

*At rise: The stage dark. Momentarily, the disembodied voice of the DIRECTOR is heard from the control booth at the back of the auditorium.*

DIRECTOR

So remind me again, Jacqui, is it this one?

*(Beat.)*

Oh – oh, it's *not* this one, it's *this* one, I see. Okay, all right then, here we go.

*(The click of a switch is heard and the stage lights come on, revealing a table and two chairs arranged on the stage.)*

DIRECTOR

Ah, there we are! And if I recall correctly, this one is for the microphone.

*(The click of a switch is heard and the house lights come on.)*

DIRECTOR

And apparently I don't recall correctly. All right, well let's turn those off again.

*(The click of a switch is heard and the house lights turn off.)*

DIRECTOR

Okay, that's good. So that means this one must be for the microphone.

*(The click of a switch is heard and the stage lights turn off.)*

DIRECTOR

Or not. Oh, it's all so terribly confusing, isn't it? Okay, so let's turn these back on.

*(The click of a switch is heard and the stage lights come back on.)*

DIRECTOR

That's better. So now, Jacqui, is this switch the one for the microph–

*(The click of a switch is heard and the DIRECTOR'S voice is cut off. Moments later another click is heard and the DIRECTOR'S voice is heard once more, beginning mid-sentence.)*

DIRECTOR

–hang of it now, Jacqui, yes. I feel much more comfortable...ish.

*(Beat.)*

All right, my lovely actors, let's get this tech rehearsal show on the road.

*(Pause.)*

Places, please – quick as you please!

*(Pause.)*

Let's be having you, automagically. The sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can all go home.

*(Pause.)*

Melissa? Gavin?

*(Pause. Then angrily.)*

*Where are you?*

*(Suddenly, the frantic voices of MELISSA and GAVIN can be heard offstage, their replies spoken almost in unison.)*

MELISSA

*(Off.)*

Sorry!

GAVIN

*(Off.)*

I'm here!

*(As soon as MELISSA and GAVIN rush on stage – both dressed in period costume of some description – the click of a switch is heard and the stage lights turn off, plunging them into darkness. A second later, a loud banging and clattering is heard as one of them collides with the furniture, followed by a cry of pain.)*

MELISSA

Argh!

*(A moment later the click of a switch is heard and the stage lights come back on. MELISSA is discovered in a crumpled heap, entangled in a chair. GAVIN crosses and helps her to her feet.)*

DIRECTOR

My apologies, dears. I was about to tell Jacqui something in confidence – she's here helping me learn the ropes – so I switched off the microphone...which evidently wasn't the microphone.

MELISSA

Ooh, my leg.

DIRECTOR

Right, let's get on with it. I think we should start—

*(The DIRECTOR suddenly stops himself, a look of confusion on his face.)*

DIRECTOR

Wait...why are you both in costume?

GAVIN

Because you told us to, yesterday.

DIRECTOR

Did I?

*(Beat.)*

Oh good. Well, that's good then. Excellent. All right, let's start that again, only this time I want you to—

*(The click of a switch is heard, cutting off the DIRECTOR mid-sentence. MELISSA and GAVIN look at each other, confused. A few moments later, the click of a switch is heard and the DIRECTOR'S voice is audible once more, coming in mid-sentence.)*

DIRECTOR

—just as soon as I do. Is that clear?

MELISSA

Um...no, not really. Your voice cut out.

DIRECTOR

Oh, it did? Oh, I must've hit the microphone switch by mistake. Well, as I was saying, I want you both off the stage, and then I'll turn the stage lights off. Then you, Melissa, can make your way in the dark — *carefully* this time — to your place, at which point I'll bring up the stage lights and then Gavin, you can make your entrance and begin the scene. Is that clear?

GAVIN

Got it.

MELISSA

Yes, absolutely.

*(MELISSA and GAVIN leave the stage. The click of a switch is heard and the stage lights turn off. A few moments later the click of a switch is heard and the stage lights come back on, revealing MELISSA sitting in the chair stage R. looking somewhat forlorn. A moment later, GAVIN enters from stage L.)*

GAVIN

At last! Lady Ursula, I've been searching everywhere for you. Why must you—

*(Just then the click of a switch is heard and the stage lights go out, plunging them into darkness.)*

DIRECTOR

Oops! My bad.

*(The click of a switch is heard and the stage lights come back on.)*

DIRECTOR

Let's take it again from your entrance please, Gavin.

GAVIN

*(After a sigh.)*

Right.

*(GAVIN exits momentarily, then re-enters in character.)*

GAVIN

At last! Lady Ursula, I've been searching everywhere for you. Why must you spurn me so cruelly?

MELISSA

Oh, Lord Haversham, surely you can see this is impossible. I could never—

*(MELISSA'S line is interrupted by a cackle of laughter coming from the control booth.)*

DIRECTOR

Heh, heh, heh, heh, heh! Ooh, Jacqui, you are wicked.

MELISSA

*(Throwing an indignant look at the control booth.)*

Excuse me?