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*Dramatic Publishing*



A PLAY IN THREE ACTS  
BY  
JOHN OSBORNE  
AND  
ANTHONY CREIGHTON

Epitaph for  
George Dillon



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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**EPITAPH FOR GEORGE DILLON**

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**(EPITAPH FOR GEORGE DILLON)**

C A S T  
*In Order of Appearance*

JOSIE ELLIOT  
RUTH GRAY  
MRS. ELLIOT  
NORAH ELLIOT  
PERCY ELLIOT  
GEORGE DILLON  
GEOFFREY COLWYN-STUART  
MR. WEBB  
BARNEY EVANS

The action of the play takes place in the home of the Elliot family just outside London.

TIME: *The present.*

ACT ONE: *Spring.*

ACT TWO: *Summer.*

ACT THREE, *Scene One: Autumn.*  
*Scene Two: Winter.*

The first professional performance in Great Britain of *EPITAPH FOR GEORGE DILLON* was given at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London, on 11th February 1958 by the English Stage Company. It was directed by William Gaskill and the décor was by Stephen Doncaster. The cast was as follows:

JOSIE ELLIOT.....	Wendy Craig
RUTH GRAY.....	Yvonne Mitchell
MRS. ELLIOT.....	Alison Leggatt
NORAH ELLIOT.....	Avril Elgar
PERCY ELLIOT.....	Toke Townley
GEORGE DILLON.....	Robert Stephens
GOFFREY COLWYN-STUART.....	Philip Locke
MR. WEBB.....	Paul Bailey
BARNEY EVANS.....	Nigel Davenport

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## NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

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**JOSIE:** She is about twenty, pretty in a hard, frilly way and nobody's fool. She first appears with her hair done up in curlers and wears a turban, a grubby blouse, and baggy slacks, later changing to "respectable" clothes. In Act Two, she wears the "jazz trousers" delivered in the first act. In Act Three she appears in her dressing gown.

**RUTH:** She is about forty, slim, smartly dressed, attractive. She wears businesslike clothes, suitable to the season. Upon her first entrance she wears hat, scarf and coat, having just come from work.

**MRS. ELLIOT:** She is a sincere, emotionally restrained little woman in her early fifties, who firmly believes that every cloud has a silver lining. She wears clothes of an everyday nature. In Act One, she wears hat and coat when she enters.

**NORAH:** She is in her middle thirties. She has some of her mother's restraint, and a naive simplicity in all things and at all times. In Act One, she wears outdoor clothes; at other times, clothes appropriate for the season.

**PERCY:** He is a small, mean little man—small in every sense of the word, with a small man's aggression. He wears ordinary business clothes, adding a macintosh and umbrella in Act One, and coat and hat in Act Three.

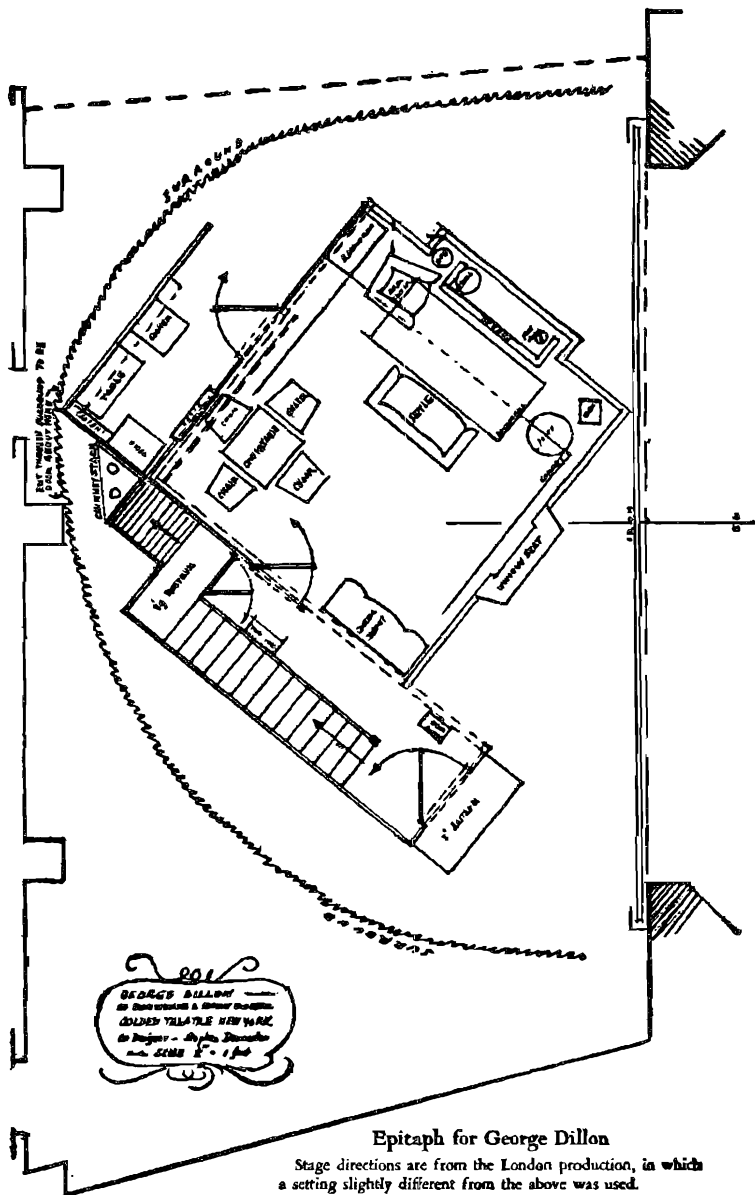
**GEORGE:** He is a little over thirty, boyish, yet every year his age. He is short, not good-looking, but with an anti-romantic kind of charm. Throughout the play proper he appears in everyday clothes. For the scrim scenes, he wears a dressing gown in Act Two and hospital wear in Act Three.

**GEOFFREY COLWYN-STUART:** He is a pale, balding man in his late thirties, all sweetness and light. He is dressed in an elegant suit, with a spotted tie and a handkerchief to match.

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MR. WEBB: He is a tall, official-looking man, dressed in conservative manner.

BARNEY EVANS: He is nearly fifty, and has never had a doubt about anything in all that time. He wears a rather old Crombie overcoat, an expensive but crumpled suit, thick horn-rimmed glasses, and a rakish brown Homburg hat.





## FURNITURE PLOT

Small table no more than 10 inches deep

Small table with two shelves, no more than 12 inches square and 24 inches high

Hat and coat stand, fastened to stair facing, no more than six inches deep when fastened in place

Ornate cocktail cabinet with compartments at both ends. One or two drawers in lower center section. Upper center section for glasses must open with a leaf front, like some old-style desks. Orange tube light set in this section lights whenever leaf is pulled down.

Square dining table, three feet square, with pull-out end leaves  
Four straight-back dining chairs, one with arms

Console type radiogram with lift-up lid for turntable; record rack at left end—can be built in or added on outside

Stuffed armchair, on the low side

Stuffed sofa, six feet, with arms (used for sitting); must be low-seated and low-backed to provide sight lines to dining table behind it

Stuffed round pouffe, maximum 14 inches high

Two kitchen tables in kitchen. Depth must allow for two people to stand behind hatch.

Small kitchen stove

Two stools (unseen, for actors)

Two wall lights

Mirror

Floor lamp

Curtains at window

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## PROPERTY PLOT

Three pencils  
Three keyrings, two with keys (one in each set to fit front door)  
Small photo of soldier with two poppies attached to it  
Small package containing man's wrist watch, strap open, and heavy envelope, white, typewritten address, registered mark  
Handwritten note (copied from script), new each night  
Glass ash tray  
Four one-pound notes  
Four boxes English cigarettes  
Two ladies' lighters  
Ladies' handbag dressing  
"Woman" magazine  
Ash tray fastened to leather strap so it can be placed on sofa arm  
*T. V. Times* magazine  
Round cushion on sofa  
Square cushion on armchair  
Cane wastepaper basket  
Seven 10-inch records (one cut with no sound in grooves); no covers  
Table runner for dining table  
Two 12-inch doilies  
Biscuit barrel with lid  
Silver-plated fruit bowls with fruit  
Painting of wild ducks  
Oval wedding group in frame, tinted with pastels  
Small china dog  
Bottle of sherry (practical)  
Ten wine glasses  
Cocktail cabinet dressings  
Hat and coat stand dressings  
Three sherry glasses  
Table cloth for dining table (orange seersucker)  
Glass vase  
Green vase

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Bunch spring flowers  
Bunch roses  
Four chrysanthemums  
Yellow crepe paper cut into small strips for fallen chrysanthemum petals  
Large wooden tray (to hold five cups and saucers set separately and large teapot)  
Two smaller wooden trays  
Twelve cups and saucers  
Twelve teaspoons  
Six knives  
Six forks  
Ten fruit (dessert) spoons  
Sugar bowl  
Sugar  
Sugar spoon  
Milk pitcher  
Large clay teapot (not decorated)  
Oil cruet  
HP sauce (similar to A-1 sauce)  
Salad cream  
Catsup  
Salt and pepper shaker  
Eight fruit bowls  
Large serving spoon  
Fish knife and fork  
Large cuttlebone fastened to one dinner plate, covered with imitation parsley sauce  
Bottles and cans for dressing on all kitchen shelves  
Colander  
Empty slop pail  
Frying pan  
Pan scrubber  
Saucepan  
Kettle  
Cloth duster  
Plain clothes box (for slacks)

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Brown wrapping paper  
String  
Tissue paper  
Weekend case with dressing (clothes, etc.)  
String bag with shopping dressing  
Black plastic shopping bag half filled with shopping dressing  
Brown bag with four oranges  
White bag with cookies  
Bunch of parsley  
Slippers (Norah's) under sofa  
Two brief cases  
Macintosh  
Umbrella  
Manila file with form papers  
Fountain pen  
Two evening English newspapers—*different editions*  
Morning English newspaper  
Men's suitcase, dressing  
Green grip bag, stuffed  
Corkscrew (not collapsible type)  
Knitting needles and yarn with some knitting completed  
Sand  
Six loose manuscripts, held with paper clips  
Bound manuscript  
Packet of cheroots  
Glass of milk  
English telephone  
Message pad and pencil  
Directory  
Wine bottle, to be filled and corked fresh each night  
Corks for bottle  
Small book  
Uneaten breakfast (imitation) on tray  
Bowl with paste mixture and fork  
Blank pad and pencil  
Financial returns sheet, new one each night  
Three cigars, one new one each night

Standard typewriter  
Thin English portable typewriter (wrapped)  
Fancy wrapping paper  
Ribbon  
Coal bucket  
Fire irons and pedestal  
Three wall plaques  
Cushion to fit on window seat  
Square room carpet  
Hearth rug  
Hearth wooden fender  
Small bench (or built shelf) under hatch in kitchen

Consumable goods

\*milk  
\*banana  
\*can fruit salad  
tea bags  
sugar  
HP sauce  
\*parsley  
English cigarettes  
tissue paper  
brown paper  
fancy paper  
ribbon  
\*Sherry  
\*red wine  
\*Jock's letter  
pencils  
financial returns  
catsup  
\*sliced beets  
\*can vegetable salad  
corks  
sand

Starred (\*) items must be gotten new every day

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# ACT ONE

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**SCENE:** *The home of the Elliot family, just outside London. Spring, late afternoon. The action takes place in the sitting-room and hall, the front door being stage right. In the hall, immediately facing, are the stairs which turn off left. Flat against the staircase is a hat and coat stand, shelving hats, coats, magazines, umbrellas, etc., in the midst of which is a vase of everlasting flowers. Upstage of the hall, under the arch formed by the stairs, is the door leading into the room called the lounge. Next to this, upstage, is the invisible wall which divides the hall from the sitting-room. The only object suggesting the wall is a door set upstage. Downstage of this, set against the "wall" facing into the sitting room is a radiogram, upon which stands a biscuit barrel and a silver-plated dish containing wax or real fruit. Nearby, an armchair of the "contemporary" kind faces downstage. Against the upstage wall, right, is a dining chair. Center, an ornate cocktail cabinet and another dining chair. On the wall, flanking this are two wall lights, in the center of which is painted a group of wild ducks in flight. Left center is the door leading to the kitchen, next to which is the kitchen hatch, which when raised, reveals the kitchen beyond. Below the hatch is a tea-trolley. Above the hatch, on the wall, is a tinted photograph of a wedding group. In the stage left wall, French windows which look out on to a small back garden. Below the French windows, a half-round occasional table; above, hangs a mirror. In front of the French windows is a settee, again of the utility-contemporary period. At the head, a white-painted wrought iron floor lamp. Upstage, left center, a draw-leaf table with dining chair and arm dining chair in position. On the cocktail cabinet stands a large china model*

*of an Alsatian dog and a photograph of a soldier in a silver frame, decorated with "Haig" poppies. The inset scenes take place behind a scrim set in the back wall on a rostrum four feet high and small acting area.*

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** *JOSIE is on stage alone. She is about twenty, pretty in a hard, frilly way and nobody's fool. At the moment she is not looking her best. The turban she is wearing reveals a couple of curlers above her forehead, her jumper is grubby and her slacks baggy, stained and not very fetching. She is sprawled in the armchair. In a vicious idleness she stares at a highly-colored weekly. Mozart is on the radio, delicate, liquid. She flips through the magazine, is about to put it down when something catches her attention. She reads.*

**JOSIE.** *Fancy writing up and asking that! [She laughs and goes on with her reading, fondling one of her curlers as she does so. Presently she throws the magazine down.] Soppy cow! [She sighs and leans back, thrusts her hands into the top of her slacks, rubbing her stomach and frowning. She gets up and stares at her reflection in the mirror. Pursing her lips experimentally, she watches the effect. She leans forward and tries stuffing up her eyebrows. It doesn't seem very successful and she sighs again.] Oh, that damn row! [She goes to the radio, stabs at the knobs, then gives up and switches it off. Her eye catches the magazine again and she goes through it again until she finds what she is looking for. She stares at it sullenly and flings the paper on the floor. At the mirror again she tries several grimaces, puts out her tongue. A little more speculation, and she goes over to the settee, and sinks down on her knees. She stretches, and, catching sight of the resulting white space between her jumper and slacks, strokes herself dreamily. She slides forward on to her stomach, her hands moving over the arm of the settee, curiosity in her fingers and boredom in her body. She starts to*

sing, in a studied, offhand way, one of those downward-inflection popular hits:] "Why don't you give me . . . Give me . . ." [Pause.] "All that you have to share. Why don't you give me . . . Give me . . ." [She picks her nose daintily, and turns over on her back.] "And tell me you really care. . . ." [Her hand trails the space beside her, like a hand in rippling water, then stops, as she says deliberately:] I wonder—what it would be like? [She is about to swing her legs above her head, when the front doorbell rings.] Good-O! [She rushes off to the front door, almost reaches it, when she remembers something and comes back into the dining room. Her eyes light on her handbag and she snatches it up, taking it with her, through the hall, straight to the front door. The bell is still ringing, and she calls out:] Oh, all right! Wait a minute! Wait a minute! [Opens front door.]

[We hear a VOICE saying: "Parcel for Mrs. Elliot. Three pounds fifteen and ninepence to pay."]

JOSIE. Miss Elliot, if you please. I thought you were never coming. Here you are. You have been a long time. I thought you'd have been here this morning. I haven't even been able to go up the road, waiting for you to come. What? I haven't got it. Well, you'll have to change it. [A few minutes of change-fumbling before she slams the front door, and goes into the sitting-room with a square cardboard box in her arms, which she starts to open excitedly, kneeling on the floor. Off come the string and paper, then the lid and a layer of tissue paper. She rises quickly, places the box on the settee, takes a cigarette from her handbag, which she puts in her mouth, kicks off her slippers, and goes to the radio-gram, unzipping her slacks at the same time. She raises the lid, switches it on, and takes off her slacks, leaving them on the floor, one leg inside out. She selects a record from the pile beside her, and puts it on. Cigarette in mouth, she waits expectantly until the corn-crake growl of a New Orleans



*trumpet strides off into a piece of fairly traditional jazz. She runs back to her parcel and takes out the contents in a scurry of paper and impatience, which turn out to be a pair of black, tapering trousers. She puts them on, zipping up the sides with a little difficulty. Hands on hips, she looks down at the result anxiously, then delightedly. She goes nearer to the mirror, to get a better view of herself. She bounces up and down, looking at this angle and that, patting her stomach, feeling the seat until she is finally satisfied. She lights her cigarette, then, putting her hands in her unfamiliar pockets, strikes a more or less elegant attitude and a bored expression, one black undeniably slim leg straight out in front of the other. She inclines her head back, and blows out a cloud of smoke. JOSIE may be funny at times, but she is never consciously so. She begins to dance, slowly at first, and surprisingly well, across R, ending up by lying with her back on the floor, and her knees up.]*

[*The front door opens, and RUTH enters the hall. JOSIE sits up quickly.*]

JOSIE. That you, Mum? [RUTH closes the door, but makes no reply. JOSIE takes off her new trousers, and starts slipping them back in their box. As she is doing this, RUTH enters from the hall. She is about forty, slim, smartly dressed, attractive. She carries a small week-end case, which she puts down when she gets into the sitting-room.] You're in early. [RUTH goes to the radiogram, and switches it off.]

RUTH. Do you mind if we do without New Orleans just for the moment? [She crosses and picks up JOSIE'S old slacks from the floor.] Are you looking for these? [She throws them over, and JOSIE manages to catch them.]

JOSIE. Thought you were Mum.

RUTH. I don't suppose you've made any tea?

JOSIE [putting on her slacks]. I had some at dinnertime. [RUTH goes into the kitchen, and puts the kettle on to boil.] You're in early.

RUTH [off]. Why aren't you at work today?

JOSIE. Wasn't feeling very good this morning.

RUTH [off]. Oh?

JOSIE. So Mum said I'd better stay indoors. [*She is staring at the case RUTH has left on the floor.*] Going on your holidays?

RUTH [off]. No—coming back. Satisfied?

JOSIE. How can you be coming back, when you haven't been away? Anyway, I haven't had a day off work for ages—it won't hurt them. [*Picking up the case to see if it is empty.*] New case?

RUTH [off]. I picked it up from where I left it last night—at Leicester Square Left Luggage Office. And it's full of obscene photographs.

JOSIE. Oh?

RUTH [*appearing in the doorway*]. Josie, give me a cigarette, will you? I came all the way back in the train without one. [*Goes back into kitchen.*] There wasn't any post for me, was there?

JOSIE [*crossing to her handbag R*]. Package came for you—registered.

RUTH [off]. No letters?

JOSIE. Just the pools. It's only a small one. Doesn't weigh anything hardly.

RUTH [off]. And what's inside it?

JOSIE [*searching in her handbag*]. How should I know?

RUTH [off]. Didn't you open it?

JOSIE. What do you mean? Course I didn't open it.

RUTH [*coming back in*]. If you must fry yourself food when you're feeling ill, you might have the decency to clear up afterwards. The gas stove is covered in grease and muck—it's filthy. [*She takes off her hat, and moves to the occasional table down L, where she sees a small package.*] Is this it? [*Examines it, and goes on, rather absently.*] You've even left the breakfast things in the sink. [*JOSIE is holding her*

*packet of cigarettes, watching her curiously. RUTH stares at the packet.*

JOSIE. Typewritten.

RUTH. You've had damn-all to do all day. It's like a slum when your mother comes in.

JOSIE. Aren't you going to open it?

RUTH [*a quick glance at her*]. I said you're a slut.

JOSIE. Oh, did you? I didn't hear. [*After a momentary hesitation, RUTH unwraps the package. JOSIE slips her cigarettes back into her handbag, and moves over to the kitchen door. From a small cardboard box, RUTH takes out a man's wrist watch. JOSIE takes it in, and goes into the kitchen.*] I'll get a cup of tea. [*The watch is lying in RUTH'S hand, as with the other, she takes out a piece of note paper, and reads it. Then she places the box on the table. She stares at the paper, stroking her temples with her fingers, as if she felt a weight in her head. Presently, she calls out to JOSIE in the kitchen. The edge has gone out of her voice, and she sounds tired.*]

RUTH. Josie, be a good girl and get me that cigarette, will you?

[*JOSIE enters with a cup of tea, which she hands to her.*]

JOSIE. That man was here again this afternoon, asking for you.

RUTH. I've asked you twice to let me have one of your cigarettes. Please! I'll pay you back tonight.

JOSIE. Haven't got one. Sorry.

RUTH [*turning back to the table*]. Oh, well, I suppose I'll have to go upstairs, anyway. There may be some in the bedroom somewhere. [*She replaces the watch and note in the little box.*] Who was here, did you say?

JOSIE. That man. I don't know who he is. The one who came on Saturday, and again the other day. That's the third time he's been.

RUTH. I thought you told him I didn't get in till 5:30?

JOSIE. I did. He said he'd come back one evening.

RUTH [*to armchair and sitting*]. Well, what time did he come today?

JOSIE About four, I suppose.

RUTH. He doesn't sound very bright, whoever he is. What's he look like?

JOSIE. Not bad. Bit like Frankie Vaughan.

RUTH. Who the hell's Frankie Vaughan? [*Sipping tea.*] You make a putrid cup of tea, don't you. Doesn't he say what he wants?

JOSIE. Just that he wants to see you—that's all.

RUTH. Strange way to go about it. Calling at the time when you've specifically told him I shall be out. You didn't tell him anything, did you?

JOSIE. Tell him what? That he looked like Frankie Vaughan?

RUTH. Oh, Josie, for heaven's sake, can't you see I'm tired? All I want is a cigarette and a bath.

[*The front door opens and MRS. ELLIOT comes in. She is a sincere, emotionally restrained little woman in her early fifties, who firmly believes that every cloud has a silver lining. She carries various carrier-bags filled with shopping. At the hall-stand she removes her coat.*].

RUTH. That's your mother. For heaven's sake make a start on that kitchen so that she can get started on the supper without having to clear up your mess first.

JOSIE [*moving to kitchen*]. O.K.

MRS. ELLIOT. Are you there, Josie? [*Taking off hat.*]

JOSIE. Hullo, Mum. You're not in any trouble, are you, Auntie?

RUTH. In trouble? Do you mean in the general or the popular sense?

JOSIE. What?

MRS. ELLIOT [*coming into sitting room with bags*]. Hullo, dear, hullo, Josie. Managed to get a seat on the train today, thank goodness. [*Into kitchen.*]

RUTH. Hullo, Kate.

JOSIE. Hullo, Mum.

MRS. ELLIOT. Oh Josie, you are a naughty girl, you really are.

[*Into sitting-room.*] I was hoping you'd have everything nice and clean and tidy when I came in.

JOSIE. I was just going to do it.

MRS. ELLIOT. Just look at it out there. It would be tonight, too, when there's so much to do.

RUTH. Here, let me take that from you. [*Taking one of the bags.*]

MRS. ELLIOT. Thank you, Ruth.

JOSIE. I'm sorry, Mum. Auntie Ruth was talking to me just as I was going to do it. Everyone seems a bit early tonight. [*Into kitchen.*]

MRS. ELLIOT [*unpacking carrier*]. I asked Mr. Beamish to let me off five minutes early. Didn't like it, either. I thought I'd just miss the rush. Funny what a difference a few minutes makes. Anyway, I managed to get some shopping up the road before they closed. Oh, dear, what a rush. There we are. You're back early, Ruth, dear. Weren't you feeling well? Wonder if George likes parsley sauce.

RUTH. It wasn't anything. Central heating in the office, I expect.

MRS. ELLIOT. Well—Josie complained she wasn't too great this morning at breakfast time, so I made her stay home. I hope you haven't gone and caught something off of her—food poisoning or something.

RUTH. Yes.

MRS. ELLIOT. You do look tired, I must say.

RUTH. Oh, I'm better now. Josie gave her *auntie* a cup of tea.

MRS. ELLIOT. You always hate her calling you Auntie, don't you? What can you expect, dear, when that's what you are? Now, I wanted you to do something for me. What was it? Josie, don't bother with those things now. Lay the table for me in here instead; there's a good girl.

RUTH. You seem a bit overloaded.

MRS. ELLIOT. Well, I had to get a few extras.

JOSIE [*in from kitchen*]. Where's the fire, Mum?

MRS. ELLIOT. Now try and help me a little, Josie. I'm rather cross with you over that kitchen, my girl.

JOSIE. Well, I'm doing it, aren't I?

RUTH. All right, you two, I'll help, only don't go on about it, please. [*Into kitchen.*]

JOSIE. Well. She was "going on" a bit herself just now.

MRS. ELLIOT. That's enough, Josie. [*Clearing table.*] I had hoped that at least you could have had the table laid.

JOSIE. Yes, Mum, all right.

MRS. ELLIOT. I'm in such a muddle, I don't know where I am. I haven't a chance to do a thing. Hope your father comes in on time.

JOSIE. What's all the panic? Don't tell me you've got somebody coming?

MRS. ELLIOT. Yes, I have.

JOSIE. Who on earth is it?

[*RUTH comes in with loaded tray, puts it down, and she and MRS. ELLIOT start laying the table.*]

MRS. ELLIOT. Young George is coming, that's all.

RUTH. George?

MRS. ELLIOT. George Dillon. The young fellow that works at my place. You know. I told you about him.

RUTH. Oh, did you? I don't remember.

JOSIE. Oh, him. [*She yawns loudly and flops into the arm chair.*]

MRS. ELLIOT. Of course I told you. I've often spoken about him. I've asked him down to tea lots of times. But each time, some appointment seems to turn up and he can't come. Well, he's coming now, for certain. He's a very busy chap. Always on the go.

RUTH. Oh, that one. The rather superior young man who's so much younger than the rest of you. Is he still there? I thought you said the job wasn't quite good enough for him.

MRS. ELLIOT. I've always felt a bit sorry for him, that's all. He seemed so much on his own all the time. And, one day,

I started telling him about our Raymond, and he was most interested. He was in the services as well, you see.

RUTH. Quite a coincidence.

MRS. ELLIOT. Yes. He went right through the war.

RUTH. I had the idea we all did. [*Pause.*]

MRS. ELLIOT. No. Ruth, some boys didn't get to see the end of it.

RUTH. I'm sorry, Kate. I've had a bit of a day, I'm afraid. I'm not in the right frame of mind to talk to young men, refined or not. If I can't do anything for you down here, I'll go and run myself a bath, if you don't mind.

MRS. ELLIOT. Oh. Were you going to have a bath now?

RUTH. Yes. Why?

MRS. ELLIOT. Well, I can't go into a long rigmarole now—I've too much to do before George comes. But you see—well, you've got to know sometime, I suppose—I've asked him to stay.

JOSIE. Stay? What, here?

MRS. ELLIOT. It won't be for long—just till he finds somewhere else to go.

JOSIE. What's wrong with where he is?

MRS. ELLIOT. He's not very happy there. I'll tell you later. Don't worry me with a lot of questions now, Josie. There's too much to do.

RUTH. Well, it's your business. It's your house—not mine. What about Percy?

MRS. ELLIOT. Nothing about Percy. It's got nothing to do with him.

RUTH. You're right, of course. [*Rather dryly.*] It isn't his house, either.

MRS. ELLIOT. There's just one thing—

JOSIE. There won't half be an atmosphere when he finds out. You know what Dad's like—he hasn't got over those budgeregars you bought yet.

MRS. ELLIOT. He knows what he can do, and it won't take me long to tell him. Oh, do clear up that paper and stuff, Josie. The place looks awful. What was I saying?