

Please Enjoy the Following Sample

- This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.
- This sample is for **perusal only** and may not be used for performance purposes.
- You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.
- We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about
licensing or purchasing a play or
musical, please visit our websites

www.samuel french.com

www.samuel french-london.co.uk



Flare Path

A Play

Terence Rattigan

Samuel French — London
www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk



© 1943 BY SAMUEL FRENCH LTD

Rights of Performance by Amateurs are controlled by Samuel French Ltd, 52 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5JR, and they, or their authorized agents, issue licences to amateurs on payment of a fee. **It is an infringement of the Copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before the fee has been paid and the licence issued.**

The Royalty Fee indicated below is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

Basic fee for each and every performance by amateurs in the British Isles	Code M
---	--------

The publication of this play does not imply that it is necessarily available for performance by amateurs or professionals, either in the British Isles or Overseas. Amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to the appropriate agents for written consent before starting rehearsals or booking a theatre or hall.

ISBN 978 0 573 11128 0

Please see page iv for further copyright information

FLARE PATH

Produced on August 13th, 1942, at the Apollo Theatre, London, with the following cast of characters :

(In order of their appearance)

COUNTESS SKRICZEVINSKY	<i>Adrianne Allen.</i>
PETER KYLE	<i>Martin Walker.</i>
MRS. OAKES	<i>Dora Gregory.</i>
SERGEANT MILLER	<i>Leslie Dwyer.</i>
PERCY	<i>George Cole.</i>
COUNT SKRICZEVINSKY	<i>Gerard Hinze.</i>
FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT GRAHAM	<i>Jack Watling.</i>
PATRICIA GRAHAM	<i>Phyllis Calvert.</i>
(By courtesy of Gainsborough Pictures (1928) Ltd.)	
MRS. MILLER	<i>Kathleen Harrison.</i>
SQUADRON-LEADER SWANSON	<i>Ivan Samson.</i>
CORPORAL JONES	<i>John Bradley.</i>

Directed by ANTHONY ASQUITH.

Setting by RUTH KEATING.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

The residents' lounge of the Falcon Hotel at Milchester, Lincs. About 6 p.m. Saturday.

ACT II

SCENE 1.—The same. About three hours later.

SCENE 2.—The same. About 5.30 the following morning.

ACT III

The same. About 12 noon the same day (Sunday).

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

(See also page ii)

This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights including Stage, Motion Picture, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translation into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

No part of this publication may lawfully be reproduced in ANY form or by any means — photocopying, typescript, recording (including video-recording), manuscript, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise—or be transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, without prior permission.

Licences for amateur performances are issued subject to the understanding that it shall be made clear in all advertising matter that the audience will witness an amateur performance; that the names of the authors of the plays shall be included on all programmes; and that the integrity of the authors' work will be preserved.

The Royalty Fee is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

In Theatres or Halls seating Four Hundred or more the fee will be subject to negotiation.

In Territories Overseas the fee quoted above may not apply. A fee will be quoted on application to our local authorized agent, or if there is no such agent, on application to Samuel French Ltd, London.

VIDEO-RECORDING OF AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS

Please note that the copyright laws governing video-recording are extremely complex and that it should not be assumed that any play may be video-recorded for whatever purpose without first obtaining the permission of the appropriate agents. The fact that a play is published by Samuel French Ltd does not indicate that video rights are available or that Samuel French Ltd controls such rights.

FLARE PATH

ACT I

SCENE.—*The residents' lounge of the Falcon Hotel at Milchester, Lincs.*

Down R. is a door marked Lounge Bar. Up R. is a curved counter marked "Reception," behind which is a door bearing the label "Private." Back R. is a door leading on to the road. There are large bow windows at back, with window seats, and a staircase L., leading to a small landing at back and thence curving out of sight. Up L. is a door marked Coffee Room. Centre L. is a fireplace, with fire burning.

On the rise of the CURTAIN the sole occupant of the room is DORIS SKRICZEVINSKY, a carelessly dressed woman in the early thirties inclined to fat. She has fallen asleep in a large armchair, below the fireplace, a copy of "Everybody's" open on her lap.

(Effects Cues : No. 1, B.B.C. music ; No. 2, Car door slam ; No. 3, Car driving away.)

A wireless at her side is playing music. A car door is heard slamming and a car drives away. PETER KYLE, a man of about thirty-five, dressed in correct country attire—too correct to be convincing—comes in from the road, carrying a suitcase. He looks round, then goes up to the reception desk, puts down his suitcase, hat and coat on the chair up R., and rings a small hand-bell. Nothing happens. He rings again. DORIS wakes up.

DORIS (*calling*). Mrs. Oakes !

(MRS. OAKES comes in from the door marked "Private" (*her office*). She is a tall, angular woman of middle age.)

(The music fades on the wireless.)

MRS. OAKES. Yes ? (*Seeing PETER.*) Yes ? What can I do for you ?

PETER. I'd like a room, please.

MRS. OAKES. Single or double ?

PETER. Single.

MRS. OAKES. Quite impossible. I'm sorry.

(A slight pause. Then :)

(Effects Cue No 4 : B.B.C. Announcer.)

ANNOUNCER. Hullo, Forces ! "Round the World in Eighty Days." A dramatization of the novel—

(DORIS switches it off. MRS. OAKES, paying no further attention to PETER, has come from behind her counter to collect a tea-tray off the fender.)

DORIS (*derisively*). Round the world in eighty days! They do think up some queer ones, I must say.

MRS. OAKES. I never listen these days, except to the news. Finished with your tea, Countess?

DORIS. Yes, thank you, Mrs. Oakes.

(MRS. OAKES takes up the tray and crosses R. PETER is watching her, exasperated.)

MRS. OAKES. Of course, I'm not saying it would be easy to think up new things all the time——

PETER (*loudly*). What about a double?

MRS. OAKES. You said you wanted a single.

PETER. Yes, but if you haven't got a single, I'd like a double.

MRS. OAKES. I'm sorry. We're full right up. (*She goes behind the counter and closes the flap.*)

PETER. Then why did you give me the choice of asking for a single or a double?

MRS. OAKES. You might have been a married couple.

PETER. I might have been a sultan and full harem, but I don't see that makes any difference. If you haven't got a room you haven't got a room, have you?

MRS. OAKES (*unmoved*). No. We haven't got a room.

(*She goes into her office, carrying the tea-tray. PETER turns round.*)

PETER. God, what a——

DORIS (*rises and comes c. slightly. Excitedly*). Why, it is!

PETER. I beg your pardon.

DORIS. You're Peter Kyle, aren't you?

PETER. Yes, I am. (*Down to her, c. Politely.*) I'm afraid——

DORIS. Oh no. You wouldn't know me. I saw "Light of Love" in Milchester only yesterday. Isn't that funny?

PETER (*abstractedly*). Yes, it is. (*He makes an obvious effort to be polite.*) It's over two years old—"Light of Love."

DORIS. Oh, we only get the old ones in Milchester. Well, I never—this is a thrill!

PETER. It wasn't a good picture either, I'm afraid.

DORIS. Oh, it was quite good, really. One or two bits were rather silly, I thought. You were ever so good, though.

PETER. Thank you very much.

DORIS. Not at all. I always think you're good.

(*She stares at him in wonder and awe. PETER is evidently not unaccustomed to this. He extends his hand, graciously.*)

PETER. How do you do ?

DORIS. Oh, how do you do ? My name's Doris. I won't tell you the other name because you'd never be able to pronounce it. You came over here to arrange about your new picture, didn't you ? I read all about it in the "Express." And how you're giving all your salary to the Red Cross. I do think that's fine. Of course, you are English, aren't you ?

PETER. By birth, yes. But I've been an American citizen for the last seven years.

DORIS. Well, well, well. Peter Kyle ! Would you believe it—drifting into the old Falcon—just like that—and asking for a room.

PETER. And not getting it.

DORIS (*crosses behind the sofa to the counter*). Oh, don't you worry about that. The idea ! (*Calling.*) Mrs. Oakes !

(MRS. OAKES *emerges from her office.*)

MRS. OAKES. Yes ? (*Glaring at PETER.*) I thought I told you——

DORIS (*excitedly*). Mrs. Oakes, don't you know who this gentleman is ?

MRS. OAKES. No.

DORIS. Come here, and then tell me if you don't recognize him.

(MRS. OAKES *comes from behind the counter and stares at PETER.*)

MRS. OAKES (*at length*). No, I can't say I do.

DORIS. Look again. Look at him sideview. (*To PETER.*) Do you mind turning round ?

PETER (*embarrassed*). I think if you don't mind——

DORIS. There ! You must know that smile. Whom does it remind you of ?

MRS. OAKES (*at length*). Mabel Smart's brother.

PETER. I think I'd better tell you my name straight away, otherwise this might go on all night. I'm Peter Kyle.

MRS. OAKES. Peter Kyle ?

DORIS. The film actor.

MRS. OAKES. An actor ?

DORIS (*frenziedly*). You must have seen him, Mrs. Oakes. He's at The Palace this week in "Light of Love."

MRS. OAKES. I don't go to The Palace. (*To PETER.*) Have you been at the Odeon in Skillingworth ?

PETER. I've really no idea.

DORIS. Of course he has. He's very famous—so please, Mrs. Oakes, do try and fix him up, if you can.

MRS. OAKES (*to PETER*). How long did you want to stay ?

PETER. Just the one night.

MRS. OAKES. Just the one night. (*She crosses behind the counter.*) Well, Countess, seeing that the gentleman is a friend of yours, I'll see what I can do.

PETER. That's terribly kind of you.

MRS. OAKES. Now, let me see. (*She opens the book of rooms.*) I could put up a bed for him in the attic—only I don't like to do that because of fire bombs.

PETER. I don't mind—

MRS. OAKES. No, but I do. I don't want my hotel burnt down.

PETER. But I'm not particularly inflammable.

MRS. OAKES. Possibly not—but the bed is. (*She shuts the book.*) I know. There's Number Twelve. Wing-Commander Taylor. He's Duty Defence Officer, so he'll be sleeping up at the station to-night. You can go in there. (*She opens the register.*) Will you register, please? And fill in this form.

(*PETER crosses to the desk. DORIS comes down c.*)

PETER. I'll fill in the form and give it to you later. (*He fills in the book.*)

MRS. OAKES. I can't send you up at once, because the Wing-Commander might want to use his room before dinner.

PETER. That's quite all right.

MRS. OAKES. You must be careful not to touch any of the Wing-Commander's things. He's most particular. Oh. (*She examines the book.*) I see you're an alien.

(*DORIS sits on the R. arm of the sofa.*)

PETER (*nervously*). Er—yes I am—

MRS. OAKES (*coldly*). Dinner is at half-past seven.

(*She goes into her office.*)

PETER (*hangs up his hat and coat*). Evidently she thinks I'm a spy.

DORIS. Oh no, I'm sure she doesn't. It's only that we get so few civilians round here. There's only the aerodrome, you see, and nothing else at all. We're all Air Force here, you know. I suppose you came to see someone up at the station.

PETER. Well—I—

DORIS. I don't want to be inquisitive. I mean, curiosity killed the cat. But I just thought it was such a funny place for a gentleman like you to come to—

PETER (*deliberately, coming down to her, c.*). I was on my way to town. I passed this place and thought it might be fun to stay the night. That's all.

DORIS. Fancy. Well, I'm glad you did, I must say.

PETER (*with automatic gallantry*). So am I.

DORIS (*simpering*). Silly.

PETER (*hastily*). When you say you're Air Force, does that mean you work up at the aerodrome?

DORIS. Oh no. I'm no W.A.A.F. I haven't the figure for it. No—my husband's a pilot.

PETER. Fighter pilot?

DORIS (*shocked*). Oh no. Bombers. Wellingtons. You must have seen them when you passed the aerodrome.

PETER. I'm not very good about aeroplanes—

DORIS. Aircraft. Yes, he's captain of a Wellington, is my Johnny. He's done quite a lot of raids. He's only got a few to go before they give him a rest.

PETER. A rest?

DORIS (*crosses to the fireplace for her bag*). Yes. After a fixed number of operational trips they get given a rest, you know—put on to something different—like teaching or groundwork. (*She delves in her bag*.) Will you have a cigarette, Mr. Kyle?

(*Effects Cue No. 5: Bombers fade in from a distance.*)

I've got something here called Summer Crop. They're pretty awful, but it's all they've got here. (*She comes back c. and puts her bag on the c. table.*)

PETER. You have one of these. They're Chesterfields.

DORIS. Oo, lovely, I will. (*She takes one.*) However did you get them?

PETER. I smuggled over two thousand in with me from America.

DORIS. Naughty! Do come and sit down and tell me all about Hollywood. Do you know Carmen Miranda or Bing Crosby?

(*They sit on the sofa.*)

(*Effect Cue No. 6: Bombers overhead, then fade.*)

(*The aircraft pass overhead. The noise is momentarily very loud.*)

PETER looks up.)

PETER. What are they?

DORIS (*casually*). Stirlings, I expect. They're four-engine aircraft, anyway. Probably from Shepley. Been a daylight do most likely. The boys'll know. Tell me, did you meet Carmen Miranda or Bing Crosby?

(*The noise of the bombers fades.*)

PETER. I've never met Carmen Miranda, but I know Bing Crosby fairly well.

DORIS. Fancy! Whatever's he like?

(*Effects Cue No. 7: Damaged bomber overhead.*)

(*This time it is DORIS who looks up.*)

PETER. He's very nice. As a matter of fact our houses are quite near each other and——

DORIS (*sharply*). Sh! (*She jumps up and listens intently.*) There's something wrong with that one.

(*Effects Cue No 8: Damaged bomber landing.*)

(*She runs to the window, opens it and sticks her head out. PETER follows her.*)

There she is! See.

PETER (*looking out*). Yes. God, what an enormous thing. It looks all right to me.

DORIS. She's flying on three engines. Been shot up, I expect.

(*The sound passes into the distance.*)

(*Suddenly.*) Oh lor!

PETER. What's the matter?

DORIS. She's landing. Look. They've put the under-carriage down. She's going to land on our aerodrome.

PETER. My God, so it is. It's coming in.

(*Effects Cue No. 9: Engines of bomber off.*)

(*PETER stares intently out of the window. The sound of the aircraft engines fades suddenly as they are throttled back. DORIS turns quickly away from the window.*)

DORIS. Is she down?

PETER. Yes. I think so. It's gone out of sight behind those hangars.

(*Effects Cue No. 10: Damaged bomber taxi-ing back.*)

(*DORIS is still listening intently. There comes the sound of the aircraft engines.*)

DORIS. It's all right. She's taxi-ing back.

PETER. It was in trouble all right. It was flying all lopsided.

DORIS. Probably flown by the famous Chinese pilot—Wun Wing Low.

(*Effects Cue No. 11: Taxi-ing back fades.*)

(*She sits on the sofa again. She titters expectantly, but PETER does not laugh.*)

Not my joke. Teddy Graham's—he's a flight-loot up at the station. Oo—I've suddenly thought—you must know Mrs. Graham—Teddy Graham's wife—Patricia Warren—the actress, you know. She was in a play of yours in New York. The part was only a—cough and a spit, she says, but you might remember her. She's staying here.

PETER (*sitting by her*). Really?

DORIS. Do you remember her ?

PETER. Yes, I do.

DORIS. She's ever so nice, I think. Don't you ?

PETER. Yes. Charming.

DORIS. She won't half be surprised when she sees you. She went up for a nap. Shall I call her down ?

PETER. No, please don't. I'll see her later, anyway.

DORIS. She's only been here since yesterday morning. It's the first chance she's had of coming to see her hubby as the play she was acting in in London only came off last week. He's just been made captain of a Wellington—she's as proud as proud of him. It's a treat to see them together—it is really.

PETER (*abruptly*). I feel it's time for a drink. Can I get you one ?

DORIS. Thank you, Mr. Kyle. I'll have a gin-and-lime. There's the bell by the door.

(PETER presses a bell. A man in the uniform of a Sergeant Air Gunner comes in from the road. He is about thirty-five, small, dark and insignificant. His name is DAVID MILLER and he is known, naturally, as DUSTY.)

DUSTY. 'Evening, Countess.

DORIS. Hullo, Dusty.

DUSTY. Spotted my wife anywhere ?

DORIS. I don't think she's come yet, Dusty. She was coming by 'bus, wasn't she ?

DUSTY. Four-twenty-five from Lincoln—so she should 'ave been 'ere twenty minutes ago. She's a proper mucker-upper, though—she'll go and catch the wrong 'bus, you see—end up in Grimsby and then blame me. (*While he is speaking he is taking off his overcoat. He now turns and sees PETER.*) Oh, excuse me— (*Down R.C.*)

PETER (*crossing to DUSTY*). We were just going to have a drink. Will you join us ?

DUSTY. Thank you, sir. I don't mind.

PETER. I've rung the bell, but nothing seems to happen. (*To DUSTY.*) What does A.G. stand for ?

DUSTY } (*together*). Air gunner.

DORIS } (*together*). Air gunner.

DORIS. Didn't you know that ? You are ignorant.

PETER. Yes, I am, I'm afraid. So you're the man who sits in the rear turret ?

DUSTY. That's right. Tail-end stooge—that's me.

PETER. What's it like being a tail-end stooge ?

DUSTY. Oh, not so bad. Gets a bit cold sometimes.

PETER. A bit cold is an understatement, isn't it ?

DUSTY. Don't know. Depends, really. Some nights it's all

right. Other nights you come down and you got to get a bloke with a 'ammer and chisel to get you off of the seat.

(A boy of about fifteen (PERCY), wearing an apron, comes through the door marked Lounge.)

PERCY. Anybody ring ?

PETER (going down to him). Yes, I rang. I want a gin-and-lime—— (To DUSTY.) What's yours ?

DUSTY. Beer please, sir.

PETER. A beer and a whisky-and-soda.

PERCY (with a broad smile). There's no whisky.

PETER. Then I'll have a gin and tonic.

PERCY (with a broader smile). There's no tonic.

PETER. Then bring me a pink gin.

PERCY (disappointed). Yes, you can have that. (To DUSTY.) Was that a Stirling come down 'bout ten minutes ago, Sergeant?

DUSTY. That's none of your business what it was, nosey.

PERCY. Garn, I knows a Stirling when I seen one. Anyone hurt inside ?

DUSTY (with dignity). I've no idea, I'm sure.

PERCY (with relish). Bet there was. I saw an ambulance driving out.

(He recognizes PETER. He goes out shouting, "Fred, do you know who's here ?")

DORIS. Was anyone hurt ?

(DUSTY crosses to her and nods.)

Bad ?

DUSTY. Two bumped off—tail gunner and wireless op. Cannon shells. Other gunner caught it—not bad though.

DORIS. Been a daylight do, has there ?

DUSTY. Big one. (With a glance at PETER.) Talk about careless talk !

DORIS. Oh, don't mind him. You don't know who he is, do you ?

DUSTY. No. Can't say I do.

DORIS. It's Peter Kyle.

DUSTY (after a pause). Cor ! (He gazes awestruck at PETER.)

PETER (going up to him). What's your name, Sergeant ?

DUSTY. Miller, sir.

PETER. I'm glad to meet you. (He shakes hands.)

DUSTY. Peter Kyle. Well, I'm a—— Do you know Dorothy Lamour ?

PETER. No. I can't say I do.

DUSTY (plainly disappointed). Oh.

(PERCY comes in with the drinks on a tray.)

PERCY (*crossing to DORIS, hands her a drink*). It was a Stirling come down. Fred in the bar seen 'er too. (*He turns to DUSTY.*)

DUSTY (*takes drink and crosses behind the sofa*). Fred in the bar can be wrong, sometimes, I presume, or is he omniscient?

PERCY (*hands the tray to PETER*). I don't know what he is, but 'e knows it was a Stirling. Shot up something terrible it was 'e says.

(*PETER pays him.*)

PETER. Keep the change.

PERCY (*surprised*). Thank you, sir. Thank you. (*He crosses PETER to the door.*) Where's it to-night, Sergeant, Berlin?

DUSTY. It'll be a clip on the ear'ole for you, my lad, if I 'ave any more of your lip. Beat it!

(*PERCY goes. His voice can be heard in the lounge before the door closes behind him.*)

PERCY (*off*). Sergeant says it's Berlin to-night.

DORIS (*to DUSTY, in a low voice*). Nothing on to-night, is there, dear?

DUSTY (*down L. of the sofa*). Not as far as I know.

DORIS (*cheerfully*). Tinkerty tonk, Mr. Kyle!

PETER (*leaning against the counter*). Good health.

(*They drink. A Flying Officer (COUNT SKRICZEVINSKY) comes in. He wears the Polish air force eagle over the left breast, and the word "Poland" on his shoulders. He is over forty, tall and thin, with a permanent and slightly bewildered smile. He hangs up his hat and gasmask.*)

DORIS (*rising, goes up to him at the door*). Hullo, Johnny ducks, you're early. (*She kisses him lightly on the cheek, and brings him down to PETER.*) Is Teddy with you?

COUNT. 'E—poots—car—garage. (*He speaks English with the greatest difficulty, always retaining his bewildered expression.*)

DUSTY. 'Evening, sir.

COUNT. Good—evening.

DORIS. Johnny, I want you to meet a very famous man.

COUNT. Pardon?

DORIS (*pointing at PETER*). Very—famous—man. Film star. Understand? Peter Kyle.

COUNT (*not having understood*). Oh yes—please.

PETER. How do you do?

(*He shakes hands. The COUNT clicks his heels slightly.*)

DORIS. Isn't he sweet when he does that? First time I met him, he kissed my hand. Of course, I had to fall for him after that, didn't I, Johnny ducks?

(*The COUNT smiles at her vaguely and she squeezes his hand.*)

You must excuse his English, Mr. Kyle. It's not up to much but it's getting better. He's having English lessons up at the station—aren't you, Johnny ducks ?

COUNT. Please ?

DUSTY. English—lessons, sir. Your wife says you are having English lessons.

COUNT (*with a sudden burst of loquacity*). Oh yes. English lessons. I learn much. 'Ow are you to-day, Mrs. Brown, please ? Se Eiffel Tower is se toweldest beelding in se vurruld.

DORIS. World, Johnny, world. Not vurruld.

COUNT. World. World.

(MRS. OAKES appears at the office door. She puts a telegram in the letter rack. DORIS crosses to the sofa and sits on the L. arm.)

MRS. OAKES. Good evening, Count.

COUNT. Good evening, Missus.

MRS. OAKES. You'll be in to dinner, I presume ?

COUNT. Oh yes, sank you, please.

MRS. OAKES. And you'll be staying the night ? No early breakfasts or late suppers ? (*She winks heavily.*)

COUNT. No, please. To-night I stye wiss my vife.

(MRS. OAKES picks up her room-book and starts to go.)

DORIS (*to the COUNT*). Not stye. Stay. To-night I stay with my wife.

DUSTY (*calling*). Oh, Mrs. Oakes !

(MRS. OAKES turns.)

MRS. OAKES. Yes ?

DUSTY. It's all right about that double room for to-night, isn't it ?

MRS. OAKES. Yes. You've got Number Two. Do you want to go up now ?

DUSTY. No, thanks. The wife's not come yet. Should 've been 'ere near an hour ago. (*Gloomily.*) Just like her, I will say. (*He crosses to the fire.*)

MRS. OAKES. She'll turn up—you'll find.

(*She disappears as TEDDY GRAHAM comes in through the front door. He is a Flight-Lieutenant and wears the D.F.C. His age is 24.*)

TEDDY (*coming down to DORIS*). Hullo, Doris, my beautiful. How's every little thing ?

DORIS. Mustn't grumble.

TEDDY. 'Evening, Sergeant. Where's the wife ?

DUSTY (*crosses c. slightly*). Don't know, sir. Gone off course a bit—looks like.

(TEDDY takes off his hat and coat and goes up to hang them up.)

TEDDY. You told me her navigation was pretty ropery.

DUSTY. It's lousy. If she don't come soon I'd post her as missing—believed got in the wrong 'bus. (He goes back to the fire.)

TEDDY. I should. Johnny, you clot! What about that beer you were going to get me?

COUNT. I not forget.

(He rings the bell. TEDDY suddenly sees PETER and approaches him cautiously.)

TEDDY. Good God! It's—not—Peter Kyle—is it?

DORIS (rises and goes up to TEDDY). Yes, it is, Teddy. It really is. Isn't it wonderful?

TEDDY. Pukka gen?

DORIS. Pukka gen. (She goes down to the R. end of the sofa.)

TEDDY. Good Lord! I say—I mean—Good Lord! I say, I'm most awfully glad to meet you, sir, and all that.

PETER. Must you call me sir?

TEDDY. No, I suppose not—I mean—Peter Kyle! Well, well, well! (He shakes PETER's hand energetically.) This calls for a party, don't you think, boys and girls? (Calling.) Percy!

COUNT (going up to TEDDY). Please—I wish—

TEDDY. All right, Johnny—these are mine. (He pushes him over to DORIS. Pointing at PETER.) Very famous bloke here, Johnny.

COUNT. Oh yes, sank you.

(PERCY appears promptly, his manner, when he speaks to TEDDY, surprisingly deferential.)

PERCY. Yes, Flight-Lieutenant Graham, sir?

TEDDY. Where have you been? We've been ringing for half an hour.

PERCY. Sorry, sir. Didn't know it was you, Flight-Lieutenant Graham, sir.

TEDDY. Another round for these people whatever they're having, Percy, and pints for the Count and me.

PERCY. Yes, sir. Berlin to-night, Flight-Lieutenant Graham, sir?

TEDDY. What? No, Percy. Home Sweet Home, to-night.

(PERCY's face falls. He goes out, down R.)

I say, this has rather shaken me—you know—I mean your being here, in the old Falcon—just like—I mean—a commercial traveller or something. No offence, or anything—

PETER. That's all right.

TEDDY. Good Lord, you must know Pat. (*He crosses to the foot of the stairs above the sofa.*) That's my wife. Patricia Warren she was—still is—I mean she still uses the name and all that. (*Calling.*) Pat! Pat! Are you upstairs?

(PETER comes down R.)

PATRICIA (*her voice coming from upstairs*). Hullo, Teddy. I heard you come in.

TEDDY. Come on down. There's something down here that's going to shake you considerably.

PATRICIA. Oh? Just coming.

TEDDY (*crossing below the sofa to PETER R.*). I say, I suppose you do know her. I mean, she was in a play of yours, you know—tiny part, but she shoots a line about your having been very kind to her and all that—

PETER. Does she? Yes, I remember her well.

TEDDY. Look—you go there (*he pushes him to up L. directly beneath the stairs*)—so she won't see you as she comes down—

PETER (*protestingly*). No, I think—

DORIS (*pushing him also*). Go on, silly! Look out!

(TEDDY goes behind the sofa. DORIS leans on the left banister.

PATRICIA GRAHAM comes down the stairs. She is about TEDDY's age, perhaps a year or two older.)

PATRICIA. What's all this about my being shaken?

TEDDY. Nothing, darling. Just to get you to come down.

PATRICIA. Hullo, Johnny. Good evening, Doris.

TEDDY (*coming down level with DUSTY*). This is Sergeant Miller—my tail gunner. A very bad type—

PATRICIA (*comes down to him at the fire and shakes hands*). He doesn't look it. How do you do? (*Brightly, turning to TEDDY.*) It's funny the loose way you Air Force people use your slang. For instance, to shake someone or to be shaken seems to cover anything from crashing in flames to seeing a caterpillar or, something—

(DORIS pushes PETER down to the L. of PATRICIA. PATRICIA turns. She stands quite still. PETER smiles, but she does not smile in return. She turns her head quickly to look at TEDDY, who is gazing at her, smiling expectantly. Then she looks back at PETER.)

PETER. Hullo.

PATRICIA. Hullo.

(*They shake hands.*)

TEDDY. Well, darling, are you shaken or are you shaken? Now be honest.

PATRICIA. I'll be honest. I'm shaken.

(PERCY comes in, staggering under the weight of a loaded tray. He puts it on a table down R. PATRICIA crosses to the table R.)

Which of these is for me ?

TEDDY (*following her*). Well—as a matter of fact—

PATRICIA. Teddy—you don't mean to tell me you've left me out. I'll have a pink gin.

TEDDY. Another pink gin, Percy.

PERCY. Yes, sir.

TEDDY. Come on, everybody. (*He takes three beers. He gives one to the COUNT behind the sofa and then to DUSTY at the fire.*)

(PERCY goes out. PETER crosses to the table. JOHNNY comes down slightly. PETER takes up the drinks for DORIS and himself.)

PATRICIA. When did you arrive ?

DORIS (*crossing to PETER*). Only a few minutes ago. Just fancy Peter Kyle blowing into the old Falcon just like that. Happened to be passing and thought it would be fine to stay the night. You should have seen my face. (*She takes her drink from PETER.*)

PATRICIA (*brightly*). Yes. (*Crossing L. to TEDDY.*) What's the news from the aerodrome, Teddy ?

TEDDY. Nothing much. (*Raising his glass.*) Cheers, everybody !

(DORIS goes up to JOHNNY.)

PATRICIA. There must be some news or are you going all careless talk on me ?

TEDDY. First time I've ever known you take an interest in what's going on at the aerodrome. As a matter of fact it's been a quiet day, hasn't it, Sarge ?

DUSTY. Pretty quiet, sir.

TEDDY. A Stirling force-landed a few minutes ago. You probably saw it.

PETER. The Countess and I saw it.

(PATRICIA sits on the L. arm of the sofa.)

DORIS. Don't call me Countess, please, Mr. Kyle. Or if you do, give me my full name, which is Countess Skriczevinsky.

(*She screws her face up in a mock effort to pronounce the name.*)

COUNT (*correcting her gently*). Please Countess Skriczevinsky.

DORIS. Get Johnny correcting me for a change !

(*There is a general laugh. The COUNT looks slightly more bewildered.*)

(*Correctly.*) Sorry, ducks, I can say it, Johnny. I was only fooling, Countess Skriczevinsky.

(*The COUNT smiles.*)

PATRICIA. What was the matter with the Stirling that force-landed?

TEDDY. Been shot up in a raid. Big raid too, I believe. I can't tell you where, of course.

(*PERCY comes in with PATRICIA's pink gin and puts it on the c. table.*)

PERCY. 'Ell of a do on Kiel this afternoon.

TEDDY (*startled*). Come here, Percy. (*Regarding PERCY sternly, as he crosses.*) Who told you that?

PERCY. Just come through on the six o'clock. (*He crosses to the door.*)

TEDDY. Oh, the laugh's on me.

PERCY. 'Ell of a do it must 'ave been. Blenheims, Wimpeys, 'Alifaxes and Stirlings. We lost seventeen. Shot down twenty-two of theirs, though.

(*He goes out. DORIS sits on the c. table and hands PATRICIA her drink.*)

TEDDY. Seventeen? Not too good. (*He meets DUSTY's eye.*) I reckon the squadron's done pretty well up to now to keep out of these daylight do's, don't you?

DUSTY (*fervently*). You're telling me.

COUNT (*suddenly*). I—have—wish to go on sese daylight do's.

TEDDY. You mean, you don't have wish.

COUNT. No, no. I *do* have wish. I have wish to see my bombs to fall——

(*There is a slight pause.*)

TEDDY. I see what you mean, Johnny old boy.

(*DORIS takes his hand. PATRICIA drains her glass.*)

PATRICIA. I want another drink.

TEDDY. Good Lord! You haven't finished that one already?

PATRICIA. Yes, I have.

PETER (*calling at the door*). Percy!

(*PERCY appears at the door.*)

(*Politely.*) What were you drinking, Mrs. Graham?

PATRICIA. Thank you, Mr. Kyle. It was a pink gin.

PETER. A pink gin for Mrs. Graham—and the same again for the others. (*He is behind the table R.*)

(*PERCY goes out.*)

DORIS. My Johnny'll be getting tinky-boo. He can't stand more than a couple, can you, ducks?

COUNT. Yes, please.

DORIS. He means, no thank you.

COUNT. No, sank you.

DORIS. Thank you, Johnny. Thank. Th-ank.

COUNT. Sank you. Sank you.

TEDDY. Good old Johnny. Keep cracking—it'll come.

(PERCY comes in with new short drinks. He puts them on the table R. and exits.)

PERCY (off). Hurry up with those pints, Fred.

TEDDY. Just as well we've got to-night at home, eh, Dusty?

(PETER hands DORIS her gin and lime, then crosses behind the sofa and gives PATRICIA the pink gin.)

DUSTY (*gloomily*). I wouldn't put it past 'em to send us out now. They done it before.

TEDDY (*sits on the arm of the chair above the fire*). Dusty's the world's prize moaner. He even moaned to me over the intercomm. because he'd shot down a Messerschmitt. Tell them about it, Dusty.

DUSTY (*alarmed*). No, Mr. Graham, sir, please. Not now.

PATRICIA (*politely*). Do tell us, Sergeant.

(PETER puts the tray on the window seat and stands behind the sofa.)

DUSTY. It's nothing, Mum, really. Mr. Graham's told you it's only I shot down a Messerschmitt, I think.

TEDDY. What do you mean, you think? It was at night, Patricia. Nothing else in the sky for miles around except us and this one-one-o, and he still thinks someone else might have shot it down. Tell 'em, Dusty.

DUSTY. They'll think it's a line, sir.

PATRICIA. Why don't you tell the story, Teddy?

TEDDY. I didn't see it. We were stooge-ing along over the Dutch coast somewhere, and suddenly I hear Dusty's voice over the intercomm., saying: (*imitating DUSTY's gloomy voice*) "Ullo, skipper. Tail calling. M.E. one-one-o's just been at us. Sod's gone into the drink on fire. Over."

(*There is a general laugh. DUSTY looks acutely uncomfortable.*)

"Gone" is the operative word.

(PERCY comes in with the beers and stands by JOHNNY, listening.)

PATRICIA (*to DUSTY*). You did shoot at it, though, didn't you?

DUSTY. Oh yes, Mum. I shot at it all right. Bright moon there was. Saw it as clear as I'm seeing you. He opens up 'bout five 'undred yards with 'is cannons, and I've got 'im in my sights, and 'e's getting bigger all the time, and I press the triggers and there's a ruddy great glow all of a sudden and down 'e goes into the drink turning and twisting. I thought——

(There is a pause. Everyone, including the COUNT, is listening intently.)

Crikey!

PATRICIA. That's not what I'd have thought.

(The COUNT takes a drink from PERCY. Enter MAUDIE up R., at the front door. She is a small woman, much muffled up, and carries a small case, umbrella, and gas-mask. She comes down R.)

DUSTY. First time I'd ever seen a Messerschmitt, and down he goes—just like that. *(He clicks his teeth unbelievably.)*

TEDDY. Good show, Dusty. *(He takes a beer for himself and DUSTY.)* You get another beer for that. *(He sees MAUDIE.)* Oh, Dusty——

(DUSTY puts down his beer and crosses to her.)

DUSTY. 'Ullo, Maudie.

MAUDIE. Hullo, Dave.

(They do not kiss. PETER, DORIS and JOHNNY have gone up to the window, and have politely turned their backs.)

DUSTY. Got on the wrong 'bus, did you, Maudie?

(TEDDY and PATRICIA talk together. PATRICIA sits on the sofa.)

MAUDIE *(accusingly)*. You said the Skillingworth 'bus, Dave.

DUSTY. Yes, that's right. Four-twenty-five from Lincoln.

MAUDIE. Well, I went to Skillingworth and you weren't there.

DUSTY. Lor, Maudie, I didn't tell you to go to Skillingworth. You should 'ave got off at Milchester.

MAUDIE *(still accusingly)*. You said the Skillingworth 'bus, Dave.

DUSTY. Yes, but the Skillingworth 'bus goes through Milchester: you should 'ave got off at Milchester.

MAUDIE. You never said nothing about Milchester. You don't look very well, Dave. Have you been getting those backaches?

(DUSTY looks round hurriedly at the others. Only TEDDY is looking at him.)

DUSTY *(hastily)*. Here, Maudie! You sign your name here.

Hungry for More?

THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE SCRIPT

Buy the **full script** and explore other titles

www.samuelfrench.com

www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk



[Breaking Character]

An Online Resource for Theatre Makers



Find us on
Facebook

Titles are subject to availability depending on your territory.