Samuel French Acting Edition

The Winter Wife

by Claire Tomalin

SAMUEL FRENCH

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The first performance of *The Winter Wife* was given at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, on 12 February 1991. It transferred to the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith on 5 March 1991. The cast was as follows:

IDA ..... Gabrielle Lloyd
KATHERINE ..... Rachel Joyce
MARIE ..... Pamela Ruddock
DR. BOUCHAGE ..... Michael Irving

Directed by Patrick Sandford. Designed by Tanya McCallin. Lighting by Stephen Watson, and stage management by Mandi Upward. In this production there were two non-speaking parts, Georgia Bance as a nurse and Mark Raggett as a porter.

CHARACTERS

KATHERINE MANSFIELD (Mrs. John Middleton Murry), aged 31

IDA CONSTANCE BAKER, aged 32

DR. BOUCHAGE, aged about 35

MARIE, aged about 50

(While the characters are based on real people and events, the play is in no sense a biography of Katherine Mansfield.)

SETTINGS

A compartment of a French *wagon-lit*, a doctor's surgery and the Villa Isola Bella, a simple holiday house in Menton on the French Riviera. The stage should show all three part of the villa, *salon*, terrace and a few steps leading up to the bedroom.

The time is 1920.

ACT I

Scene 1: The train

Scenes 2, 3: The villa

Scene 4: The surgery of Dr. Bouchage

Scenes 5, 6, 7: The villa

ACT II

Scene 1: The surgery

Scenes 2 – 6: The villa

Scene 7: A station platform

ACT I

Scene 1

We hear that we are inside a TRAIN—French Express, 1920. At first we can see nothing.

IDA. Did you call me, Katie?

(No answer. A small LIGHT goes on, illuminating an upper bunk bed, and we see the inside of the sleeping compartment. IDA is peering over the edge of the top bunk with an anxious face. SHE has her long hair sensibly tied back in a plait, and is wearing a practical flannel nightdress.)

IDA. Would you like me to rub your back, Katie dear?

(More silence. IDA hesitates, withdraws into her bunk, hesitates again, switches off her LIGHT. Now, from the lower bunk, KATHERINE (silk nightdress) very cautiously reaches out and half raises the blind so that SHE can see the countryside in the early morning LIGHT of September. The effort of raising the blind makes HER start coughing. As SHE coughs, we glimpse the LANDSCAPE of Provence rushing past. All the LIGHT is now in the lower part of the compartment.

IDA. (*From the darkness above.*) Are you all right, Katie?

(No answer. KATHERINE struggles to control her cough.)

IDA. Katie? Do you need some water?
KATHERINE. No.
IDA. Are you sure, dear?
KATHERINE. (*Coughing more, exasperated.*) *No*!

(After a short pause, IDA's bare legs appear, dangling over the upper bunk. SHE climbs awkwardly and slowly down, feeling her way with her dangling legs. KATHERINE watches, fascinated. SHE is no longer coughing. IDA puts on her dressing gown and slips out of the compartment.)

KATHERINE. She dropped down, slowly waving her big grey legs, as though something pulled her, dragged her—the tangle of rich blue weed on the red carpet luxuriously provided by the *chemins de fer de France* : (*KATHERINE's tone changes from dreamy to angry.*) What I feel is: she is never for one fraction of a second unconscious of me. If I sigh, I know that her head lifts. If I rustle my bedclothes, she pricks her ears and sits up. When we sit down together, I know that those grave large eyes solemnly fix on me. There is no escape. There is no chance of freedom. Even if I do absolutely nothing.

(The TRAIN has slowed and stopped. IDA comes into the compartment again, peers under the window blind and announces.)

IDA. (*Pronouncing French as English.*) A—vig ... Avig ... Avig—non.

KATHERINE. One of the loveliest names in the world done to death. *Avignon.* (*Her French accent is excellent.*)

(IDA turns and gazes at KATHERINE, who looks back at her totally expressionless, mask-like.)

IDA. Darling, I can see by your eyes that you have *not* had a good night.

(KATHERINE stares Ida out and, when IDA turns away, says, so suddenly that IDA jumps.)

KATHERINE. *Jones*! I'm all right. Just think about getting us some breakfast.

ACT I

Scene 2

The villa Isola Bella in Menton. We can see the hall-salon downstairs, MARIE (a neat, brisk but comfortable woman in an apron) and IDA carrying bags through and up the short flight of stairs into the bedroom. Meanwhile KATHERINE is standing in the doorway to the terrace, motionless and gazing out into the SUNSHINE. MARIE goes downstairs and disappears, leaving IDA to hover. Very slowly, KATHERINE turns

and makes her way up the stairs. SHE is dressed with perfect taste, every detail right, from hat to shoes. Entering her room, SHE takes no notice of Ida, just stands surveying her new territory.

IDA. I'll do your unpacking as soon as you like, Katie dear. Would you like to lie down for a bit? Or will you wait until after tea? Oh, good, there are some mosquito nets.

KATHERINE. I'll have tea first. There's no hurry about unpacking. You can do it later, after tea.

IDA. You must be awfully tired. Tired and hot. Strange that it's autumn in England, and like a furnace here in Mentone. (*SHE gives the English pronunciation.*)

KATHERINE. I *love* this heat. *Menton*, Ida.

(MARIE comes in with another bag, and repeats approvingly.)

MARIE. *Menton, mais out, Mesdames. Quelle belle ville. Quelle chaleur.* (*Exit.*)

KATHERINE. The sun gets right into my bones and makes me feel better. All that English damp was killing me. I can't think why I ever tried to live in England. Just look at the view! (*SHE pushes open the long window, revealing brilliant blue, and stands with her back to Ida. SHE goes on speaking.*) Off you go, Ida, thank you. I'll come when tea is ready.

IDA. Are you sure you're all right, Katie? You wouldn't like me to bring you some warm water? Or some cool water?

KATHERINE. (*Mimicking her.*) Or some ice, Katie dear? Or how about a nice little bowl of cyanide? Just go away, Ida, that's all.

(IDA goes. When she has gone, KATHERINE turns round slowly, and extracts a photograph of her husband from a small bag, puts it on the table beside her bed, pauses to look at it. SHE speaks to him, quite conversationally, pausing between sentences as though he were actually present and might answer.)

KATHERINE. If only you were not tied by your work. If only, if only ... The villa seems quite perfect. A narrow leafy way up from the station, a view of the sea. Terrific heat. That's bliss. I shall be able to live on the terrace all day, and here by my window at night. The only dark spot on my happiness is that you are not here. I want to share all this with you. Not with anyone else, *with you alone.* Remember that.

(While she is speaking, we see MARIE putting out tea things downstairs, and IDA rearranging them.)

IDA. Tea, Katie, when you're ready!

KATHERINE. (*Puts her finger to the lips of the photograph. Then SHE takes out some of her books.*) Here is my Keats. Here is my Coleridge. And my Shakespeare. My notebooks. Jane Austen. And what's this one? Oh, *Bleak House.* (*SHE looks for a passage, turning the pages, smiling.*)

(IDA is coming up again, uncertainly, this time bearing a small pot of flowers from the tea table, which SHE puts on the chest of drawers.)

IDA. Would you like your tea here? Only I'm afraid there's no cake.

KATHERINE. Cake? No. Thank you, Ida. I'll come down in a few minutes. You go and pour if you like.

IDA. Well. I'll go down and wait for you. We can always make another pot. If you're quite sure you don't need me here. (*And goes again.*)

(When she has gone, KATHERINE arranges her books and takes the flowers from where Ida put them, moving them to sit next to the photograph of Murry. Then SHE goes to the door and starts down the short flight of stairs towards her tea.)

ACT I

Scene 3

Late morning, hot SUNSHINE on the terrace outside the villa. A palm tree beyond the balustrade, mimosa not yet in bloom, roses etc. KATHERINE is standing, leaning on her stick, beside the chaise longue, which IDA is trying to arrange in a position that will please her.

KATHERINE. I shall need a table next to the *chaise longue*, for my books and papers. I shall need a rug of

some kind, and cushions. And I think I shall have to have some sort of umbrella or parasol, if I'm not to fry and frizzle like one of the martyrs: don't you think, Jones? Though that's perhaps the way you really think of me, old Jonesie, eh?

IDA. You know I don't, darling.

KATHERINE. Just a tiny bit of frizzling round the edges for Kass, though, you don't mind that too much, do you? Just so that you can relish sprinkling the holy water on me.

IDA. Katie, you know perfectly well that my one wish is to help you get better.

KATHERINE. I know about the *helping* part. I'm not quite so convinced about the getting better.

IDA. You don't mean to say these things, I know, but—

KATHERINE. I *do* mean to say them, and I do, *mean* them, don't you forget it. I know all about your yearning and doting and wanting to have me at your mercy. I've seen that in you from the very first. From the first day when you appeared on the stairs at school, all yearning and miserable and ready to take over my life, and jealous of anyone else who came near me—

(At this point MARIE starts to emerge from the house, with something on a tray—perhaps a small bunch of grapes in a bowl of water—intended for Katherine. Sensing that this is a bad moment, SHE stops and retreats into the doorway, but cannot resist watching the rest of the scene.)

IDA. Never jealous! Never! It's not in my nature to be jealous. It's simply that we were friends, from the beginning, and that friendship means something special and sacred to me. Of course I want you to get better more than anything in the world.

KATHERINE. And when I *am* better, make no mistake, I shan't have you creeping and crawling round me with trays and hot water bottles, and cushions and deck chairs, and medicine glasses, and shawls to put over my shoulders. (*SHE is almost shouting by the end of this speech, her face distorted with anger.)* Creepy crawly! Creeping and crawling, and stuffing yourself with food to set me a fine example! Creeping and crawling and stuffing yourself! Pushing yourself in where you're not wanted!

IDA. (*Softly.*) Katie, Katie ...

KATHERINE. I *loathe* you, Ida, make no mistake about it. I abominate everything about you. With your chocolate in your pocket, and your great slabs of cake for tea. You should never have tried to come with me to France It makes me ill just to have you here.

IDA. (*With dignity.*) Katie, Katie, you'll *make* yourself ill like that. And remember we are going to the doctor this afternoon.

(KATHERINE screams at her. SHE screams until IDA exits to the house, passing the surprised MARIE with what dignity SHE can.)

IDA. Madame is not well today.

(MARIE merely gestures.

KATHERINE, when she has finished screaming, gives herself a shake and sits down. SHE is surprised at herself.)

ACT I

Scene 4

DR. BOUCHAGE is washing his hands in his surgery, a very plain cream-painted room with desk, screen, examination couch, wash basin, scales for weighing patients, window high up with opaque glass. It is all functional, not luxurious. HE is about thirty-five, thin and intelligent-looking, with a bright, eager expression. HIS English is perfect (in case anyone asks, he worked with English troops during the ware when he was a medical officer). The door of his surgery is opened discreetly by his NURSE, and KATHERINE is shown in. SHE is smartly dressed and made up, and is in a good mood again. BOUCHAGE advances and takes her hand, looking at her intently. SHE returns the gaze.

BOUCHAGE. Mrs. Murry: please come and sit down, and tell me how I can be of service to you.

KATHERINE. Dr. Bouchage. I have a premonition that you are the doctor who is going to cure me miraculously and completely of all my ailments.

BOUCHAGE. That will of course be my endeavor. But first we must become acquainted.

KATHERINE. You will ask me the usual questions, and I shall give you the usual answers. Or perhaps I'll give you unusual answers for a change. You will ask what is the matter with me. I'll tell you I am suffering from the second decade of the twentieth century. It gives me spots in my lungs.

BOUCHAGE. Ah, Mrs. Murry, you are a quick diagnostician. I must go more slowly. Tell me: you are here in Menton for your health?

(KATHERINE nods.)

BOUCHAGE. You are here with your husband?

KATHERINE. No, I am here without my husband. I am here with my ... housekeeper. My husband would be here if he could, *of course*, but unfortunately he has to stay in London. He is the editor of a weekly magazine. It is impossible for him to get away.

BOUCHAGE. (*Who is making the occasional note as they talk.*) A weekly magazine! That's very interesting. A political magazine?

KATHERINE. No, a literary magazine. He is a critic, and a poet; and I am a writer, so I can work anywhere.

BOUCHAGE. You yourself are a writer? You write novels, poetry?

KATHERINE. I write stories mostly.

BOUCHAGE. So you have a special temperament. The temperament of an artist. And now I must go back a little, Mrs. Murry. You are a Londoner—you were born in London?

KATHERINE. No, I am not a Londoner. I am a ... colonial. I was born at the furthest point of the world at which you can still be British: in New Zealand.

BOUCHAGE. Aha—so you are also a traveller. And the year of your birth, please, Mrs. Murry?

KATHERINE. I was born in 1888. A stormy evening in October. Worse, I was a third daughter.

BOUCHAGE. Is there any history of ill health in your family?

KATHERINE. My father is a stout and healthy man. My mother died two years ago. She had a weak heart.

BOUCHAGE. Brothers and sisters?

KATHERINE. Three sisters, all healthy. One brother, killed in the war.

BOUCHAGE. I am sorry.

KATHERINE. It is a common affliction. Perhaps you served in the war too?

BOUCHAGE. Indeed. It allowed me at least to practise my English. And your own health as a child? Were you always so slender as you are now?

KATHERINE. (*Laughing.*) Believe it or not, I was a fat child. My mother hated me for being so fat. "You haven't lost any weight, have you, Kass?... *Still* as fat as ever, Kass?" was all she ever said to me. I was the Cinderella. She'd be pleased now, anyway.

BOUCHAGE. And you left New Zealand ...?

KATHERINE. My father brought us to school in England when I was fourteen—for three years—in London—and then I *hated* going back to Wellington. And finally I managed to return to London, alone. And I've lived in Europe ever since.

BOUCHAGE. And you were married in—

KATHERINE. I was married in 1912.

BOUCHAGE. Your husband is quite healthy?

KATHERINE. Apart from the fact that he works too hard and doesn't look after himself ...

BOUCHAGE. Children?

KATHERINE. No children. I *wanted* children. I *still* want children.

BOUCHAGE. Any miscarriages?

KATHERINE. No.

BOUCHAGE. You have never been pregnant?

KATHERINE. Well. In fact, yes. I did lose a baby once.

BOUCHAGE. Which year was this?

KATHERINE. *I* was twenty.

BOUCHAGE. (*Notes silently.*) And the trouble with your lungs began after this?

KATHERINE. Long after. Not until 1917—during the war, in winter. I had one or two bouts of pleurisy, and fever, and the doctor in London strapped up my chest so that I could hardly move!

BOUCHAGE. And since 1917?

KATHERINE. Since 1917, I have been trying to get better.

BOUCHAGE. You have seen many different doctors? You have been in a sanatorium?

KATHERINE. Many doctors, yes. Sanatorium, no. It would be quite simply kill me to go into a sanatorium, Dr. Bouchage. You see, I have to be free to work. And I must be with my husband—at least some of the time.

BOUCHAGE. So. You have lost weight, over these years. Are you much troubled with coughing?

KATHERINE. Yes. Sometimes I cough blood. Not much. I have a lot of pain in my back. In my arms and legs. In my feet, even. I have headaches, and fever. It is difficult to sleep at night. But I am determined to get better. What do you think, Dr. Bouchage?

BOUCHAGE. (*Smiles at her across his desk.*) The will of the patient is most important. Also the climate, the way of life; rest, good food, a regular routine. Perhaps I might now take your weight, and examine your chest, Mrs. Murry? There is a screen here, if you'd would remove your blouse; you will find a special garment to change into, on the table there.

(KATHERINE goes behind the screen, emerging with a simple cotton halter top that covers her breasts. BOUCHAGE leads her to his scales and proceeds to weigh her carefully and notes her weight, which is about 40 kilos. Then HE begins to auscult, tapping her back and listening. HE asks HER to cough. BOTH preserve expressionless faces during this procedure, but as HE finishes HE motions to her that she should dress again.)

KATHERINE. (*From behind screen.*) I believe you are the youngest doctor who has ever examined me. In England all my doctors have grey beards and silk hats.

BOUCHAGE. (*Washing his hands.*) Silk hats! Indeed. I regret I cannot oblige you with a silk hat. The grey beard I expect quite soon. (*HE makes more notes while KATHERINE dresses again.)*

KATHERINE. (*Still behind the screen.*) Oh, Ida must have my comb. Could we call her, Dr. Bouchage, she is in your waiting room?

BOUCHAGE. By all means. (*As HE goes towards the door, HE turns back to Katherine to ask.*) Ida ...?

KATHERINE. Miss Baker. My housekeeper. She is my winter companion.

BOUCHAGE. Ah! Miss Baker is your *companion*. She reads aloud to you, and takes down your letters.

KATHERINE. It's only in novels that companions take down letters, Dr. Bouchage. I write my own letters. Ida's companionship is more of—more of an irritant in my daily life.

(Calling her for herself, as BOUCHAGE goes towards the door and politely murmurs round it.)

KATHERINE. *Ida*!

(IDA enters, going straight past Bouchage and ignoring his politely proffered hand, to find Katherine. KATHERINE makes the introduction from the screen, IDA politely returning to BOUCHAGE to shake hands, and returning to Katherine at once.)

KATHERINE. Ida—this is Dr. Bouchage—Dr. Bouchage, Miss Baker. Dr. Bouchage is going to cure me with sunshine and olive oil. (*In a lower voice.*) You have my comb, Jones.

(IDA passes her bag to Katherine for her to extract a comb, which SHE does, and uses deftly and quickly to arrange her hair.)

IDA. If there are any questions of diet, Dr. Bouchage, you have only to explain them to me and I shall make sure they are carried out exactly as you say.

BOUCHAGE. Miss Baker, I am sure you realize that Mrs. Murry must eat well—milk, and butter, and eggs, and fruit, and good meat. And she must rest, no worries, no exertion, just rest and food and sunshine whenever possible.

IDA. The trouble is, of course, Doctor, she will not rest. She is always working.

BOUCHAGE. Working? What is this work, Mrs. Murry?

KATHERINE. (*Handing IDA back her bag with a warning look, then turning to Bouchage.*) I did explain to you, Dr. Bouchage, that I am a writer.

IDA. It's not just your writing, though, Katie dear, is it, it's all those reviews. She gets these huge parcels of books, Dr. Bouchage, and she has to read them all, sometimes four or five at a time, and write about them.

KATHERINE. (*Furious.*) Be quiet, Jones.

(BOUCHAGE registers this.)

KATHERINE. (*Turns to him.*) This is work for my husband, for his magazine.

IDA. No magazine can be as important as your health, Kass.

KATHERINE. It is simply none of your business, Jones. Dr. Bouchage: if I do not work, I might as well be dead, it's as simple as that.

BOUCHAGE. (*Looking from one to the other.*) Perhaps you could work a little less hard, all the same, Mrs. Murry. I'm sure your husband will understand that there is good reason. Supposing you limited yourself to two hours of work, and then rested? And Miss Baker will bring you a drink of milk, something to eat? You have a good cook at Isola Bella?

KATHERINE. We have a charming cook: Marie.

IDA. She is very expensive, of course, but—

BOUCHAGE. So—you will eat well, you will rest as much as possible, you will take sunbaths, and I shall see you again next week. If you have any need of me meanwhile, you have only to send a messenger and I shall come to you at Isola Bella.

(KATHERINE and IDA go out together, murmuring polite goodbyes, though KATHERINE is evidently angry with Ida, and IDA is nervously defiant. BOUCHAGE, seeing them out, is clearly intrigued by the English ladies.)

ACT I

Scene 5

IDA and MARIE arranging the terrace to Katherine's requirements, struggling to put up the new parasol together. THEY are not natural allies. MARIE has no

English, IDA virtually no French. Then IDA spreads a fur rug on the chaise longue, and MARIE brings cushions and a table. IDA arranges flowers on the table. MARIE brings out another canvas chair. IDA now fishes in her pocket for a small sheaf of household bills.

IDA. By the way, Marie, this is definitely more than we should be spending on butter. *Trop de beurre. Trop cher.* And what do we need wine for? *Pourquoi vin?*

MARIE. *Mais—Meess—pour faire la sauce! Vous ne voulez pas quand-même que je serve le poisson de Madame sans sauce! Madame qui a surtout besoin d'être bien nourrie. Et puis les bonnes sauces ne se font pas sans beurre; sans crème; sans un verre de vin blanc.*

IDA. It is perfectly possible to eat well without this sort of expense. Sauces can be made with cornflour. *Farine.* We shall have to economize.

MARIE. *Madame est pourtant bien contente de ma cuisine.*

IDA. *Madame* would not be so *contente* if she saw these bills.

MARIE. (*Gallic shrug, scornful.*) *Ah, Meess ... Madame est si mince, si frêle. On voit bien qu'elle a besoin de plats delicats.*

(The voice of KATHERINE is heard from upstairs.)

KATHERINE. Has the post come?

IDA. Not yet, dear. I'll bring it up as soon as it comes.

KATHERINE. I'm coming down in any case.

IDA. (*To Marie.*) Thank you, Marie. We shall have to go through these accounts later.

KATHERINE. (*As SHE passes Marie in the salon, SHE pats her arm and says.*) *Vous pouvez faire ma chambre, Marie.*

(And MARIE goes up with a duster, etc. KATHERINE goes out on to the terrace, sits down and starts to read. IDA goes back into the house, and up to Katherine's bedroom, to find MARIE dusting the table on which the photograph of Murry stands.)

MARIE. *C'est le mari de madame? Beau jeune homme!*

IDA. Thank you, Marie, I always do Madame's room. (*And SHE firmly steers the surprised MARIE out. SHE spends some time straightening things and making the bed, which now has billowing, old-fashioned, white mosquito nets. As SHE smoothes it, SHE murmurs.*) There, my lovely. There. (*SHE hangs up and folds various garments. It is evident that SHE regards the room as some sort of shrine. When she had finished worshipping, SHE goes downstairs and out onto the terrace again, standing at some distance, watching KATHERINE, who is now writing. IDA thinks herself unobserved.*)

KATHERINE. (*Suddenly.*) I've decided I'm going to keep a journal of our time here at the villa. I'm telling Jack to expect it to be ready for the publishers by Christmas. It's going to be dead true, and light-hearted. Perhaps I'll put you into it, Jones, so you'd better prepare yourself. You may be about to become famous, and your little struggles with Marie will pass into literature.

(KATHERINE says all this without looking at Ida, but her tone is friendly as well as mocking, and IDA looks

relieved as well as amused. Now MARIE appears, with a cup of bouillon for Katherine.)

MARIE. (*Not looking at Ida.*) *Voilà pour madame.*

KATHERINE. (*Perfect French, perfect accent, smiling.*) *Merci, ma bonne Marie! Quel plaisir!*

(The BELL rings, MARIE hurries to answer it, returning with three letters which SHE attempts to give Katherine, but IDA intercepts her and takes them.)

MARIE. *Le facteur, madame.*

KATHERINE. (*Looks at the three envelopes. Two fail to interest her, but the third SHE wants very much. But SHE will wait until she is alone to read it. SHE turns to Marie.*) *Alors, ça s'est bien passé au marché ce matin?*

MARIE. *Ah, vous savez, madame, depuis la guerre tout est affreusement cher. Deux francs cinquante pour un choufleur pas plus gros qu'une tomate. (SHE shows its size with her hands.)*

(KATHERINE laughs, IDA cannot understand.)

IDA. There are some problems in the kitchen, Kass. Not for you to worry about, but problems—(*SHE gestures to signify there is more than she likes to say.*)

KATHERINE. (*Laughing, and refusing Ida's signals.*) Well, these are dangerous times we are living in. (*To Marie.*) *J'explique à mademoiselle que les temps sont dangereux. Mais on doit continuer à manger des chouxfleurs, à tout prix, n'est-ce pas? (To Ida.)* We can't

live without cauliflowers, can we, even in these dangerous times?

(IDA is baffled by the teasing.)

MARIE. *Madame a parfaitement raison.* (*And MARIE goes into the house, satisfied.*)

(KATHERINE starts to read her letters.)

ACT I

Scene 6

The terrace again. KATHERINE is on the chaise longue, referring to one of her books, crossing out a phrase, pulling faces at herself.

KATHERINE. (*Muttering as SHE writes.*) "We have read this kind of thing so often that it produces no impression at all ..."

IDA. (*Comes out of the French windows, bearing parcels from her shopping expedition.*) Is that the journal?

KATHERINE. (*Imitating her.*) Is that the journal? No, it's not the journal, it's a frightful review of a lot of frightfully trashy books by a lot of frightfully well-considered writers. That'll show them.

IDA. I wonder why Jack doesn't send you the interesting books?

KATHERINE. Never mind that. He sends me interesting letters anyway.

IDA. I'm glad, darling. Now look what I've brought for us. I thought we might try some of this specially good coffee. Marie told me where to get it. Just smell the packet! And these are your cigarettes.

(KATHERINE fishes for money, IDA waves it away.)

IDA. And I thought you might like this particularly beautiful peach. It was almost signalling to me, irresistible ... and in the market they were selling these little bowls, I thought you'd enjoy your peach even more out of one. (*SHE arranges a large and perfect peach in a brightly colored bowl, with a leaf, etc.*)

KATHERINE. Jones: I'm glad you noticed the peach signalling. Thank you, *ma chère*. I'm so hungry, I'll have it before lunch, I think. And lovely coffee! How extravagant you are. How delicious this all is.

(Pause, while IDA prepares to take her purchases into the house.)

KATHERINE. If you're feeling really rich today, Jones, could you stretch to making me a loan?

IDA. Of course, darling, what do you need? Let's see, I've got five francs here.

KATHERINE. It's really pounds I need, not francs.

IDA. Five *pounds*? That's quite a lot ...

KATHERINE. Actually, Jones dear, I need forty pounds.

IDA. Forty pounds ... *Forty* pounds? But Kass darling, without wanting to be awkward, that's an enormous amount of money suddenly. I mean, to find just like that.

KATHERINE. I was just wondering if you had any to spare. I never seem to have a penny, once I've paid the doctors, and the household bills; and you know how mean Jack is to me ... And now he has this man on his heels ...

IDA. You know I'm always ready to help you in any way I can; but I don't know that I can help *Jack* ...

KATHERINE. Never mind, never mind. I'll just have to find it some other way. I should be getting the advance on my book soon and, as it happens, the advance is exactly forty pounds ... I wonder if that is entirely a coincidence?

IDA. If what is a coincidence?

KATHERINE. The fact that he is asking for the exact amount of my advance. Could he have heard about it?

IDA. Could who have heard? Katie: I don't understand what you are talking about.

KATHERINE. Of course you don't, Jones dear, because you are not interested in my problems.

IDA. I don't know how you can say that.

KATHERINE. You don't know how I can say that ... You don't know very much, you don't know *anything* because you are totally lacking in understanding of friendship, or human need, of everything that makes two people understand one another.

(IDA walks away and stands with her back to Katherine, looking over the balustrade of the terrace.)