

Side 5

All characters

Cissy Oh, it's so exciting, the gala has begun –

(Wilf and Reggie put their heads round the screen)

The boys and girls look splendid and are singing lustily. But Bobby Swanson's taking it awfully slowly, and gets slower and slower. I thought the tenors were going to explode.

(Wilf and Reggie retreat. Wilf starts to give himself a rather sketchy and somewhat grotesque make-up. Reggie continues dressing.)

Jean *(to Cissy)* You've kept me waiting. Do my make-up.

Cissy Instanter. *(She starts to make up Jean and calls to Reggie.)* When I'm finished with Jean, it'll be your turn, Reggie.

Reggie Thank you, Cissy dear, but I think I'll be able to manage. Bobby Swanson very kindly lent me some of his foundation and rouge.

Cissy That was kind of him. You see, people are kind.

Reggie He thought he could bribe me into telling him what we were up to. But I gave nothing away.

They continue with their chores.

Cissy Matron says there'll be five-minute breaks between items.

Jean Why?

Cissy Bladders. *(She continues with the make-up.)* I'm not nervous, are you?

Jean Of course I'm nervous. Every great artist is nervous before a performance. It's the respect we pay our audience.

Cissy It's so odd not having to do a warm-up. Wilf Reg, when you've a moment, help me to strap on my hump, there's a good chap.

Reggie Won't be long.

(Wilf reaches into his holdall from which he produces a couple of bottles of stout.)

Jean (to Cissy) I'll do my eyes myself, I always did.

Wilf Want a drink, old son?

Reggie No, thank you.

Wilf Here's to us. Cheers.

Reggie Cheers.

(Wilf puts his head round the screen.)

Wilf Here's to us, girls. Cheers.

Cissy God bless.

Jean You're not drinking before a performance, are you?

Wilf I am before this one. As a matter of fact, I always had one bottle of stout before, one in the interval and one afterwards. Gives body to the voice.

Jean (to Cissy) Why he needs to give body to his voice tonight of all nights, God only knows.

Cissy (to Jean) Jean dear, be so kind as to sit here, nearer the windows, I need all the light I can get.

(Jean is irritated but stands and winces.) _

Jean It was only to be expected that my hip would be particularly troublesome today