

## Act 2, Scene 3 - Elvira & Charles

**ELVIRA.** Are you ready?

**CHARLES.** What for?

**ELVIRA.** To go to Folkestone, of course.

**CHARLES.** I want a glass of sherry first.

**ELVIRA.** I don't believe you want to take me at all.

**CHARLES.** Of course I want to take you, but I still think it would be more sensible to wait until tomorrow. It's a filthy night.

**ELVIRA** (*moving to and flinging herself into the armchair; crossly*) How familiar this is!

**CHARLES.** In what way familiar?

**ELVIRA.** All through our married life I only had to suggest something for you immediately to start hedging me off.

**CHARLES.** I'm not hedging you off, I merely said . . .

**ELVIRA.** All right - all right - we'll spend another cosy intimate evening at home with Ruth sewing away at that hideous table centre and snapping at us like a terrier.

**CHARLES.** Ruth is perfectly aware that the table centre is hideous. It happens to be a birthday present for her mother.

**ELVIRA.** It's no use trying to defend Ruth's taste to me. It's thoroughly artsy - craftsy and you know it.

**CHARLES.** It is not artsy - craftsy.

**ELVIRA.** She's ruined this room. Look at those curtains.

**CHARLES.** Lady Mackinley sent them to us from Burma.

**ELVIRA.** Obviously because they had been sent to her from Birmingham.

**CHARLES** If you don't behave yourself I shan't take you into Folkestone ever.

**ELVIRA** (*rising, coaxingly*) Please, Charles . . . don't be elderly and grand with me! Please let 's go now!

**CHARLES** (*moving up to the drinks table*) Not until I've had my sherry.

**ELVIRA.** You are tiresome, darling. I've been waiting about for hours.

**CHARLES.** A few more minutes won't make any difference then. (*He pours himself out some sherry*)

**ELVIRA** (*petulantly, flinging herself into the chair again*) Oh, very well.

**CHARLES.** Besides, the car won't be back for half an hour at least.

**ELVIRA** (*sharply*) What do you mean?

**CHARLES** (*sipping his sherry nonchalantly*) Ruth's taken it. She had to go and see the vicar . . .

**ELVIRA** (*jumping up - in extreme agitation*) What!!

**CHARLES.** What on earth's the matter?

**ELVIRA.** You say Ruth's taken the car?

**CHARLES.** Yes. To go and see the vicar, but she won't be long.

**ELVIRA** (*going upstage c, wildly*) Oh, my God! Oh, my God!

**CHARLES.** Elvira!

**ELVIRA.** Stop her! You must stop her at once!

**CHARLES.** Why - what for?

**ELVIRA** (*jumping up and down*) Stop her! Go out and stop her immediately!

**CHARLES.** It's too late now - I heard her go a couple of minutes ago

**ELVIRA** (*retreating backwards slowly towards the window. Charles comes to her*) Oh, oh, oh, oh!!

**CHARLES.** What are you going on like this for? What have you done?

**ELVIRA** (*frightened*) Done? I haven't done anything.

**CHARLES.** Elvira - you're lying.

**ELVIRA** (*backing away from him*) I'm not lying - what is there to lie about?

**CHARLES.** What are you in such a state for?

**ELVIRA** (*almost hysterical*) I'm not in a state - I don't know what you mean!

**CHARLES.** You've done something dreadful.

**ELVIRA.** Don't look at me like that, Charles! I haven't! I swear I haven't!

**CHARLES** (*stopping and taking a pace backwards away from her striking his forehead*) My God! The car!

**ELVIRA.** No, Charles, no . . .

**CHARLES.** Ruth was right. You did want to kill me! You've done something to the car!

**ELVIRA** (*howling like a banshee*) Oh - oh - oh - oh!

**CHARLES** (*stepping towards her again*) What did you do? Answer me! (*At this moment the telephone rings. CHARLES goes to the telephone up-stage R on the drinks table*) Hallo - hallo! Yes, speaking . . . I see . . . the bridge at the bottom of the hill .. thank you - no, I'll come at once. (*He slowly puts back the receiver. As he does so the*

*door bursts open .ELVIRA stands facing the door*)

**ELVIRA** (*obviously retreating from someone*) Well, of all the filthy low - down tricks . . . ! (*She runs across, below the sofa, shielding her head with her hands and screaming*) Ow - stop it - Ruth! - leave go . . . ! (*ELVIRA runs above the sofa to the door and out of the room, slamming the door . It opens again immediately and slams again.*

**CHARLES**, standing still by the telephone, stares aghast