

THREE SHORT PLAYS
BY M PEPPER LANGLINAIS

In this document are three short plays I've written: "The Apple or the Cigarette," "Souls, Mated," and "The Strange Art of Longing." I apologize for the various formatting, but I wrote them at different times and for different submissions that each had its own requirements, and I am too lazy at this point to reformat them.

These plays were exercises in creativity and the results were mixed at best. I don't write much by way of stage work any more, though I wouldn't rule out going back to it. None of these were ever picked up for production, though "Souls, Mated," came close a couple times.

If anyone were to want to perform one of these, I'd only ask they contact me and let me know, maybe send me a program or flyer or some such.

M Pepper Langlais

THE APPLE OR THE CIGARETTE

Lights up on EVE leaning against the trunk of an apple tree. She pulls mindlessly at the grass, lost in thought, until a sound draws her attention.

LUCIFER enters. Sees her. Pauses.

You're the female.

LUCIFER

I'm Eve. Which animal are you?

EVE

Lucifer.

LUCIFER

They stare at one another.

What's a Lucifer?

EVE

LUCIFER steps closer, slides down the trunk of the tree to sit beside her.

Nothing much any more.

LUCIFER

Did Adam name you?

EVE

No.

LUCIFER

Did God send you?

EVE

More or less. It's . . . complicated.

LUCIFER

EVE takes a minute to study him.

EVE

Are you in trouble?

LUCIFER leans his head back against the tree so that his gaze travels upward.

LUCIFER

You could say that.

[beat]

What are those?

EVE

Apples.

LUCIFER

What are they for?

EVE

Eating.

LUCIFER

And are they any good?

EVE

Some of them. I don't know about those.

LUCIFER stands up, grabs an apple, takes a bite.

LUCIFER

Nothing to write home about. I suppose if they were really good, we'd have had them in Heaven to begin with.

[holding it out to EVE]

Want it?

EVE

I'm not hungry. What's Heaven?

LUCIFER

It's where I'm from. Where God lives. Hasn't He explained anything to you?

EVE shrugs.

EVE
What's to explain? "Name the animals," He says. So we did.

LUCIFER
All of them?

EVE
All the ones we could find.

LUCIFER
What else do you do?

EVE
Eat fruit.

LUCIFER
Except when you're not hungry.
[looking around]
This is awful.

EVE
Well, maybe it's no Heaven, but . . .

*LUCIFER drops the apple, pulls out a pack
of cigarettes and a lighter.*

LUCIFER
Want one?

EVE
What is it?

LUCIFER
Cigarette. Verboten upstairs, but I don't see any signs prohibiting it here.

He lights one, takes a drag, hands it to EVE.

EVE
What am I supposed to—

GOD
[offstage]
Eve?

LUCIFER
Put it out, quick!

What? How? EVE

GOD enters.

Eve— GOD
*[seeing her with the cigarette
and clearly disappointed]*
Oh, Eve.

It's my fault. LUCIFER

Of course it's your fault! GOD

I can't help how I'm made; only you could do that. LUCIFER

*They stare one another down while EVE
looks between them, fascinated. GOD
reaches down and takes the cigarette from
her.*

Why don't you run along and find Adam? GOD

EVE exits with obvious reluctance.

And you are no longer welcome here. GOD

Where am I supposed to go? LUCIFER

You know exactly where you can go. GOD

*They stare a moment longer. LUCIFER
departs. GOD waits until He's sure He's
alone, then takes a drag on the cigarette.
Lights down.*

Lights up on a bar. EVE is nursing a nearly empty glass. LUCIFER enters.

LUCIFER

May I?

EVE

It's a free world.

LUCIFER takes a seat beside her.

LUCIFER

What's that you're drinking?

EVE

Apple martini. Appletini, I think they call it.

LUCIFER

Is it any good?

[EVE shrugs]

You want another one?

EVE

I can't; the bartender has cut me off.

LUCIFER flags down the bartender; GOD enters.

LUCIFER

An apple . . .

[gesturing at EVE's glass]

Whatever that is.

GOD eyes LUCIFER and EVE suspiciously.

GOD

[to LUCIFER]

And it's for you?

LUCIFER

Of course. She's convinced me it's marvelous.

GOD looks between them again, stalks off. LUCIFER pulls out a pack of cigarettes.

EVE

You can't.

LUCIFER

Can't what?

EVE

Smoke in here. Or anywhere, for that matter.

LUCIFER

They have a lot of rules. Not like the old days.

GOD returns with the drink, sets it in front of LUCIFER, and leaves again. LUCIFER takes a sip and makes a face.

LUCIFER

Christ, how can you stand it?

He switches his full glass for her nearly empty one and lights a cigarette.

EVE

You'd be surprised what a person can learn to stand when there are no other options.

LUCIFER

There's always another option.

GOD returns.

GOD

I knew it! You bought the drink for her!

LUCIFER

So?

GOD

And you're smoking!

LUCIFER

So what?

GOD

So now you're banned from my bar, that's what.

*EVE opens her mouth to protest but
LUCIFER shakes his head at her. He stands.*

LUCIFER

Don't bother. He never changes His mind.

EVE

You know him?

LUCIFER

More or less. It's . . . complicated.

GOD

Out.

[looking hard at EVE]

Both of you.

[EVE stands.]

EVE

But I've got nowhere else to go.

LUCIFER

Like I said, there are always options. And I've been thrown out of better places than this.

*He slips his arm around EVE and begins
guiding her toward the door. EVE lets
LUCIFER lead her, hesitates briefly at the
door and looks back.*

EVE

But what was he really mad about, I wonder? The appletini or the cigarette?

LUCIFER

Both? Neither? Who knows? With Him it depends on the day. Mostly He just doesn't like to be crossed.

*EVE hesitates a moment longer, looks to
LUCIFER.*

EVE

You know another place?

LUCIFER

Oh, I know lots of places. Allow me to tempt you.

They exit. Lights down. Curtain.

SOULS, MATED

CHARACTERS

Iain
Neil
Girl
Danielle
Rebekah
Bartender
Meredith
Gloria
Pub Patrons

SETTING

A pub with tables, booths, a bar

[Lights up.]

[IAIN and NEIL enter the pub. They're at that age where youth starts to turn toward more serious considerations: jobs become careers, relationships become commitments. They're expected to know what they want in life now; they're accountable. IAIN is managing the transition well, but NEIL needs help.]

[A GIRL sits alone at a quiet table, possibly waiting for someone while she fiddles with her smartphone. IAIN passes on the way to an empty booth, but NEIL pauses to look the GIRL over.]

GIRL: *[noticing NEIL]* Oh, um, hi?

[NEIL continues to stare.]

GIRL: Can I, uh, do something for you?

NEIL: God, what couldn't you do for me?

[The GIRL's smile becomes puzzled, strained. IAIN realizes he's lost his mate, takes in the GIRL's expression, acts to extract NEIL.]

IAIN: No, sorry, he's just . . . Hasn't been out much lately. *[to NEIL as he drags him away]* Leave the nice girl alone.

[NEIL cranes to look over his shoulder at his fading prospect.]

NEIL: *[hopeful]* Maybe she's not a nice girl. Maybe she's a dirty, mean, nasty girl.

IAIN: Lovely. Sit. Bekah is a nice girl, by the way. I expect you to be nice back.

[They sit.]

NEIL: I'm not really looking at the moment.

IAIN: No? Could have fooled me. *[indicating the GIRL]* And probably her. Although I think really you just creeped her out a bit.

NEIL: Well, it would be more like stopping at motorway services, you know. Not my final destination.

IAIN: Is that why you broke up with Sam? *[when NEIL doesn't answer]* Still not talking about that, eh? Well, buck up, 'cause they're here.

[DANIELLE and REBEKAH enter, spot IAIN and NEIL, and come to join them. DANIELLE immediately sits next to IAIN, leaving REBEKAH to hesitate as NEIL makes more space for her.]

DANIELLE: Bekah, this is Neil. Neil, Rebekah. And everybody knows Iain.

NEIL: *[muttering]* Ah, God, he's a sitcom.

[REBEKAH gives him an odd look; IAIN and DANIELLE shoot him nonverbal warnings. NEIL straightens up, goes textbook.]

NEIL: *[to REBEKAH]* Hi, nice to meet you, how are you, would you like something to drink?

REBEKAH: Yeah, okay . . . What are you having?

NEIL: We haven't ordered anything yet. Field is wide open.

REBEKAH: Well, whatever you drink is fine with me.

NEIL: How can you possibly know that if we only just met? What if I order something you don't like?

REBEKAH: Why would you order something I don't like?

[NEIL shoots IAIN and DANIELLE a pleading look.]

DANIELLE: Well I'm going to have a Manns. Bekah, would you like a Manns?

[REBEKAH glances at NEIL as if for approval. NEIL remains passive.]

REBEKAH: Yes, please.

NEIL: See? And I don't drink Manns. *[as REBEKAH's face falls]* Look, it's not a big deal or anything. We don't have to drink the same thing to get along, do we? If I drank all the same things as Iain, I'd . . . Well, never mind.

IAIN: You'd what?

NEIL: I dunno. Something.

[IAIN and NEIL stare one another down for a moment.]

IAIN: Why don't we go get the ladies their drinks, eh?

[DANIELLE and REBEKAH are required to move so IAIN and NEIL can slide out of the booth. The girls resetttle once the men are standing. IAIN and NEIL make their way toward the bar.]

IAIN: Well?

NEIL: Well what?

IAIN: She's nice, isn't she?

NEIL: She's too nice. Too eager to please. *[glancing back]* Cute though. *[to the BARTENDER]* Two Manns, an Olde Suffolk, and . . . *[gesturing at IAIN]* whatever he's having.

IAIN: You've known me how long? And you don't even know what I drink?

NEIL: It's Danielle's job to keep track, not mine.

IAIN: *[to the BARTENDER]* I'll have a 6X.

*[The BARTENDER moves off to collect their order.
NEIL glances around.]*

IAIN: Stop that.

NEIL: What?

IAIN: Looking as if you want trouble.

NEIL: If I wanted trouble, I'd have stayed with Samantha.

IAIN: Finally. You can't bring that up without explaining it. What happened?

NEIL: It wasn't going anywhere.

IAIN: After three years and more, it wasn't going anywhere? Who decided that? Where did it need to go?

[NEIL only shakes his head.]

IAIN: Well, did you kick her out, or did she leave?

[The BARTENDER returns with their drinks.]

NEIL: Enough of that.

[NEIL takes out his wallet, leaves the money on the bar, then gathers two of the drinks while IAIN gets the other two. They take their time going back to the booth.]

IAIN: You'll at least let Bekah down easy, yeah? She's sweet, after all. Fragile.

NEIL: I don't know what you were thinking, setting me up with her.

IAIN: Not me. Danielle. She thought you might like something different.

NEIL: Truth is, Iain, I'm looking for something rather specific.

IAIN: How do you mean?

[But they are back at the booth now, setting down the drinks and taking their seats. Meanwhile, MEREDITH and GLORIA enter and take seats at the bar.]

DANIELLE: The two of you walk like old women.

IAIN: We were trying not to spill.

REBEKAH: *[looking at NEIL's drink as she sips her own]* What did you get?

NEIL: Olde Suffolk.

REBEKAH: Can I try it?

[NEIL is surprised but pushes the drink toward her. REBEKAH takes a sip, grimaces, forces a smile.]

REBEKAH: It's good.

NEIL: There's no need to lie.

[DANIELLE comes to the rescue.]

DANIELLE: So Bekah and I work together.

NEIL: That doesn't do much to recommend her. I mean, I wouldn't like the idea of the two of you gossiping about me or something.

IAIN: They don't gossip. Do you, Danielle? They don't have time to gossip.

NEIL: Lunches, breaks, e-mails . . . They probably talk about you all the time, Iain.

IAIN: Why would they? There's nothing to talk about. It's not like I'm so interesting.

NEIL: Then they talk about how boring you are. *[to REBEKAH]* Isn't that right?

IAIN: No! They talk about whatever they watch on the telly or something. Books, or . . . *[to DANIELLE]* What would you say you talk about?

DANIELLE: A little bit of everything, I suppose.

IAIN: Do I count as a little bit of everything?

NEIL: Of course you do.

IAIN: I wasn't asking you.

DANIELLE: It's nothing bad. You must talk to Neil about me sometimes.

IAIN: No. I don't.

REBEKAH: *[to NEIL]* Can I have another taste of yours?

NEIL: You didn't even like it.

REBEKAH: I think maybe I could get used to it.

[NEIL pushes the drink toward her.]

NEIL: Is that your philosophy in life? To just get used to things you don't like? *[off her blank look]* I wouldn't want anyone to simply get used to me. That was the problem with the last girl.

DANIELLE: What happened with that anyway? Iain wouldn't tell me a thing.

IAIN: I didn't know anything to tell!

DANIELLE: *[disbelieving]* Really? You really didn't talk about it? At all?

[REBEKAH is taking increasingly long sips of NEIL's drink.]

NEIL: *[to REBEKAH]* Easy.

DANIELLE: *[to IAIN]* A three-year relationship, and it doesn't merit a conversation? Is that how it'll be if we break up?

IAIN: But we're not! Are we? We're not breaking up. Are we?

NEIL: Look, nothing happened. That was the problem, really. Nothing— *[REBEKAH is gulping his drink now]* Do you want another?

[REBEKAH nods, and NEIL gets up. IAIN moves as if to join him.]

DANIELLE: *[to IAIN]* Where are you going?

IAIN: *[gesturing at NEIL]* Well, I . . .

NEIL: Best stay put if you don't want them gossiping. I'll just be a minute.

[IAIN glances uncertainly at the girls, stays where he is. NEIL approaches the bar, notices MEREDITH and GLORIA. The BARTENDER comes over.]

BARTENDER: What can I get you?

[All NEIL's attention is on MEREDITH.]

BARTENDER: What, that? No good, friend.

NEIL: How do you know?

BARTENDER: They're in here often enough. But she never leaves with anyone.

NEIL: How is it I've never seen her before?

BARTENDER: Maybe you were never looking before. Now what can I get you?

NEIL: Whatever she's having.

BARTENDER: It's just a Fuller's.

NEIL: Fine. That's fine.

[The BARTENDER shakes his head, goes to fetch the drink. NEIL approaches MEREDITH and GLORIA. They stop mid-conversation when they notice him hovering.]

NEIL: *[to MEREDITH]* You're the reason I broke up with my girlfriend.

GLORIA: Seriously? How is it you always draw the weird ones, Merry?

MEREDITH: It's all right, Gloria, I think I can manage this one. *[to NEIL]* I'm not sure it's much of a compliment to me to suggest I'm the reason for a relationship gone off. Or maybe, really, it's not much of a compliment to you, saying you dropped someone for me when you don't even know me.

NEIL: I didn't want to waste her time.

GLORIA: How chivalrous of him, eh, Merry? *[to NEIL]* So now you're wasting ours, is that it?

[MEREDITH makes a quieting gesture toward GLORIA. The BARTENDER sets NEIL's drink on the bar, exchanges a look and shrug with GLORIA.]

MEREDITH: *[to NEIL]* You're serious.

GLORIA: He's off his trolley.

NEIL: I started having dreams a few months ago . . .

MEREDITH: *[making light]* Is this a roundabout way of saying I'm your dream girl?

NEIL: More than a stop at motorway services.

MEREDITH: What?

GLORIA: I'm telling you, Mer—

NEIL: *[to MEREDITH]* You like to walk through Regent's Park, especially the garden at St. John's. You sit by the fountain there when you need to think.

GLORIA: See there? He's a stalker. *[to NEIL]* We'll call the police if you don't leave us alone.

MEREDITH: *[to NEIL]* If you are a stalker, you're a good one. I've never seen you.

GLORIA: They're the worst kind.

NEIL: *[to MEREDITH]* You're happy whenever you see a heron because you think they might mean good luck. You always mean to look it up later, but then you forget.

MEREDITH: How do you know that?

NEIL: I dreamed it.

GLORIA: He's all wrong, Merry.

MEREDITH: He's not wrong, actually.

[MEREDITH is distracted by the hesitant approach of IAIN, who has been ousted and urged on by DANIELLE.]

MEREDITH: *[to NEIL]* I think your friend . . .

IAIN: Um, hi.

NEIL: Iain, allow me to introduce my final destination.

IAIN: That doesn't even make sense. *[to MEREDITH as he attempts to draw NEIL away]* Sorry if he bothered you, he doesn't get out much these days.

[NEIL shakes IAIN off.]

IAIN: Weren't you getting Bekah a drink?

[NEIL pushes his beer toward IAIN.]

NEIL: See if she likes this one.

IAIN: Maybe it'd be better if you brought it over.

[NEIL looks to where DANIELLE and REBEKAH are sitting, then at MEREDITH, then at IAIN.]

NEIL: *[to MEREDITH]* Give me a minute?

MEREDITH: I wasn't planning on taking any.

NEIL: They're yours all the same, as many as you like.

GLORIA: She doesn't want any of your goddamn minutes.

IAIN: Neil . . .

NEIL: All right, fine.

[NEIL takes the beer over to the booth. IAIN follows.]

GLORIA: He's not just off his trolley, I don't think he ever got on.

MEREDITH: *[amused]* Maybe he just missed his stop.

GLORIA: Just so long as he doesn't make you his next one.

[GLORIA digs for money to pay for their drinks and urges MEREDITH to finish up. Meanwhile, NEIL sets the beer in front of REBEKAH but does not sit.]

NEIL: *[to REBEKAH]* Sorry about the wait.

DANIELLE: Is that the only thing you're sorry for?

NEIL: *[to REBEKAH]* But really, I'd hate to waste your time—and mine—on something that will never work.

DANIELLE: Gave it much of a chance, did you?

NEIL: *[to REBEKAH]* You're really very sweet, and I'm sure you—

[REBEKAH tosses the drink over him.]

NEIL: *[beat, as if considering REBEKAH's gesture as a form of argument]* Fair enough.

DANIELLE: *[sliding out of the booth]* We need to take Bekah home. *[when neither man reacts]* Iain? We need to take Bekah home.

IAIN: Well, I . . . I don't think I really need . . . Do I?

NEIL: They want you to take the hit, you see. You'll get to sit there all night and listen to how awful I am, and how awful men are. Sort of the sacrificial scapegoat. But if you don't go, they'll talk about you, too. They'll work themselves into a frenzy and be ready to rip you apart next time you see them. Either way, you're dead, I'd say. Just depends on which way you want to go.

IAIN: And how is it you get away so easy? Since this is your fault?

NEIL: They have nothing to threaten me with. Aside from beer. And they've used up all their ammunition now.

DANIELLE: Iain, help me get her out.

[IAIN obliges in helping DANIELLE pull REBEKAH out of the booth and get her standing.]

NEIL: Not much of a drinker, I take it.

DANIELLE: Congratulations, Neil, you've ruined another one. And this time it took minutes rather than years.

[DANIELLE tugs REBEKAH along toward the door, turns when IAIN doesn't immediately follow.]

IAIN: I'll catch up. I just . . . *[glancing at NEIL]* . . . Get him a towel . . .

[DANIELLE and REBEKAH exit. NEIL walks over to where MEREDITH is getting ready to leave as well while GLORIA hovers. IAIN steps over to get a tea towel from the BARTENDER.]

GLORIA: Now look. He's coming back.

NEIL: Leaving already?

MEREDITH: Work tomorrow.

NEIL: So it's not just you wanting to escape me.

MEREDITH: No, I mean . . . Maybe a little.

[beat]

That girl you were with didn't look . . . well.

NEIL: And you assumed that was my fault.

[beat]

I only just met her.

MEREDITH: You only just met me.

[IAIN offers NEIL the towel.]

NEIL: *[mopping up]* Who knew Fuller's was so sticky?
[pausing to scrutinize the towel] Or is it the towel?

GLORIA: Maybe it's you.

NEIL: No, nothing seems to be sticking to me tonight. *[to MEREDITH]* At least let me get you a cab, or walk you . . .

MEREDITH: Through Regent's Park?

[NEIL hesitates, not sure if she's making fun.]

NEIL: If you like.

GLORIA: Oh, no you don't. *[to MEREDITH]* I'm not letting you go off like that. You'll end up dead or something.

NEIL: *[to GLORIA]* You must be the reason she never leaves with anyone; you drive them all away.

GLORIA: The crazy ones, you bet I do.

NEIL: And we're all crazy in your book, aren't we?

MEREDITH: It's fine, Gloria. You come, too.

[GLORIA shoots NEIL a triumphant look.]

GLORIA: *[to MEREDITH]* And we're not going to your flat, either. We'll have them drop us on a different street, just to be safe.

MEREDITH: Them? *[noticing IAIN]* Oh.

[IAIN offers a tiny wave.]

NEIL: See. Doubly protected.

GLORIA: *[eyeing IAIN]* He doesn't half look like he could protect himself, much less anyone else.

NEIL: It's his disarming appearance that causes the villains to make fatal mistakes.

[They look at IAIN.]

IAIN: Maybe we shouldn't cut through the park. It's a bit late. Dark out.

NEIL: And there, you've ruined it.

IAIN: What?

NEIL: I was building your mystique, and you just . . .

IAIN: My mystique.

[beat]

You know, you're making even less sense tonight than usual. Ever since Samantha, in fact—

MEREDITH: Who's Samantha?

IAIN: His last girlfriend.

MEREDITH: *[to NEIL]* The one you broke up with because of me?

NEIL: Well, if we're being true to facts, she broke up with me. But either way it comes to the same thing.

GLORIA: Left because you're a nutter, no doubt.

NEIL: Left because she started to notice I was looking for someone else every time we went out. Someone I'd seen in a dream. Several dreams.

[beat]

Funny. I don't even know your name.

MEREDITH: Meredith. But most people call me Merry. Like Christmas.

NEIL: Like a walking holiday. I'm—

MEREDITH: Neil, yeah, your friend said it earlier. And he's Iain, and this is—

NEIL: Gloria. Yes.

GLORIA: For God's sake, it's not a dinner party. Come on, Merry, we need to go.

NEIL: *[to MEREDITH]* Do you believe in fate?

MEREDITH: I don't know. Sometimes. And then in my saner moments, not so much.

NEIL: And are you having a sane moment?

[pause]

MEREDITH: . . . No.

GLORIA: Which is exactly why you need me. Come on.

[The BARTENDER comes to their end of the bar.]

BARTENDER: More drinks?

GLORIA: Don't encourage them.

[The BARTENDER looks to the others, but MEREDITH and NEIL are locked in silent communication. The BARTENDER catches IAIN's eye.]

IAIN: I think we were just leaving.

GLORIA: Yes! Thank you!

[The BARTENDER shrugs, moves off down the bar.]

IAIN: *[to NEIL]* I do have to get going. Danielle will be having a fit. If I don't go smooth her down . . .

[NEIL answers without taking his eyes from MEREDITH.]

NEIL: She won't let you come outside and play any more?

IAIN: It's not like that.

[Now NEIL does turn to look at IAIN.]

NEIL: Of course it is.

[GLORIA gives MEREDITH's arm a tug. MEREDITH resists.]

GLORIA: What has he done now, hypnotized you?

MEREDITH: *[to NEIL]* I like it when you put your hand on the small of my back when we walk. You didn't mention that part.

[MEREDITH and NEIL lock gazes again.]

GLORIA: Oh, for the love of—

[NEIL steps over, puts his palm flat on the small of MEREDITH's back.]

NEIL: Like this.

MEREDITH: It always felt like you were guiding me through something, or toward it.

NEIL: And where would you like me to guide you now?

[GLORIA shoots IAIN a look; he shrugs. MEREDITH and NEIL head for the door.]

GLORIA: *[to IAIN]* Well?

IAIN: Well what?

GLORIA: Now what do we do?

IAIN: I don't . . .

GLORIA: We can't let them go off alone. Stars in their eyes, they'll wander into traffic.

IAIN: Should we . . . go after them then?

GLORIA: Well, I don't trust Merry alone with your friend anyway. *[as IAIN moves forward]* But you keep your hands to yourself.

[beat as she gives IAIN the once-over]
At least until I change my mind.

[They exit.]

[Curtain.]

THE STRANGE ART OF LONGING

CHARACTERS

Arthur Longing—a young artist (male, late-20s to mid-30s)
Lavender “Dilly” Morganstern—his patroness (female, mid- to late-30s)
Josephine Carter—Arthur’s intended (female, early to mid-20s)

SETTING

A drawing room or parlor

[Curtain rises on ARTHUR pacing the drawing room. The furnishings were once fine but are now threadbare and faded. There are chairs, a sofa, a sideboard for fixing drinks, a clock, and windows. Canvases lean against the walls in various places, turned away so that the paintings themselves cannot be seen. This might be the genteel, declining American South or the last vestiges of faltering English aristocracy.]

ARTHUR paces. Pauses at the window to gaze out. Comes away dissatisfied and paces a bit more. Starts to pour a drink. Thinks he hears something and returns to the window. Paces. Remembers the drink. He is in the middle of pouring it when the door opens and DILLY enters, startling him into spilling.]

ARTHUR

Damn it to hell!

DILLY

[closing the door after her]

You paint better than you pour.

[ARTHUR is trying to mop up the spill.]

ARTHUR

Not normally. I—

[really looking at her for the first time, surprised]

You’re young.

DILLY

No younger than you. Oh, I know. You were expecting some wizened old hag. Sorry. I know mental images are so important to artists.

[beat]

But this isn't why you wrote to me, is it? Why you asked to meet me in person?

ARTHUR

[flustered]

No, but . . . Would you like a drink?

DILLY

So long as it goes in a glass.

[DILLY glances around the room, selects a chair to sit in while ARTHUR fixes her drink.]

DILLY

You know, after four years of supporting your work, I had the idea your furniture might be better. Well, that's my mental image shattered. So now we're even.

ARTHUR

[bringing her the drink]

You have been . . . most kind . . . about my art.

DILLY

It's not a matter of being kind. Your paintings will be worth something before long, I'm sure, and then I'll see a return on my investment.

ARTHUR

I'm almost afraid I'll disappoint you.

DILLY

Then don't. Is this why you sent the letter?

[ARTHUR goes to fix himself a drink.]

ARTHUR

I do have to admit to a certain curiosity about, you know, such a person who would . . . What I mean is . . . How did you even find me?

DILLY

You sent the address . . .

ARTHUR

No, no. I mean originally. My work, how did you come across it?

DILLY

It was you I came across, actually. I saw you painting in the park. Or, I should say I saw you preparing to paint. But I felt you showed so much persistence in your struggles with your easel that, assuming you were equally tenacious with your painting, you must make masterpieces almost daily.

ARTHUR

You have seen some of my paintings? I sent you a couple, I'm sure I did.

[ARTHUR begins to sit, gets nervous and stands again.]

DILLY

Three, in fact.

[beat]

I do wonder, did you paint them especially for me? There was no note.

ARTHUR

No, no, a true artist merely paints what he sees, outside or
[gesturing to his head]
in.

DILLY

Then you must see an awful lot of trees. Outside or
[mimicking the gesture]
in.

ARTHUR

There are more than a few in the area. Didn't you recognize any as you came up the drive?

DILLY

Just the one. That I have two paintings of. But the willow . . .

ARTHUR

Is in the park. By the pond.

DILLY

I'm sure I'd know it if I saw it. You're fond of trees, Mr. Longing?

ARTHUR

After all you've done to promote my work, I think you can call me Arthur.

DILLY

And you can call me Dilly.

ARTHUR

But your name is . . .

DILLY

Lavender, yes. Imagine getting someone to call you 'Lavender' with a straight face. 'Dilly' commands so much more respect. The nickname is from an old song.

ARTHUR

Yes, I know it.

[singing]

Lavender's blue, dilly dilly . . .

[resumes speaking]

I suppose given a name like that it makes sense you love art.

DILLY

About as much sense as, given your house is surrounded by trees, you love to paint them. Do you paint anything else?

[ARTHUR glances around at the canvases, abruptly takes a seat and gulps some of his drink.]

ARTHUR

I do trees best, but . . .

DILLY

But?

ARTHUR

I have painted other things. Places. People.

DILLY

People! I would love to have my portrait done! I've always wanted to, you know, but it seems a little self-indulgent to hang a big picture of oneself over the fireplace. Especially since it would mean taking my father's portrait down.

ARTHUR

Your father . . .

DILLY

Geoffrey Morganstern. Maybe you've heard of him?

ARTHUR

[rising, flustered again]

Of course. Of course I've heard of him. I never . . . realized . . .

Not many Morgansterns around.

DILLY

No.

ARTHUR

Not a common name at all.

DILLY

No, I suppose not.

ARTHUR

Anyway, my father once told me to find something I like and invest in it. So that's what I did.

DILLY

Invested . . .

ARTHUR

In you.

DILLY

And I thank you.

ARTHUR

Yes, but?

DILLY

But?

ARTHUR

There's a reason you sent me a letter asking to meet me in person. After four years, what could be so important you find it necessary to be in the same room?

[pause]

ARTHUR

If not for you, Miss—Dilly—I probably would have lost the house.

DILLY

And your trees, poor dears. Though you'd always have your memories of them. And your paintings. Unless . . . I hope you didn't send me the only pictures of that tree from out front?

ARTHUR

Oh, no. There are several.

DILLY

Well, that's a relief.

ARTHUR

And several more of the tree behind the house besides.

DILLY

I will have to make a point of getting a look at it on my way out.

ARTHUR

[gesturing at a stack of canvases]

I could show you—

DILLY

No, Arthur. I wouldn't want the painting to ruin the splendor of the real thing.

ARTHUR

It would be a sad letdown. The paintings are sort of an idealized version, you see.

DILLY

. . . Of the tree.

ARTHUR

I subscribe to a classical form of art. I remove the unsightly blemishes and show things at their best, you know, as if they were perfect.

DILLY

Trees. You do this for trees.

ARTHUR

I do it best with trees. But I have done people. And places.

DILLY

So you've said . . . Can you sketch, Arthur?

ARTHUR

Certainly. Any good artist should be able to sketch.

DILLY

Then I'd like you to do one of me, if you please.

[off his beginning to protest]

I don't think it's so much to ask, seeing as I've saved you from being homeless. Is it?

[ARTHUR glances around, sets down his drink, takes up a sketchbook and pencil from a table, then sits and begins to draw.]

DILLY

And are you doing an unblemished, idealized version of me?

ARTHUR

You have no blemishes that I can perceive.

DILLY

And do you consider yourself very perceptive?

ARTHUR

Artists must be, in order to paint the truth.

DILLY

You just told me you don't paint the truth; you paint ideals.

ARTHUR

Right now I'm sketching your unblemished soul.

DILLY

[rising]
That's enough of that, I think.

ARTHUR

But I'm not done.

[DILLY walks around the room, inspecting a few items. Goes to the window. ARTHUR continues to sketch.]

DILLY

It's a lovely house . . .

ARTHUR

Been in the family for three generations. It would be a shame—a personal shame, for me—to lose it.

DILLY

Are you in danger of losing it?

ARTHUR

Always. Even with a generous patroness, there is not much money to be had in painting.

DILLY

[gesturing at the canvases]

But you have enough here . . . We could get you a gallery showing, I'm sure. And if you took paid sittings . . .

ARTHUR

It's hopeless.

[Concerned, DILLY returns to her seat as ARTHUR sets the sketch aside.]

DILLY

And this is why you asked to see me?

[beat; ARTHUR doesn't respond]

Well, it can't be hopeless. What makes you think so?

ARTHUR

Look at them.

[DILLY glances around, not understanding.]

ARTHUR

The paintings. Look at them.

[Slowly, DILLY rises and goes to one of the stacks of canvases against the wall, selects the topmost, looks at it for a long moment.]

DILLY

Well . . .

ARTHUR

Well?

DILLY

At least it's not a tree.

[DILLY sets the canvas down, takes up another.]

DILLY

Oh. But this one is.

[turning the canvas]

I think?

[ARTHUR rises, agitated.]

ARTHUR

I haven't been able to paint in months! It all—it all comes out wrong!

DILLY

Maybe you need a break, or a change of scene.

ARTHUR

You're not an artist, so how could you possibly understand? I have to paint. I can't not paint.

[pause]

For a while I hoped it was passing, that I would come back to my old self and be able to paint like I always had, but . . . It's been eight months, and I'm starting to believe I'll never paint as well as I used to. No matter how clearly I see things here

[pointing to his head]

I can't get them to translate there.

[indicating the canvas DILLY is holding]

[DILLY sets the canvas down.]

DILLY

I'm not sure in what way I can help you, Arthur.

[ARTHUR flops onto the sofa.]

ARTHUR

There is no help. No hope. Given the circumstances, Miss Carter could never accept me. Nor would I want her to.

[DILLY returns to sit.]

DILLY

Ah! This is why you wrote me.

ARTHUR

I wanted you to meet her.

DILLY

Meet her? When? Now?

ARTHUR

I've invited her for tea.

DILLY

And what were you anticipating, Arthur? Oh no, wait, I see it: you expected a kindly old woman, a sort of fairy tale godmother. I was supposed to swoop in and give you a happily ever after.

[beat]

That's all well and good—assuming I were so inclined—but it won't solve your painting problem.

ARTHUR

There is no solving my painting problem. I can only hope it will resolve itself.

DILLY

Now that's no way to look at things. As the old saying goes, give a man a painting and he'll be able to cover one wall. But teach a man to paint and he can cover every wall.

ARTHUR

I've never heard anyone say that.

DILLY

Really? How surprising. And you an artist besides.

[beat]

What time do you expect your Miss Carter?

ARTHUR

[checking the clock]

Not long.

DILLY

Then let's move quickly. You say your troubles began eight months ago . . .

ARTHUR

Yes . . .

DILLY

And what else happened at that time?

ARTHUR

Nothing of note.

DILLY

Come, Arthur, there must have been something! Something to precipitate a change in you, stem the flowing tide of your art.

[beat]

A tree didn't become blighted? Have to be cut down?

ARTHUR

The trees have all been perfectly well.

[expression grows dark]

Though the cherry didn't flower this season.

DILLY

There now! Perhaps your subconscious is too worried about the cherry tree to focus on your work.

ARTHUR

Even if that is the case, what can I do about it?

DILLY

Sometimes simply being aware of the problem can help. Or . . . I know! You should paint the tree as if it were in bloom. Wouldn't that be, as you put it, the ideal?

ARTHUR

I suppose anything is worth a try at this point. I—

*[There is a knock, the door hesitantly opens.
JOSEPHINE enters, carrying the tea tray.
ARTHUR jumps up; DILLY rises more
sedately.]*

ARTHUR

Miss Carter! You should have allowed Mrs. Goldenson to bring in the tea.

JOSEPHINE

I don't mind, really. I arrived as she was bringing it and thought to save her the trouble.

*[ARTHUR comes forward, ready to take the
tray from her.]*

ARTHUR

But it's far too heavy for you.

JOSEPHINE

Not at all.

ARTHUR

Allow me to—

[He takes hold of the tray; there is a tug of war.]

DILLY

Arthur, unless you want to spend more time cleaning your rug today, I suggest you let Miss Carter set the tray down.

[to JOSEPHINE]

I'm Dilly, by the by.

[JOSEPHINE notices DILLY for the first time, is surprised by her youth and beauty, and releases the tray just as ARTHUR does the same.]

JOSEPHINE

Oh! Oh, I am so sorry! I just . . . I didn't realize . . .

DILLY

That I would be so young. Yes, I seem to be surprising everyone on that account today.

[Both JOSEPHINE and ARTHUR are attempting to clean up the dropped tray but are mostly getting in one another's way.]

JOSEPHINE

No, really, it's not—oh, Mr. Longing, I am sorry—it's not your age, Miss, er . . . Or is it Mrs.? No? I only thought . . .

DILLY

Oh, stop it, both of you, you're only making it worse. Leave it for a moment if you would.

[DILLY shoos ARTHUR and JOSEPHINE toward the sofa to sit.]

DILLY

Better.

[to JOSEPHINE]

Now, as I was saying, I'm Dilly . . .

[DILLY waits expectantly but JOSEPHINE and ARTHUR only stare.]

DILLY

This is the part where either Arthur does the honors or, given that he appears to have gone a little soft, you introduce yourself.

[ARTHUR stands.]

ARTHUR

Yes, of course. Miss Morganstern, er, Dilly, this is Miss Carter.

[JOSEPHINE stands.]

JOSEPHINE

[surprised]

Morganstern?

DILLY

Please do just call me Dilly. And may I call you . . . ?

JOSEPHINE

Oh! Josephine. Of course you may call me . . . I mean, since you and Mr. Longing are so . . . so close . . .

[DILLY sits and the others follow suit.]

DILLY

And yet you call him Mr. Longing. How did you meet?

JOSEPHINE

My father wanted a painting done—

DILLY

Of a tree?

JOSEPHINE

Pardon?

DILLY

No, never mind, do continue.

JOSEPHINE

A painting of The Arbors—

ARTHUR

That's what they call the house.

JOSEPHINE

Nothing so grand as this house, but still quite lovely, if I do say so myself.

DILLY

And Arthur was commissioned for the work.

JOSEPHINE

Well, no . . .

DILLY

Then . . . how exactly did this painting lead to you two meeting?

JOSEPHINE

My father hired Richard Theon to do the painting.

[looking to the abandoned tray]

I really should . . .

[JOSEPHINE slips off the sofa to begin cleaning up the tray. ARTHUR appears ready to help but DILLY motions for him to stay put.]

JOSEPHINE

Unfortunately, Mr. Theon was more interested in me than his work.

DILLY

Ah. I see. I take it his attention was unwelcome?

JOSEPHINE

Oh, he—he's nice enough, I suppose, but . . .

DILLY

Is it because he's an artist?

JOSEPHINE

[glancing at ARTHUR]

No, no, I don't object at all to artists.

DILLY

But?

JOSEPHINE

I simply felt that Mr. Theon should apply himself to the task for which he'd been hired.

[picking up the tray]

There now. I'll just take this back to Mrs. Goldenson.

[JOSEPHINE exits with the tray. Once again ARTHUR appears as if he might follow, but DILLY stops him.]

DILLY

Interesting.

ARTHUR

[irritated]

I'm glad you think so.

DILLY

This Richard Theon rattled her it seems.

ARTHUR

However good a painter he is, he's the worst kind of man.

DILLY

And I still don't know how the two of you met. Mr. Carter can't possibly condone his daughter running off to visit a bachelor artist without some pretense of a reason.

[ARTHUR shifts uncomfortably.]

DILLY

He doesn't know, does he?

ARTHUR

Miss Carter—

DILLY

Oh, honestly, Arthur. Can't you call her Josephine?

ARTHUR

I don't . . . She hasn't . . .

DILLY

Well, how long have you known each other?

ARTHUR

[thinking]

Not so long as a year . . . Nine months, maybe ten.

DILLY

[bemoaning]

Oh, Arthur.

ARTHUR

I found her in one of the yew trees.

Of course you did. DILLY

I was painting . . . ARTHUR

I'm sure. DILLY

And I saw something flutter, so I went to investigate. ARTHUR

You climbed the tree? DILLY

I thought perhaps something was stuck in it. ARTHUR

She'd climbed all the way up? DILLY

Well, it's sort of . . . ARTHUR
[glancing around at the canvases]
I've got a picture . . .

Never mind that. Don't you see? This is the source of your problem. DILLY

The yew tree? ARTHUR

No, Arthur. You're in love. DILLY

I wouldn't go as far as that. ARTHUR

Wouldn't you? Didn't you invite me here in the hopes I would give you my blessing? DILLY
[off ARTHUR's discomfort]
But, Arthur, just think: you began to see her around the same time you stopped being able to paint.

ARTHUR

Didn't stop Theon.

DILLY

One man's muse is another man's defeat, I suppose.

[beat]

I once knew a writer, a very talented man. But once I—that is, once he fell in love, he found he couldn't write.

ARTHUR

Why on earth not?

DILLY

He needed to be serious, I think, in his mind in order to write. And love makes a person anything but serious.

ARTHUR

That's ridiculous. Love is a very serious business.

DILLY

If you're thinking of love as a business, Arthur, you'd do just as well to marry me as Josephine.

[off ARTHUR's startled expression]

No, dear, I'm not suggesting it. Merely making a point. In any case, as things currently stand, you're closer to me than to her; at least you call me by my name.

*[JOSEPHINE enters with a fresh tray.
ARTHUR starts to go to her but stops
himself this time.]*

JOSEPHINE

[setting the tray on a table]

Miss, er, Dilly? Would you like to do the honors?

[DILLY looks to ARTHUR.]

ARTHUR

I think you should pour . . . Josephine.

*[Startled by his use of her name,
JOSEPHINE drops a teaspoon.]*

DILLY

Oh, don't let's start all that again. You sit, Josephine; you've done enough work for one afternoon.

[DILLY goes to pour the tea.]

DILLY

I think it's rather archaic, the whole Miss and Mr. and so on. What use are names if people aren't going to use them? Oh, I realize there's a time and place for more formal addresses, but among friends one should be oneself, name and all.

JOSEPHINE

Well, but then, you are . . .

[JOSEPHINE thinks better of what she is about to say. Locks gazes with DILLY.]

DILLY

[sternly]

And how do you take your tea, Josephine? Lemon?

JOSEPHINE

[subdued]

Yes, please. And a sugar.

DILLY

Yes, you do strike me as the sugar type. Arthur?

ARTHUR

Just lemon.

DILLY

[nodding]

Just so.

[DILLY puts a tea biscuit beside the cup on each saucer and hands JOSEPHINE and ARTHUR their tea before going back to pour her own.]

JOSEPHINE

I suppose . . .

[quick glance at ARTHUR before trying his name]

Arthur . . . told you . . .

DILLY

That you were in the yew tree? Or that you've been visiting without your father's knowledge? Surely Mr. Theon is finished with his painting by now. Have you some other need to escape?

ARTHUR

She does it as a favor to me, actually.

DILLY

How gallant of you, Arthur.

ARTHUR

She helps me . . . mix paint.

[JOSEPHINE throws ARTHUR a surprised look as DILLY goes to sit with her tea.]

DILLY

Really?

[to JOSEPHINE]

I'm surprised you don't get any on your clothes. That would certainly give your game away, don't you think?

JOSEPHINE

I'm very careful.

[She looks to ARTHUR for approval.]

ARTHUR

And of course we always have Mrs. Goldenson; she's become very good at getting paint out of clothing.

DILLY

And what do you wear, Josephine, when forced to remove your clothes so Mrs. Goldenson can clean them?

[off JOSEPHINE's and ARTHUR's aghast reactions]

It's no use telling me stories, and in most cases I wouldn't care a whit what the two of you get up to, but I do need to protect my investment.

ARTHUR

[setting aside his tea]

Now wait a minute!

DILLY

You asked me here, Arthur, and I'm glad you did. Clearly your relationship with Josephine—whatever it may be—has derailed your work. And I'm sure you, Josephine, would never want to come between Arthur and his ability to paint.

JOSEPHINE

No! No, of course not . . .

DILLY

So it's very simple then. You must break it off.

[JOSEPHINE and ARTHUR exchange a look.]

JOSEPHINE

Then I should . . . go?

ARTHUR

No.

[to DILLY]

You really are a Morganstern, aren't you? Set to arrange everyone's lives to your satisfaction.

DILLY

I'm trying to arrange things to your satisfaction, Arthur. I can't see that you'd be very happy if you couldn't paint. And as you said to me before, you wouldn't be able to support Josephine as a wife, either.

JOSEPHINE

A wife?

ARTHUR

[to DILLY]

So much for an unblemished soul.

DILLY

I never claimed to be unblemished.

JOSEPHINE

[to ARTHUR]

You called her unblemished?

ARTHUR

Clearly an error on my part.

DILLY

He was cozening me.

[to ARTHUR]

I never did see that sketch.

[With irritation, ARTHUR grabs the sketchbook, hands it to DILLY. She looks it over for a long moment.]

DILLY

[gently]
Well, Arthur, not all your talent is lost.

ARTHUR
[still angry]
I'm not sure what entitles you to be a critic.

DILLY
Everyone's a critic, haven't you heard? But it's my money that gives me real credentials.
[beat]
This sketch is very good. It appears, if you apply yourself, you may yet be able to produce fine art.

ARTHUR
[bitter]
A sketch is not a painting.

DILLY
No, but it's a start. Let's put it to the test, shall we? Why don't you do a sketch of Josephine?

JOSEPHINE
Oh! No, I don't think . . .

[But ARTHUR snatches the sketchbook back from DILLY and situates himself to draw JOSEPHINE.]

ARTHUR
If you would, Miss . . . Josephine . . . Bring your chin up. I can't draw you if I can't see you . . . Now turn your face a little more toward the window . . .

[DILLY gets up, comes around to look at ARTHUR's work while he sketches.]

ARTHUR
Dilly, if you hover like that, I won't be able to concentrate.

[DILLY moves to the window.]

ARTHUR
And now you're blocking my light.

[DILLY goes to return her cup and saucer to the tray.]

DILLY

If you're finished, Josephine, I can take yours.

[JOSEPHINE starts to turn.]

ARTHUR

Don't move.

[JOSEPHINE freezes and DILLY removes the cup and saucer from her hands.]

DILLY

Tell me, Josephine, have you any siblings?

JOSEPHINE

[trying to remain still as she speaks]

An older brother and a younger sister.

DILLY

Do you think they would like Arthur?

JOSEPHINE

I can't imagine anyone wouldn't like Arthur.

[ARTHUR pauses, looks up briefly, goes back to drawing. DILLY returns to her seat.]

DILLY

Spoken like someone with love veiling her ability to see plainly. What about your parents? Would they enjoy having a painter for a son-in-law?

JOSEPHINE

[forgetting to be still, turning to DILLY]

Well, my father is a widower, you see, so he depends on me for so much of what would have been my mother's duties.

DILLY

Not exactly an answer to my question. I suppose you mean to say he'd hate to lose you. To anyone, never mind a penniless painter.

[ARTHUR stops working but does not look up.]

JOSEPHINE

Well, yes . . .

DILLY

But you're a grown woman. You don't intend to live at home forever, do you?

JOSEPHINE

No . . . I think once my sister is married . . .

DILLY

She has a fiancé?

JOSEPHINE

No . . .

DILLY

Suitors?

JOSEPHINE

Well . . .

ARTHUR

I think I'm finished.

DILLY

Let's see it then.

ARTHUR

[closing the sketchbook]

No.

[off DILLY's and JOSEPHINE's surprise]

I don't have anything to prove, to you or anyone except myself, and I've done that to my satisfaction.

DILLY

You think you'll be able to paint again?

[ARTHUR nods.]

DILLY

It has to be the thing you want most, Arthur. Nothing else can eclipse it.

[ARTHUR nods again and DILLY rises, goes to collect the tea tray.]

DILLY

It's probably time you went home, don't you think, Josephine? You'll be missed before long, considering how much your father relies on you.

JOSEPHINE

Oh! I . . .

[JOSEPHINE looks to ARTHUR but he does not meet her gaze.]

JOSEPHINE

[rising]

Yes, I—I suppose I should be getting home.

[DILLY holds out the tray.]

DILLY

And if you wouldn't mind, dear.

JOSEPHINE

No, no, of course I don't mind.

[JOSEPHINE takes the tray and DILLY walks her to the door.]

DILLY

You probably shouldn't come again for a while; he needs time.

[JOSEPHINE nods]

To see you would only wound him more, and I know you wouldn't want that.

[another nod from JOSEPHINE]

And you have so many things to look after at home . . .

[DILLY opens the door and JOSEPHINE exits. DILLY closes the door.]

ARTHUR

Your father couldn't have done better, I imagine.

DILLY

He's a very good manager. It's what makes him so successful.

ARTHUR

And so many people in his employ unhappy.

DILLY

A completely happy man is seldom a productive one.

ARTHUR

He taught you that.

DILLY

A man has to want something, Arthur. That's what keeps him going.

ARTHUR

And a woman?

DILLY

The same.

ARTHUR

And what do you want, Dilly?

DILLY

Dividends.

[pause]

ARTHUR

Would you have been happier? With the writer?

DILLY

It hardly matters. He wouldn't have been happy with me. Any more than you would be with Josephine.

[beat]

And it would have made me very unhappy to make him unhappy.

ARTHUR

So you've saved us the trouble.

DILLY

Yes, and more importantly I saved you the time you would have wasted on such a mistake. Now you can paint, and Josephine no longer has to sneak around behind her father's back and risk whatever terrible consequences her actions might have brought her.

ARTHUR

Mr. Carter is a good man. He wouldn't—

DILLY

My father is a good man. He would and he did. Any father would, under the circumstances.

ARTHUR

Your father is a tyrant. And if you continue on like this, you'll turn out just like him.

[beat]

As for me, did it occur to you I might be rather unhappy without Josephine? Or doesn't that matter either?

DILLY

You'll get over it, Arthur, and so will she.

ARTHUR

As you have.

DILLY

Precisely. And now I think I should go and leave you to it.

*[DILLY offers her hand as if for a shake.
ARTHUR takes it, holds it.]*

ARTHUR

And your writer?

DILLY

What of him?

ARTHUR

Did he ever get over it?

DILLY

He did very well for himself.

ARTHUR

That isn't what I asked.

[DILLY pulls her hand free.]

DILLY

He died, unmarried, about four years ago.

ARTHUR

So young. And alone.

DILLY

He had family.

ARTHUR

One can have family and still be alone, Dilly.

[pause]

Come, then. I'll walk out with you.

DILLY

To show me your trees?

ARTHUR

On the way, perhaps.

DILLY

Oh? You have an appointment?

ARTHUR

I thought I might stop at The Arbors and ask Mr. Carter's permission to paint some of his trees.

DILLY

[laughing]

Oh, Arthur, you should have been a gardener!

ARTHUR

I'll consider it if the painting doesn't work out.

DILLY

[sobering]

Are you sure this is what you want?

ARTHUR

You've at least made me sure of what I don't want, and for that I thank you.

*[ARTHUR guides DILLY toward the door.
As they exit . . .]*

ARTHUR

If you come with me, I can show you Mr. Carter's hawthorn, it's quite impressive . . .

DILLY

[laughing again]

Oh, Arthur!

[Lights.]

[Curtain.]