

RED VELVET

AUDITION MONOLOGUES & SCENES

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RED VELVET
MONOLOGUE 1
CHARLES KEAN (from Scene 2)

SITUATION: Edmund Kean, one of England's greatest actors, has collapsed during a performance of *OTHELLO*, in which he was playing the title role in black-face. Never before had the role been portrayed by an actual black actor on the London stage. The director has hired an American black actor to replace Edmund Kean in the role. Charles, Edmund Kean's son, who assumed he would step into the role, adamantly opposes the suggestion that his father be replaced by a black actor. He is addressing the director and his fellow actors, including Ellen Tree, his fiancée who is playing Desdemona. **You may or may not use a Standard English accent.**

CHARLES: Acting is an art. Transformation is an art. My father, a small . . . physically . . . challenged aging man, to see him become a warrior Moor . . . is an art, isn't it: People come to the theatre to get away from reality. And, what I mean to say is . . . it's a sad fact . . . and I'm sorry to say it . . . But it's true I'm afraid that this man's . . . well . . . he will prevent them from escaping reality . . . You know what I mean, Ellen. English theatre is top of the tree because within one artist, male or female, there is everything. It's a craft. We are colorless canvasses on which to paint. If we bring Jews to play Shylock, blacks to play the Moor, half wits to play Caliban we decimate ourselves in the name of what?. Fashion? Politics? Then any drunken fool on the street will play Falstaff. You my darling, will only be allowed to play what you are—too old for Juliet, too bland for the Queen.

RED VELVET
MONOLOGUE 2
MARGARET ALDRIDGE (from Scene 4)

Situation: Margaret is a white English woman who is married to Ira Aldridge, a black actor who has just opened at the Theatre Royal. He is the first black actor to portray Othello on a London stage. Margaret has encountered much scorn from London society for marrying a black man. Even though her husband is starring in the show, she still was not given a proper seat for the performance. Even though this has hurt her she does not want to upset her husband. Pierre is the director and a friend to both Ira and Margaret.

MARGARET: I didn't get a seat in the circle. Pierre tried but . . . It was so busy—that's why. What a great reason to be denied a seat!. I was tucked away. Stage left. I had a great view.

I went to find Pierre in the interval, he was surrounded of course, Chatting away. I don't know how he does it. I saw Lord Brougham. He said you were marvellous. I went to the powder room in the interval—they were like bees.buzzing away . . . Clara Porterhouse and Jessica Clybourne were in a corner. They were noticeably silent. I ignored them both after last time . . .and those awful words. Glenda Cunningham was in. She was not entirely polite. She has a way of making me feel an inch high .

I thought you were very . . . powerful . . . you stood out enormously. You played more . . .fury than you've ever played before . I was devastated by the end. The silence in the theatre was so absolute I didn't dare move. And when everyone stood up[--well. . . .I was crying for Othello and . . . and with pride. I can't believe we're here. After all these years. It's like a dream.

RED VELVET
MONOLOGUE 3
PIERRE (from Scene 6)

You push and you push but . . you don't hear. Just yourself. Only ever yourself, I . . . you exploit yourself for all it's worth but when someone else dares to speak what they seem you refuse to acknowledge it. You think that work is your right, but everyone works hard every damn one of us. Ambition drives us all and you have to prove your place like the rest of us. I've worked twice as hard because of what? Gossip, accusations and now, I've earned my place . It's taken me years to get here, I won this role and then I invited you in. I took the gamble and all I asked was that you play it carefully, tone it down, toe the line for once. You never listen how many times . . . ? This is not some huge political statement . . . you're not that important. This is about you. You have no one to blame but yourself, Ira. You've put me in an impossible position.

RED VELVET
MONOLOGUE 4
CONNIE (from Scene 5)

I watch you last night. It . . . it wasn't for me. I didn't like . . . that you was so easily turned. Why you kill yourwife on the back of such careless talk? It's commpn sense tho', sir, marryin' into the world's a mistake. Can't trust no one Everybody smilin' like them a friend, but . . . I find more often than not, people mostly have two faces, don't you think? An' when you show 'em a weak spot them rub it. I had thos mistress once, grew attached to me, kept me close by an' told me all she problems, sir, but when five pounds went missing she grabbed me by my ear like a dog and fling me out. I'm just sayin', people see what them a look for.

RED VELVET
MONOLOGUE 5
IRA (from Scene 6)

When I was a boy, there was this man, William Brown, he had no one to follow either. spent his life savings on a house, rundown, basic but he had such passion he turned that house into a theatre. His friend, Jimmy Hewlett, was an actor—untrained, unpolished, worked as a tailor uptown in the day but he was burnin' up with talent. They dared too, Pierre. You see Jimmy was cuttin' an' stitchin' in the day, Mr. Brown did odd jobs, I was at school, but evenings we rehearsed and played Romeo and Juliet, Richard III, Henry V, I was fourteen. We were rough but we had passion. . . and we became real popular.

Powers that be didn't like it though, and one night while we playin', they set fire to that house. It burned like paper. The drier the wood, the quicker it burns. The noise was deafenin'-- screams, the flames catchin' further, shoutin'. Couldn't see my way out, couldn't breathe and just when I thought I was done, Mr. Brown grabbed my hand, pulled me up from the floor and dragged me out into the open air and look what he did. We just in the fire, Pierre . . . I've given everything to get here. I have pushed and forced and played in.

RED VELVET
MONOLOGUE 6
HALINA (from Scene 7)

No one takes me seriously and I'm really very serious. I need to get . . . a promotion, and I try hard but it makes no change. Michael Ostrowski, he's two years younger, he gets great stories. I want to go forward, you know how I mean? Is all men, the whole office. I am the only woman, you see? So everything I do is . . . visible. There's only one, how you call, water closet . . . in the office, right? And that's become a huge trouble. I almost caused a walk out strike. There were meetings, voting, new written rules. It was like awful, Now I have to ask one of them to check the closet and he puts a sign on the door when I'm in there. They all complain. I say they should ring a bell so the whole district knows my business.

RED VELVET

SCENE 1

HALINA, CASIMIR & TERENCE (from Scene 1)

(CASIMIR sneaks into the darkened room, and hides behind a chair. HALINA follows him into the dark room.)

HALINA: Casimir.? . . . Casimir? . . . , . Don't mess around. . . where are you?

CASIMIR: Boo!

(She is startled)

HALINA: Oh my God! You're terrible.

CASIMIR: And you're lovely.

HALINA: Look at this room.

CASIMIR: I'd rather look at you.

(HE embraces her, she stumbles back.)

CASIMIR: Steady.

HALINA: Sorry, I'm so clumsy. *(Seeing the chest)*. What's in here ?

CASIMIR: Costumes, probably. Personal props.

HALINA: You know everything.

CASIMIR: And you smell of strawberries.

(HE goes to embrace her possibly a kiss. The door swings open and TERENCE enters.)

TERENCE: Oh, my giddy . . . ! You frightened the life out of me, What on earth are you doing in here?

CASIMIR: So sorry sir, We got lost, I'm so sorry. We're going now.

TERENCE: Who gave you permission to , , ,?

HALINA: Good evening . . . I'm from the Lodz Times

TERENCE: I'm sorry how did you get in here?

HALINA: Casimir was giving me a tour.

CASIMIR: I didn't mean to . . . I had no idea that she . . . I'm so sorry, sir.

TERENCE: Show her out the same way you showed her in.

CASIMIR takes her arm, she shrugs him off.

CASIMIR: We have to go.

TERENCE: For pity's sake! . . . Get out now! You've no idea.

(JRA'S voice is heard yelling off stage)

TERENCE: God help me.

RED VELVET
SCENE 2
TERENCE & IRA (from Scene 1)

IRA: For pity's sake, why the hell do I pay you?

TERENCE: I don't know how she

IRA: I told you never, never

TERENCE: I'm sorry, sir . . . it won't happen again

IRA: An amateur. A nobody, digging . . .

TERENCE: I've spoken to the manager . . .

IRA: We had better be full.

TERENCE: Completely.

IRA: Damn right we are.

(Awkward silence. TERENCE gives IRA some medicine)

TERENCE: It'll be wonderful tonight, sir, just wonderful. Back where we belong,

IRA: Over thirty years, Terence . . . Can you imagine that?

TERENCE: Thirty years?

IRA: I am always alone.

TERENCE: But I'm here, sir.

IRA: I don't want you.

TERENCE: Sorry?

IRA: I said . . .

TERENCE: Sir . . . if I may suggest . . .

IRA: What? What's to suggest, Terry?

TERENCE: It's why I'm here . . . I'm always . . . it's my job, sir.

IRA: And this is mine. This theatre is heaving because I am here. I—
Am—Here. It is reputation that endures. Geography is irrelevant. Do you hear me?

TERENCE: Sir?

IRA: Do you miss London?

TERENCE: Every day.

(TERENCE goes. As the door shuts IRA relaxes and we see he is exhausted.)

RED VELVET
SCENE 3
HENRY & BERNARD (from Scene 2)

(The sounds of protest outside are heard faintly as Betty Lovell, Henry Forrester, 20, and Bernard Warde,, enter:)

BERNARD: They're ransacking the city .

HENRY: I'm sure London's seen worse, sir. It's terrifically exciting.

BERNARD: Enough excitement on this stage thank you very much.

HENRY: But we're at a crossroads, sir – a point of absolute, unequivocal change. Makes the blood rush.

BERNARD: Makes my blood freeze.

HENRY: The proposals are imperative, Mr Warde.

BERNARD: You can't be that naive.

HENRY: The petitions have been gathering steam for years.

BERNARD: Most people probably don't even know what they're signing.....

HENRY:: The buying and selling of human beings should be no part of any civilised society. When the trade is finally abolished in all British colonies, we'll be able to hold our heads up high again, sir.

BERNARD: For goodness sake, boy, our whole economy relies on the labour force on those plantations. How do you think this theatre was built? It's how things are.

HENRY: I think that's terribly short sighted

BERNARD: Then it's a good thing I have spectacles. *(Bernard puts on his glasses and opens his newspaper: Irritated silence.*

RED VELVET

SCENE 4

PIERRE, CHARLES HENRY BERNARD, ELLEN, BETTY & IRA (from Scene 2)

PIERRE: I have managed to coax Mr. Ira Aldridge to debut on our stage..

HENRY: Oh my goodness!

BERNARD: Can't recall the face.

HENRY: That's just fantastic.

PIERRE: His returns are excellent. Full houses always.

HENRY: Sorry, Mr. Kean, I didn't mean . . .

ELLEN: Aldridge, Aldridge . . I think I've read his reviews.

HENRY: Have you seen him, Mr. Laporte:

PIERRE: Mais oui.

HENRY: So you know?

ELLEN: Know what?

HENRY: That he . . . really is the best man for the job.

BETTY: He's the one from the Coburg, isn't he? 'The Revolt of Surinam'?

HENRY: He acted the other slaves off the stage.

ELLEN: So you've seen him?

HENRY: Several times. I had a friend in it—his first engagement. He was also one of the slaves. He wasn't terribly, I'm afraid. Tried too hard., Hasn't worked much since. But he did tell me how astonishing Mr. Aldridge was to work with. I think that was one of his first engagements on this country.

CHARLES: What on earth d'you mean?

ELLEN: Isn't he the American?

HENRY: Yes!

BERNARD: A Yankee ?

CHARLES: Good lord! Was he any good?

HENRY: Yes . . . of course . . . well,, sir . . I was quite taken aback. I mean who would have thought . . . he was quite, erm. . . . extraordinary, sir.

BETTY: When will he go on?

PIERRE: Tonight.

(Startled mutterings 'what?' 'really?' 'how can we?')

CHARLES: So he's here already?

PIERRE: Oui, He should be here now. I will go and . . . er . . . Tonight's show will be a tribute to your father, Charles. A complete stamp of quality in his honor. *(He exits.)*

BERNARD: All go, isn't it ?

BETTY: I'm so relieved.

HENRY: Me too, me too.

ELLEN: Never mind, Charlie, perhaps it's for the best. It'd be a lot of pressure on ylu ad it keeps continuity for the company.

CHARLES: I don't need consoling, Ellen.

BERNARD: Do you think we'll actually rehearse all afternoon? I have an appointment at the Garrick at five.

PIERRE: *(Re-entering)*. Ladies and gentlemen of the Covent Garden company, may I present Mr. Ira Aldridge.

(IRA enters)

IRA: Good afternoon.

(Open mouthed silence.)

PIERRE: As I think I mentioned, Ira has played the Moor many times.

(Silence)

RED VELVET
SCENE 5
IRA & ELLEN (from Scene 2)

IRA/OTHELLO: O my fair warrior!

(ELLEN'S acting is charismatic. She does not look at IRA.)

ELLEN/DESDEMOBA: My dear Othello!

IRA: Ellen, would you mind trying something?

ELLEN: "Trying"?

IRA: Sorry, when you greeted me . . .

ELLEN: That is how Mr. Kean . . . Oh, of course. I do beg your pardon.

IRA: No, not at all.

ELLEN: What is it you would like?

IRA: I like chance. Possibility. I like to listen and respond.

ELLEN: So you're an advocate of the 'domestic' style of acting?

IRA: I like that school, yes, but . . . I try not to be tied to the one style.

ELLEN: I see.

IRA: There are, of course, some styles I . . . avoid.

RLLRM: Oh would the 'teapot' school of acting be amongst them?

IRA: . . . it would.

ELLEN: And have you seen Mr. Kemble perform? Then we need say no more.

(He laughs, a connection made.)

IRA: I like Mr. Cooke's method.

ELLEN: Do you really? So do you write your verse in prose?

IRA: Yes, but . . . I cheat a little. I don't write it down but speak as I feel. Truth alters rhythm and gesture. Don't you think? The old guard don't always like it.

ELLEN: Yes, I know. But I do feel quite strongly that we mustn't allow the mundane to interfere with the gamut of our performance.

IRA: Not at all. I want truth to inform the depths and the heights of what we do. Not to reduce it.

ELLEN: I find rhythm a necessary framework, otherwise one could slope around quite randomly.

IRA: Of course you're right, I think what I'm saying is I'd rather slide in and out of rules than be strangled by them.

ELLEN: So what rules do you propose to break, Mr. Aldridge?

IRA: I think if we trust each other we'll know when we get there.

ELLEN: So I may play what I feel?

IRA: Absolutelu.

ELLEN: How . . . avant-garde/. What if you don't like what I do.

IRA: It's not about me, it's about being true to the tragedy

ELLEN: What frustrates me in our profession, Mr. Aldridge, with all due respect, is the absolute attention given to the leading actor so that the story becomes lost. Without Desdemona the tragedy does not exist, n'est ce pas? If we play together we conjure magic.

IRA: My thoughts exactly. Shall we?

ELLEN: Yes.

RED VELVET
SCENE 6
IRA & CHARLES (from Scene 2)

(CHARLES' acting as 'teapot' school verging on melodrama)

CHARLES/IAGO: (aside) 'O, you are well tuned now,
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
AS honest as I am.'

IRA: Charles . . .

CHARLES: Mr. Aldridge?

IRA: Is that how you're going to do it?

CHARLES: Yes, it absolutely is..

IRA: Might I suggest . . .

CHARLES: I have played this role opposite my father for the best part of a year. He has given me many excellent notes and I have listened to them all. This will be my interpretation of Iago not yours.

IRA: Are you not open to improvement?

CHARLES: You're implying you know better.

IRA: No , , , no, not at all. Look . . . I see this is . . . complicated for you.

CHARLES: At last!

IRA: What I mean is . . . being part of the company . . . Mr. Kean's company but . . . without your father . . .

CHARLES: I shall lead this company for him.

IRA: Excuse me?

CHARLES: It's a natural progression.

IRA: No . . . that's not the . . .

CHARLES: This theatre has a royal patent to present quality spoken drama. Not burletta, not curiosities, but drama. That is our task and as such, I am best equipped to lead this company.

IRA: I think you'll find that as the title role, I am best placed to lead this company.

CHARLES: Who the hell do you think you are? This isn't some provincial experiment. This is Covent Garden . . . We're not a freak show.

IRA: With acting like that we could be.

CHARLES: I beg your pardon? I've been performing with my father for years . . . I know exactly what I'm doing.

IRA: None of us know Mr. Kean.

CHARLES: Speak for yourself.

IRA: Talent is an unknown quantity.

CHARLES: Have you ever heard of pedigree?

IRA: And everyone knows lightning never strikes the same place twice.

CHARLES: How dare you!

RED VELVET
SCENE 7
CHARLES & PIERRE (from Scene 2)

CHARLES: You're playing with our reputations for some misplaced idealism.

PIERRE: Non, non, non . . . Ira is a highly respectable . . .

CHARLES: Oh for pity's sake, this is ridiculous. I shall speak to Father. He won't allow it.

(CHARLES puts on his coat.)

PIERRE: It's pointless. Vraiment.

CHARLES: And who the hell are you to say that?

PIERRE: Edmund and I discussed the . . . options and we agreed this to be the best one.

CHARLES: What?

PIERRE: I'm sorry.

CHARLES: How dare you!

PIERRE: We didn't want you to

CHARLES: We? We? Don't try and claim him, Pierre. I know what he says about you at home.;

PIERRE: I think you should calm down.

CHARLES: What is this? Your private coup d'etat?

PIERRE: Your father agreed with me.

CHARLES: Is your pen wet with the history you write yourself into:

PIERRE: I think we should get back to work.

CHARLES: We've all heard the whispers on the wings. Is this you indulging your old ways? A personal agenda you need to get out of your system?

PIERRE: How dare you!

CHARLES: You know what you should do, Pierre, you should book one of the Venus Hottentots to play Emilia. An African beauty with her nether portions on full display to the stalls. Pay extra for close examination just like on Piccadilly. You've taken advantage of my father's condition. I'll have not part in this.

PIERRE: Charles we have a performance tonight. I think it would be beneficial if you would .

CHARLES: Mark my words, no good will come of this. You're blind, every single one of you, and your misguided liberalism will sends us all to the dogs!

(CHARLES storms off)

RED VELVET
SCENE 8
IRA & PIERRE (from Scene 2)

IRA: That went well. (*A nervous laugh*). Oh my lord

PIERRE: I thought it would be . . . easier than that.

IRA: You alright?

PIERRE: It will be alright. Pierre Corneilli wrote ‘To win without risk is a triumph without glory.’

IRA: You sure?

PIERRE: We will be alright.

IRA: You said that already,

PIERRE: Charles won’t go on.

IRA: Fine.

PIERRE: I think a little friendly advice, only my opinion you are the artiste . . . but it’s important to play a little carefully to start. One step at a time. You’re always the lion. You roar and give everything. The whole performance. But they need a bit more of the . . . kid gloves. A little . . . gently to start.

IRA: Have you read they play, Pierre?

PIERRE: I’m just saying, really, a suggestion . . . This audience, they’re older, not so pliant, nervous but they will accept if we tread carefully. Give them time. Just to start—softly, softly. For me, oui.

IRA: Alright, we’ll reel them in gently.

PIERRE: Bien.

RED VELVET
SCENE 9
IRA & PIERRE (from Scene 2)

PIERRE: Do you remember the first time we came here? ‘The Red . . .’?

IRA: ‘Harlequin. . .’

PIERRE: ‘. . . and the Red Dwarf’.

IRA: We sat there.

PIERRE: Curtain up and . . . merde!

IRA: Queen Ronabellyana, the ugliest woma

PIERRE: The shock!

IRA: No one told us she was a man . . .

PIERRE: They’re all laughing and we’re . . . horrified.

IRA: Don’t you’ll make me laugh and I feel sick already.

PIERRE: And then, out of the blue, he just fell off the stage straight into the gentleman’s lap.

IRA: Was that the moment . . . ?

PIERRE: Skirts over his head, feet in the air, all was revealed.

IRA: I’ve never laughed so hard.

PIERRE: I remember you grabbed my arm, tears in your eyes—unable to speak.

IRA: Grimaldi.

PIERRE: . . . a genius.

IRA: The greatest clown of them all.

(Silence)

IRA: These are big shoes to fill.

PIERRE: Edmund? He's just a man.

IRA: Who acts like lightning.

PIERRE: And you are the thunder to follow.

IRA: Are we doing the right thing?

PIERRE: You are every inch the Moor.

RED VELVET

SCENE 10

IRA & MARGARET (from Scene 4)

MARGARET: I can't believe we're here. After all these years. It's like a dream.

IRA: A few weeks and we'll be able to rent a proper home. A small house perhaps.

MARGARET: Goodness!

IRA: And then we can save to buy.

MARGARET: Can you imagine?

IRA: What color shall we paint the front door?

MARGARET: Green? No blue.

IRA: We'll look back and tell our children, that we . . .

MARGARET: Ira. . . .

IRA: No, we absolutely will. . . . This is the start of a whole new chapter It's been hard I know. Touring isn't good for family life. . . .

MARGARET: Please don't

IRA: If we settle, it'll happen. You need stability.

MARGARET: I have stability.

IRA: I mean a place to really call home. I see how it is, Mags. I;m not blind. Every first night. Every public engagement. . . . But you, you hold your head high and sail past, like a swan. For every mean-spirited remark. For all the damp, cheap, lodgings. Every small peeling theatre. Every mile you've endured on the road, every penny you've carried to the bank. Every moment of self-doubt you've heard or had. The reason we're here . . . and I want you to know that I know . . I wouldn't be here without you.

MARGARET: I don't need to . . .

IRA: You do.

MARGARET: A house? Can you imagine?

IRA: You can stay at home.

MARGARET: I can buy furniture.

IRA: You can

MARGARET: Paint the nursery.

IRA: The most important room.

MARGARET: It's lovely.

RED VELVET
SCENE 11
ELLEN & BETTY (from Scene 5)

BETTY: How are you today?

ELLEN: Fine. You?

BETTY: Pretty exhausted actually. I don't know how you do it.

ELLEN: Pace yourself.

BETTY: Oh I do, I do. At least I try to. Do you think I don't?

ELLEN: No, I just mean, I try to pace myself.

BETTY: Oh yes of course. I see what you mean . . . Mr. Aldridge is on stage already. Running lines, I think. Are you alright?

ELLEN: Yes, of course.

BETTY: It's only that, well . . . I . . . heard you wince in that last scene. I wondered . .

ELLEN: He caught my arm a little, that's all.

BETTY: You were ever so good, I mean you always are . . . I almost collided with him. He was striding around at such a terrific speed. I was centre stage at one point. Mr Kean would've been furious.

Silence

BETTY: Do you think I was a bit shouty last night?

ELLEN: No, not really . . . trust your rib reserve. Less off the throat.

BETTY: Thanks. You didn't come for a drink?

ELLEN: I was tired

BETTY: Mr. Aldridge came down quite late. His wife was there. Seemed a bit of a mouse. Makes you wonder, doesn't it? Anyway you didn't miss much. Just Mr. Warde recounting theatrical anecdotes and Henry chomping at the bit.

RED VELVET
SCENE 12
HENRY, BETTY & ELLEN (from Scene 5)

(HENRY enters)

HENRY: Evening all.

BETTY: Henry!

HENRY: Gosh Ellen how's your arm? Mr. Warde said you looked like you were going to cry.

ELLEN: Honestly, Bernard is the font of all rumours.

BETTY: He grabbed her too hard apparently.

ELLEN: No, no we mistimed the moment, that's all . . .

HENRY: Terrific show last night.

BETTY: How many bows did we take in the end?

HENRY: The noise was incredible.

BETTY: I felt terribly emotional. All those people standing up for us. Do you ever get used to that?

ELLEN: No.

HENRY: What did you think Ellen? The show . . . ?

ELLEN: It felt . . . thrilling.

HENRY: His anger was very real.

BETTY: You must have been terrified.

ELLEN: No, nothing like that.

BETTY: Did you hear that woman in the circle?

HENRY: I almost corpse.

BETTY: She sounded like a horse—'Stop! Stop!'

BETTY: They literally gasped when he kissed your hands.

HENRY: It looked amazing—you really see the contrast then.

BETTY: Is it alright? When he does that? Does it feel . . . ?

ELLEN: It's fine.

RED VELVET

SCENE 13

BERNARD, HENRY, BETTY, & ELLEN (from Scene 5)

(Enter HENRY with an arm full of fresh newspapers)

HENRY: Look what I found!

BETTY: Are those todays?

HENRY: Still warm.

BERNARD: Oh my god. They were all in.

BETTY: Were they?

HENRY: May I look?

BERNARD: I've never been so front and centre on opening night. Marvellous isn't it, that at my age, there can still be a first tim

ELLEN: You were very good Bernard—you only fluffed a few lines."

BERNARD: Well . . . the nerves do get worse with age . . . You can't go now Charles this is the best bit. Sit yourself down. Right. Bull by the horns and all that. Out of the way—here goes.

(BERNARD flicks through one of the newspapers)

BETTY: They probably hated me—I get so awfully nervous. If I ever have to go on for Ellen, I'll be a wet rag.

BERNARD: Here we are, ?Two columns! That's rather good.

HENRY: I tried something a little different with Roderigo last night—I w9nder 8f they noticed?

ELLEN: Go on then Bernard . . . What is it? What does it say?

BERNARD: Bit . . . strong old girl.

ELLEN: They hated me.

BERNARD: No of course not, how could they?

ELLEN Then read it out.

BERNARD: Perhaps . . . perhaps we should read them later . . .

ELLEN: Why?

BERNARD: We're just hitting our stride. . . .

ELLEN: Oh Bernard what's the point of us if we don't hear the public's opinion?

BERNARD: I simply think sometimes . . . they're not the tickets . . .

ELLEN: If we're performing we should know.

(An uncertain silence)

RED VELVET
SCENE 14
IRA & CONNIE (from Scene 5)

CONNIE: I watch you last night.

IRA: Oh . . . what did you think?

CONNIE: It . . . it wasn't for me. I didn't like . . that you was so easily turned.

IRA: I see.

CONNIE: Why you kill your wife on the back of such careless talk?

(IRA doesn't understand her accent.)

IRA: I'm sorry, what was that?

CONNIE: Why you kill your wife on the back of such careless talk?

IRA: Well, that's the tragedy.

CONNIE: It's common sense tho', sir, marryin' into the world's a mistake. Can't trust no one . . . Everybody smilin' like them a friend but . . . I find more often than not, people mostly have two faces, don't you think? An' when you show 'em a weak spot them rub it.

IRA: You got a lot from it.

CONNIE: It upset me.

IRA: That's the beauty of theatre . . . it's . . . it's about getting under your skin.

CONNIE: I find life does that anyway.I

IRA: Can I have those papers?

CONNIE: Nothin' in them but gloom and doom.

IRA: It's not the news I want.

CONNIE: I like you, Mr. Aldridge.

IRA: You know I'm married.

CONNIE: Me not proposin' or nothin'.

IRA: Right.

CONNIE: You have a forwardness about you. No fear.

IRA: I'd say the same of you.

CONNIE: Not me, sir. I don't like attention. I do what's expected and I go home.

IRA: I don't want to appear rude, Connie, but I really, really want those papers.

CONNIE: You want to know what them say? Read what them see?

IRA: Yes. I'll take them to Mister LaPorte after. I'm very reliable ,really.

CONNIE: Only ask if you want to hear. I learn' that a long time ago.

IRA: Thanks for the advice.

CONNIE: I had this mistress once grew attached to me, kept me close by an' tol' me all she problems, intimate problems, sir, but when five pounds went missing she grabbed me by my ear like a dog and fling me out.

IRA: I don't . . .

CONNIE: I'm just sayin' people see what them a look for.

(She gives him the papers.)

RED VELVET
SCENE 15
IRA & PIERRE (from Scene 6)

PIERRE: The board. . . they made a decision. . . . they want you . . . they regrettably want you to . . . stand down.

IRA: What . . . ?

PIERRE: They feel . . . unable . . . to support us . . .

IRA: What d'you mean. . . ?

PIERRE: They're under a lot of financial pressure and . . . The theatre's been struggling for a few months. We need some good news. . .

IRA: I'm being dismissed?

PIERRE? as asubstitute for Edmund they feel . . . I'm sorry. It's . . . too late.

(PIERRE cannot look at him.)

IRA: I'll talk to the board.

PIERRE: You don't know all the facts.

IRA: Oh there's more? You just keepin' it back for full dramatic effect huh? Playin' this scene for all it's worth.

PIERRE: You do what the hell you want and I have to pick up the pieces. You think I'm just an idiot who turns a blind eye?

IRA: I don't know what you're talking about

PIERRE: Because you're guilty.

IRA: Of what?

PIERRE: What was she doing in your dressing room?

IRA: Who? . . . Oh for heaven's sake . . . we were talking through ideas for the next performance . . .

PIERRE: Oh, don't. . . please don't . . . I know you, don't play innocent . . .

IRA: It how it was Pierre . . .

PIERRE: Answer the question! Why won't you answer the question?

IRA: You see an interesting actress and a decent girl like Miss Ellen Tree comin' out my door and think I've been pawin' her in private? You've already answered the question! Everything looks bad from a certain angle Pierre. I mean Paris looks real bad.

PIERRE: That has nothing to do with . . .

IRA: It's your word against his . . .

PIERRE: I put you on the stage. I vouched for you. Me and only me. No one behind me, no one backing me up.

IRA: So what's the plot, boss: Someone in the wings?

PIERRE: You do this to yourself!

IRA: Kean Junior>. Macready changed his mind? One man's misfortune . . .

PIERRE: We go dark.

(IRA is speechless)

IRA: You would rather close the theatre than have me perform?

PIERRE: I have no choice.

