



- GEORGE: [*indignantly*] Laugh at me? They don't laugh at me.
- MRS PEARSON: Of course they do. You ought to have found that out by this time. Anybody else would have done. You're one of their standing jokes. Famous. They call you Pompy-ompy Pearson because they think you're so slow and pompous.
- GEORGE: [*horrified*] Never!
- MRS PEARSON: It's always beaten me why you should want to spend so much time at a place where they're always laughing at you behind your back and calling you names. Leaving your wife at home, night after night. Instead of
- [Cyril enters from the left, carrying a tray with a slice of cake and a thick slice of ham, turns to him appealingly.]
- GEORGE: [Redacted] me to the club [Redacted] ugh at me and [Redacted] son, do they? [Redacted] es.] [*Angrily*] Go
- CYRIL: [Redacted] Dad, I'm afraid
- [George slowly [Redacted] ed.]
- GEORGE: [*slowly*] Well—I'll be—damned!
- [George exits left, slowly, almost as if somebody had hit him over the head. Cyril, after watching him go, turns indignantly to Mrs Pearson.]
- CYRIL: Now you shouldn't have told him that, Mum. That's not fair. You've hurt his feelings. Mine, too.
- MRS PEARSON: Sometimes it does people good to have their feelings hurt. The truth oughtn't to hurt anybody for long. If your father didn't go to the club so often, perhaps they'd stop laughing at him.
- CYRIL: [*gloomily*] I doubt it.



MRS PEARSON: [*severely*] Possibly you do, but what I doubt is whether your opinion's worth having. What do you know? Nothing. You spend too much time and good money at greyhound races and dirt tracks and ice shows...

CYRIL: [*sulkily*] Well, what if I do? I've got to enjoy myself somehow, haven't I?

MRS PEARSON: I wouldn't mind so much if you were really enjoying yourself. But are you? And where's it getting you? [*There is a sharp hurried knocking heard off left.*]

CYRIL: Might be for me. I'll see.

[*Cyril hurries out left. In a moment he re-enters, closing the door behind him.*]

MRS PEARSON: It's that silly old bag from next door — Mrs Fitzgerald. You don't want her here, do you? [*sharply*] Certainly I do. Ask her in. And don't call her a silly old bag either. She's a very nice woman, with a lot more sense than you'll ever have.

[*Cyril exits left. Mrs Pearson finishes her stout, smacking her lips. Cyril re-enters left, ushering in Mrs Fitzgerald, who hesitates in the doorway.*]

Come in, come in, Mrs Fitzgerald.

MRS FITZGERALD: [*moving to left centre; anxiously*] I—just wondered — if everything's — all right...

CYRIL: [*sulkily*] No, it isn't.

MRS PEARSON: [*sharply*] Of course it is. You be quiet.

CYRIL: [*indignantly and loudly*] Why should I be quiet?

MRS PEARSON: [*shouting*] Because I tell you to — you silly, spoilt, young piecan.

MRS FITZGERALD: [*protesting nervously*] Oh — no — surely...

MRS PEARSON: [*severely*] Now, Mrs Fitzgerald, just let me manage my family in my own way — *please!*

MRS FITZGERALD: Yes — but Cyril...

CYRIL: [*sulky and glowering*] Mr Cyril Pearson to you, please, Mrs Fitzgerald. [*Cyril stalks off into the kitchen.*]



- MRS FITZGERALD: [*moving to the settee; whispering*] Oh—dear—what's happening?
- MRS PEARSON: [*calmly*] Nothing much. Just putting 'em in their places, that's all. Doing what you ought to have done long since.
- MRS FITZGERALD: Is George home? [*She sits beside Mrs Pearson on the settee.*]
- MRS PEARSON: Yes. I've been telling him what they think of him at the club.
- MRS FITZGERALD: Well, they think a lot of him, don't they?
- MRS PEARSON: No, they don't. And now he knows it.
- MRS FITZGERALD: [*nervously*] Oh—dear—I wish you hadn't, Mrs Fitzgerald...
- MRS PEARSON: Nonsense! Doing 'em all a world of good. And they'll be eating out of your hand soon—you'll see...
- MRS FITZGERALD: I don't think I want them eating out of my hand...
- MRS PEARSON: [*impatiently*] Well, whatever you want, they'll be doing it—all three of 'em. Mark my words, Mrs Pearson.

[*George enters left glumly. He is unpleasantly surprised when he sees the visitor. He moves to the armchair left, sits down heavily and glumly lights his pipe. Then he looks from Mrs Pearson to Mrs Fitzgerald, who is regarding him anxiously.*]

- GEORGE: Just looked in for a minute, I suppose, Mrs Fitzgerald?
- MRS FITZGERALD: [*who doesn't know what she is saying*] Well—yes—I suppose so, George.
- GEORGE: [*aghast*] George!
- MRS FITZGERALD: [*nervously*] Oh—I'm sorry...
- MRS PEARSON: [*impatiently*] What does it matter? Your name's George, isn't it? Who d'you think you are—Duke of Edinburgh?
- GEORGE: [*angrily*] What's he got to do with it? Just tell me that. And isn't it bad enough without her calling me George? No tea. Pompous-ompy Pearson. And poor Doris has been crying her eyes out upstairs—yes, crying her eyes out.



- MRS FITZGERALD: [*wailing*] Oh—dear—I ought to have known...
- GEORGE: [*staring at her, annoyed*] You ought to have known! Why ought you to have known? Nothing to do with you, Mrs Fitzgerald. Look—we're at sixes and sevens here just now—so perhaps you'll excuse us...
- MRS PEARSON: [*before Mrs Fitzgerald can reply*] I won't excuse you, George Pearson. Next time a friend and neighbour comes to see me, just say something when you see her—Good evening or How d'you do? or something—an' don't just march in an' sit down without a word. It's bad manners...
- MRS FITZGERALD: [*nervously*] No—it's all right...
- MRS PEARSON: No, it isn't all right. We'll have some decent manners in this house—or I'll know the reason why. [*glaring at George*] Well?
- GEORGE: [*intimidated*] Well, what!
- MRS PEARSON: [*taunting him*] Why don't you get off to your club? Special night tonight, isn't it? They'll be waiting for you—wanting to have a good laugh. Go on then. Don't disappoint 'em.
- GEORGE: [*bitterly*] That's right. Make me look silly in front of her now! Go on—don't mind me. Sixes and sevens! Poor Doris been crying her eyes out! Getting the neighbours in to see the fun! [*suddenly losing his temper, glaring at Mrs Pearson, and shouting*] All right—let her hear it. What's the matter with you? Have you gone barmy—or what?
- MRS PEARSON: [*jumping up; savagely*] If you shout at me again like that, George Pearson, I'll slap your big, fat, silly face...
- MRS FITZGERALD: [*moaning*] Oh—no—no—no—please, Mrs Fitzgerald... [*Mrs Pearson sits.*]
- GEORGE: [*staring at her, bewildered*] Either I'm off my chump or you two are. How d'you mean—“No, no—please, Mrs Fitzgerald”? Look—you're Mrs Fitzgerald. So why are you telling yourself to stop when you're not doing



anything? Tell *her* to stop— then there'd be some sense in it. [*Staring at Mrs Pearson*] I think you must be tiddly.

MRS PEARSON: [*starting up; savagely*] Say that again, George Pearson.

GEORGE: [*intimidated*] All right — all right — all right ...

[*Doris enters left slowly, looking miserable. She is still wearing the wrap. Mrs Pearson sits on the settee.*]

MRS FITZGERALD: Hello — Doris dear!

DORIS: [*miserably*] Hello — Mrs Fitzgerald!

MRS FITZGERALD: I thought you were going out with Charlie Spence tonight.

DORIS: [*annoyed*] What's that to do with you?

MRS PEARSON: [*sharply*] Stop that!

MRS FITZGERALD: [*nervously*] No — its all right...

MRS PEARSON: [*severely*] It isn't all right. I won't have a daughter of mine talking to anybody like that. Now answer Mrs Fitzgerald properly, Doris — or go upstairs again... [*Doris looks wonderingly at her father.*]

GEORGE: [*in despair*] Don't look at me. I give it up. I just give it up.

MRS PEARSON: [*fiercely*] Well? Answer her.

DORIS: [*sulkily*] I was going out with Charlie Spence tonight — but now I've called it off...

MRS FITZGERALD: Oh — what a pity, dear! Why have you?

DORIS: [*with a flash of temper*] Because — if you must know — my mother's been going on at memaking me feel miserable — an' saying he's got buck-teeth and is half-witted...

MRS FITZGERALD: [*rather bolder; to Mrs Pearson*] Oh — you shouldn't have said that...

MRS PEARSON: [*sharply*] Mrs Fitzgerald, I'll manage my family — you manage yours.

GEORGE: [*grimly*] Ticking *her* off now, are you, Annie?

MRS PEARSON: [*even more grimly*] They're waiting for you at the club, George, don't forget. And don't you start crying again, Doris...

MRS FITZGERALD: [*getting up; with sudden decision*] That's enough — quite enough.

[*George and Doris stare at her bewildered.*]



[to George and Doris] Now listen, you two. I want to have a private little talk with Mrs Fitz — [she corrects herself hastily] with Mrs Pearson, so I'll be obliged if you'll leave us alone for a few minutes. I'll let you know when we've finished. Go on, please. I promise you that you won't regret it. There's something here that only I can deal with.

GEORGE: [rising] I'm glad somebody can — 'cos I can't. Come on, Doris.

[George and Doris exit left. As they go Mrs Fitzgerald moves to left of the small table and sits. She eagerly beckons Mrs Pearson to do the same thing.]

MRS FITZGERALD: Mrs Fitzgerald, we must change back now — we really must...

MRS PEARSON: [rising] Why?

MRS FITZGERALD: Because this has gone far enough. I can see they're all miserable — and I can't bear it...

MRS PEARSON: A bit more of the same would do 'em good. Making a great difference already... [She moves to right of the table and sits.]

MRS FITZGERALD: No, I can't stand any more of it — I really can't. We must change back. Hurry up, please, Mrs Fitzgerald.

MRS PEARSON: Well — if you insist...

MRS FITZGERALD: Yes — I do — please — please.

[She stretches her hands across the table eagerly. Mrs Pearson takes them.]

MRS PEARSON: Quiet now. Relax.

[Mrs Pearson and Mrs Fitzgerald stare at each other. Muttering; exactly as before. Arshatta dum — arshatta lam — arshatta lamdumbona...]

They carry out the same action as before, going lax and then coming to life. But this time, of course, they become their proper personalities.]

MRS FITZGERALD: Ah well — I enjoyed that.

MRS PEARSON: I didn't.

MRS FITZGERALD: Well, you ought to have done. Now — listen,



Mrs Pearson. Don't go soft on 'em again, else it'll all have been wasted...

MRS PEARSON: I'll try not to, Mrs Fitzgerald.

MRS FITZGERALD: They've not had as long as I'd like to have given 'em—another hour or two's rough treatment might have made it certain...

MRS PEARSON: I'm sure they'll do better now—though I don't know how I'm going to explain...

MRS FITZGERALD: [*severely*] Don't you start any explaining or apologising—or you're done for.

MRS PEARSON: [*with spirit*] It's all right for you, Mrs Fitzgerald. After all, they aren't your husband and children...

MRS FITZGERALD: [*impressively*] Now you listen to me. You admitted yourself you were spoiling 'em—and they didn't appreciate you. Any apologies—any explanations—an' you'll be straight back where you were. I'm warning you, dear. Just give 'em a look—a tone of voice—now an' again, to suggest you might be tough with 'em if you wanted to be—an' it ought to work. Anyhow, we can test it.

MRS PEARSON: How?

MRS FITZGERALD: Well, what is it you'd like 'em to do that they don't do? Stop at home for once?

MRS PEARSON: Yes—and give me a hand with supper...

MRS FITZGERALD: Anything you'd like 'em to do—that you enjoy whether they do or not?

MRS PEARSON: [*hesitating*] Well—yes. I—like a nice game of rummy—but, of course, I hardly ever have one—except at Christmas...

MRS FITZGERALD: [*getting up*] That'll do then. [*She moves towards the door left then turns*] But remember—keep firm—or you've had it. [*She opens the door. Calling*] Hoy! You can come in now. [*Coming away from the door, and moving right slightly. Quietly*] But remember—remember—a firm hand.

[*George, Doris and Cyril file in through the doorway, looking apprehensively at Mrs Pearson.*]

I'm just off. To let you enjoy yourself.



[The family looks anxiously at Mrs Pearson, who smiles. Much relieved, they smile back at her.]

- DORIS: [anxiously] Yes, Mother?
 MRS PEARSON: [smiling] Seeing that you don't want to go out, I tell you what I thought we'd do.
 MRS FITZGERALD: [giving a final warning] Remember!
 MRS PEARSON: [nodding, then looking sharply at the family] No objections, I hope?
 GEORGE: [humbly] No, Mother—whatever you say...
 MRS PEARSON: [smiling] I thought we'd have a nice family game of rummy—and then you children could get the supper ready while I have a talk with your father...
 GEORGE: [firmly] Suits me. [He looks challengingly at the children.] What about you two?
 CYRIL: [hastily] Yes—that's all right.
 DORIS: [hesitating] Well—I...
 MRS PEARSON: [sharply] What? Speak up!
 DORIS: [hastily] Oh—I think it would be lovely...
 MRS PEARSON: [smiling] Good-bye, Mrs Fitzgerald. Come again soon.
 MRS FITZGERALD: Yes, dear. 'Night all—have a nice time.

[Mrs Fitzgerald exits left and the family cluster round Mother as—
the curtain falls.

1. This play, written in the 1950s, is a humorous and satirical depiction of the status of the mother in the family.
 - (i) What are the issues it raises?
 - (ii) Do you think it caricatures these issues or do you think that the problems it raises are genuine? How does the play resolve the issues? Do you agree with the resolution?
2. If you were to write about these issues today what are some of the incidents, examples and problems that you would think of as relevant?



3. Is drama a good medium for conveying a social message? Discuss.
4. Read the play out in parts. Enact the play on a suitable occasion.
5. Discuss in groups plays or films with a strong message of social reform that you have watched.

© NCERT
not to be republished