dreadful!-
- Mrs. G. But worse is to come. Her Grace has asked him to vote for Fox, for whom she is canvassing.
- MOLLY
PEGGY 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 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.

(James exist)

VOICES (Outside) Gainsborough.

Mrs. G. This is what comes of marrying an artist.

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 and he appears)

(Enter Gainsborough perusing a book. When he sees them he does not recognize 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 again outside and voices calling)

CANVAS- (outside) Vote for Fox. Down with Wray
SERS.