

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME - LADY JULIA'S AUDITION PIECE

LADY JULIA: (as she enters) You will kindly inform Lord Arthur that I wish to see him at once.

(She moves down C)

BAINES: I will enquire whether his lordship is well enough to see you, my lady.

SYBIL: Is he still unwell, Baines?

BAINES: He is no longer causing us grave anxiety, I am thankful to say, miss, but he is still far from being himself.

LADY JULIA: (sitting on the sofa) That might easily be an improvement. What is supposed to have been the matter with him?

SYBIL: Mama, you know poor Arthur has been most dreadfully ill.

LADY JULIA: Three days ago he informed us that his Aunt Clementina was most dreadfully ill. Not ten minutes later she practically danced into this room and announced she was giving an evening party. I can scarcely be blamed for considering Arthur's statements to be, at the least, unreliable.

BAINES: He has indeed been greatly indisposed, my lady. It was something he swallowed.

LADY JULIA: By accident or design?

BAINES: By accident, my lady. A beverage he erroneously supposed to be innocuous. Had I not been on hand to summon a doctor immediately, we might easily have lost him.

LADY JULIA: Hmm ! Since I have no desire to hurt you, Sybil, I will not comment on that.

(To Baines) But he is up and about now?

BAINES: He is up, my lady, but to say he is about would be an exaggeration. He must take things very quietly for the next few days. Now, if your ladyship will excuse me, I will inform his lordship you are here. (BAINES exits up C)

SYBIL: Mama, you won't be hard on dear Arthur, will you? He couldn't help being ill. He'll be well again in time for the wedding.

LADY JULIA: I wonder. I shall be interested to see.

SYBIL: Mama, you don't mean you think Arthur will ask for another postponement?

LADY JULIA: I shall be very surprised indeed if he does not.

SYBIL: But - why should he?

LADY JULIA: Has it not struck you as suspicious that he should first invent an illness for his Aunt Clementina, in order to obtain a postponement, and then, when that is proved false, conveniently fall ill himself?

SYBIL: But he has been ill. Baines said so.

LADY JULIA: The loyalty of such as Baines may be purchased by means of a small coin.

SYBIL: I can't believe it. He always said I was the first love of his life.

LADY JULIA: There is nothing satisfactory in being a man's first love. It is better by far - not to say safer - to be his last.

SYBIL: If Arthur asks for another postponement I shall never forgive him. And yet - if he really is ill . . .

(ARTHUR enters up c. He is in his dressing-gown and looks pale and wan)

ARTHUR: Sybil . . .

SYBIL: (running to him) Arthur! Oh, Arthur, how pale you look. You see, Mama, he has been ill.

ARTHUR: I feel better already for seeing you, Sybil. Lady Julia, how good of you to come.

LADY JULIA: Speaking for myself, my motives were not entirely prompted by solicitude. However, I am glad to see you look ill, and this is not another subterfuge.

SYBIL: You mustn't stand, Arthur. Come and sit down. Lean on me.

(She leads Arthur to the armchair RC)

LADY JULIA: Surely one can walk with a weak stomach.

ARTHUR:(sitting in the armchair RC) Thank you, darling.

SYBIL: Another cushion?

ARTHUR: No, thank you, dear. I'm quite comfortable.

SYBIL: (kneeling by his chair) Mama and I were so afraid you'd have to postpone the wedding, but now you're so much better . . .

ARTHUR: Sybil - I don't want you to misunderstand me . . .

LADY JULIA: (triumphantly) Ah-ha!

SYBIL: Arthur, you don't mean to say you want to postpone it . . .

ARTHUR: No, darling, I don't want to, only . . .

SYBIL: Oh, Arthur!

ARTHUR: (desperately) I don't want to, darling, really I don't . . .

SYBIL: (sobbing) You don't love me any more.

ARTHUR: I do, darling. (He rises and moves to Sybil)

SYBIL: No, you don't.

ARTHUR: I do, Sybil, I do, I do, I do, I do.

SYBIL: Mama said you would . . . and now you have.

ARTHUR: It's not my fault, Sybil. Please stop crying and listen to me. I'd do anything to please you, dearest, you know that.

LADY JULIA: Ha!

ARTHUR: But I'm not at all strong yet. I don't feel I could walk up the aisle with any confidence.

LADY JULIA: To my mind, it is Sybil who is unlikely to walk up the aisle with any confidence. And how long a postponement are you suggesting this time?

ARTHUR: Well, I think I could manage with a month.

SYBIL: A month!

LADY JULIA: (rising and moving to L of the sofa) Let us go, Sybil. It is quite apparent that Arthur wishes to break off the match and is choosing this roundabout way of doing it. The longer we stay the more we demean ourselves.

ARTHUR: But I don't want to break it off, Lady Julia. Nothing is further from my mind. (He moves to Sybil) You believe me, don't you, Sybil?

SYBIL: I want to, Arthur, only you are behaving very strangely. Is something troubling you beside your health?

ARTHUR: Yes, Sybil, something is.