

*Silence. Everyone waits for the storm. Lloyd comes slowly up on stage.*

**Lloyd** Poppy! Bring the book!

*Enter Poppy from the wings, with the book.*

**Lloyd** (*patiently*) Is that the line, Poppy? 'I don't understand why the Sheikh looks like Philip'? Can we consult the author's text and make absolutely sure?

**Poppy** Well, I think it's . . .

**Lloyd** (*with exquisite politeness*) 'What's that, Dad?' Right. That's the line, Brooke, love. We all know you've worked in very classy places up in London where they let you make the play up as you go along, but we don't want that kind of thing here, do we. Not when the author has provided us with such a considered and polished line of his own. Not at one o'clock in the morning. Not two lines away from the end of Act One. Not when we're just about to get a tea break before we all drop dead of exhaustion. We merely want to hear the line. (*Suddenly puts his mouth next to Brooke's ear and shouts.*) 'What's that, Dad?' (*All patience and politeness again.*) That's all. Nothing else. I'm not being unreasonable, am I?

**Brooke** *abruptly turns, runs upstairs and exits into the mezzanine bathroom.*

**Lloyd** Exit? Does it say 'exit'?

*The sound of Brooke weeping, off, and running downstairs.*

**Lloyd** Oh dear, now she's going to wash her lenses away.

*Exit Lloyd through the front door.*

**Frederick** (*chastened*) Oh, good Lord.

**Selsdon** (*likewise*) A little heavy with the sauce, I thought.

**Garry** I thought it was going to be Poppy when he finally, you know.

Scene #7  
All

**Dotty** It's usually Poppy. Isn't it, love?

**Poppy** *smiles wanly.*

**Frederick** I suppose that was all my fault.

**Garry** But why pick on, you know?

**Dotty** Yes, why Brooke?

**Belinda** I thought it was quite sweet, actually.

**Garry** Sweet?

**Belinda** Trying to pretend they're not having a little thing together.

**Dotty** A little thing? Lloyd and Brooke . . . ?

**Belinda** Didn't you know?

**Selsdon** Brooke and Lloyd?

**Belinda** Where do you think they've been all weekend?

**Frederick** Good Lord. You mean, that's why he wasn't here when poor old Tim . . .

*He stops, conscious that **Tim** is behind the sofa.*

**Dotty** . . . put the set up back-to-front.

**Belinda** Sh! Here they come!

*Enter **Lloyd** with his arm round **Brooke**.*

**Lloyd** OK. All forgotten. I was irresistible.

**Poppy** I think I'm going to be sick.

*Exit **Poppy** into the wings.*

**Dotty** Oh, no!

**Lloyd** Oh, for heaven's sake!

*Exit **Lloyd** after **Poppy**.*

**Garry** You mean . . . ?

**Selsdon** Her, too?

**Frederick** Oh, great Scott!

**Belinda** Well, that's something I *didn't* know.

**Brooke** I think I'm going to faint.

**Dotty** Yes, sit down, love!

*They sit Brooke down.*

**Belinda** Quick – do your meditation.

**Selsdon** Well, that's something *she* didn't know!

**Belinda** Hush, love.

**Dotty** Two weeks' rehearsal, that's all we've had.

**Frederick** Whatever next?

**Selsdon** *Most* exciting!

**Belinda** (*indicating Brooke*) Sh!

**Selsdon** Oh, yes. Sh!

**Dotty** Here he comes.

*Enter Lloyd from the wings, subdued.*

**Dotty** Is she all right, love?

**Lloyd** She'll be all right in a minute. Something she ate, probably.

**Garry** (*indicating Brooke*) Yes, this one's feeling a bit, you know.

**Lloyd** I'm feeling a bit, you know, myself. I think I'm going to –

**Belinda** Which?

**Garry** (*offering a chair*) Faint?

**Belinda** (*offering a vase*) Or be sick?

**Lloyd** (*subsides on to the chair*) – need that tea break.

END