

Audition Sides

Parts in grey have been cast

You will be asked to read one or two sides depending on time available. You do not need to memorise them but it will be helpful if you study them in advance. Copies will be provided at the audition.

THE BLISSES (speak with middle / upper class English accent)

Judith Bliss (f, 45), mother, grande dame of the theatre

David Bliss (m, 50s), father, tetchy, supercilious

Sorel Bliss (f, 19), daughter lively, self-critical daughter

SIDE 5 with RICHARD

SIDE 7 with SIMON

Simon Bliss (m, 20) amateur artist, fey, charming and occasionally domineering son

SIDE 2 with MYRA

SIDE 7 with SOREL

THE GUESTS (any British accent)

Jackie Coryton (f, early 20s) shy, nervous

SIDE 3 with RICHARD

SIDE 6 with SANDY

Sandy Tyrell (m, 20s), sportsman, enthusiastic, naive

SIDE 1 with JUDITH

SIDE 6 with JACKIE

Richard Greatham (m, 45-60) professionally confident, personally shy

SIDE 3 with JACKIE

SIDE 4 with JUDITH

SIDE 5 with SOREL

Myra Arundel (40s) vamp

Clara, housekeeper

SIDE 1

JUDITH, SANDY

SANDY HAS JUST ARRIVED AT THE BLISS'S HOUSE

JUDITH You must forgive me for having rather peculiar children. Have you got a bag or anything?

SANDY Yes, it's in the car.

JUDITH We'd better leave it there for the moment as Clara has to get the tea. We'll find you a room afterwards.

SANDY I've been looking forward to this most awfully.

JUDITH It is nice, isn't it? You can see as far as Marlow on a clear day. So they tell me.

SANDY I mean I've been looking forward to seeing you.

JUDITH How perfectly sweet of you. Would you like a drink?

SANDY No, thanks. I'm in training.

JUDITH How lovely. What for?

SANDY I'm boxing again in a couple of weeks.

JUDITH I must come to your first night.

SANDY You look simply splendid.

JUDITH I'm so glad. You know, you mustn't mind if Simon and Sorel insult you a little - they've been very bad-tempered lately.

SANDY It's awfully funny you having a grown-up son and daughter at all. I can hardly believe it.

JUDITH I was married very young.

SANDY You know, it's frightfully queer the way I've been planning to know you for ages and I never did until last week.

JUDITH I liked you from the first, really, because you're such a nice shape.

SANDY Oh, I see.

JUDITH Small hips and lovely broad shoulders. I wish Simon had smaller hips. Do you think you could teach him to box?

SANDY Rather - if he likes.

JUDITH That's just the trouble - he won't like. He's so dreadfully un-that sort of thing. You must use your influence subtly. I'm sure David would be pleased.

SANDY Who's David?

JUDITH My husband.

SANDY Oh.

JUDITH Why do you say "Oh" like that. Didn't you know I had a husband?

SANDY I thought he was dead.

JUDITH No, he isn't dead. He's upstairs.

SANDY You're quite different from what you were the other day.

JUDITH It's this garden hat. I'll take it off. There! I've been pruning the calceolarias.

JUDITH Have you ever seen me on the stage?

SANDY Rather!

JUDITH Oh? What in?

SANDY That thing where you pretended to cheat at cards to save your husband's good name.

JUDITH Oh, "The Bold Deceiver". That play was never quite right.

SANDY You were absolutely wonderful. That was when I first fell in love with you.

JUDITH Was it really?

SANDY Yes, you were so frightfully pathetic and brave.

JUDITH Was I?

SANDY Rather!

Pause

JUDITH Well, go on . . .

SANDY I feel such a fool, telling you what I think as though it mattered.

JUDITH Of course it matters - to me, anyhow.

SANDY It seems too good to be true - sitting here and talking as though we were old friends.

JUDITH We are old friends. We probably met in another life. Reincarnation, you know.

SANDY You do say ripping things.

JUDITH Do I? Give me a cigarette. And let's put our feet up.

SANDY All right.

JUDITH Can you punt?

SANDY Yes - a bit.

JUDITH You must teach Simon - he always gets the pole stuck.

SANDY I'd rather teach you.

JUDITH You're so gallant and chivalrous.

SANDY I should like to go on saying nice things to you forever.

JUDITH Sandy!

SIDE 2

SIMON, MYRA

MYRA HAS JUST ARRIVED AT THE BLISS'S HOUSE

SIMON Myra, this is marvellous! (*tries to kiss her*)

MYRA No, Simon, dear; it's too hot.

SIMON You look beautifully cool.

MYRA I'm more than cool, really, but it's not climatic coolness. I've been mentally chilled to the marrow by Judith's attitude.

SIMON Why, what did she say?

MYRA Nothing very much. She was bouncing about on the sofa with a hearty young thing in flannels, and seemed to resent my appearance rather.

SIMON You mustn't take any notice of Mother.

MYRA I'll try not to, but it's difficult.

SIMON She adores you, really.

MYRA I'm sure she does.

SIMON She's annoyed today because Father and Sorel have been asking people down without telling her.

MYRA Poor dear! I quite see why.

SIMON You look enchanting!

MYRA Thank you, Simon.

SIMON Are you pleased to see me?

MYRA Of course. That's why I came.

SIMON Darling!

MYRA Ssh! Don't shout.

SIMON I feel most colossally temperamental. I should like to kiss you and kiss you and break everything in the house and then jump into the river.

MYRA Dear Simon.

SIMON You're everything I want you to be - absolutely everything. Marvellous clothes. Marvellous looks. Marvellous brain. Oh, God, it's terrible!

MYRA I dined with Charlie Templton last night.

SIMON Well, you're a devil! You only did it to annoy me. He's far too plump and can't do anything but dither about the Embassy in badly-cut trousers. You loathe him, really. You know you do - you're too intelligent not to. You couldn't like him and me at the same time - it's impossible!

MYRA Don't be so conceited.

SIMON Darling, I adore you.

MYRA That's right.

SIMON But you're so callous. That's what it is, callous! You don't love me a bit, do you?

MYRA You're very sweet and I'm very fond of you.

SIMON Tell me what you've been doing - everything.

MYRA Nothing.

SIMON What did you do yesterday after you'd dined with Charlie Templeton?

MYRA Supped with Charlie Templeton.

SIMON Well, I don't mind a bit. I hope you ate a lot and enjoyed yourself - there!

MYRA Generous boy. Come and kiss me.

SIMON You're only playing up to me now. You don't really want to a bit.

MYRA I'm aching for it.

SIMON *(kissing her violently)* I love you!

MYRA This weekend's going to be strenuous.

SIDE 3

RICHARD, JACKIE

THEY HAVE ONLY JUST MET AND SIMON HAS JUST LEFT THE ROOM

RICHARD A strange young man.

JACKIE Very rude, I think.

RICHARD Have you ever met any of them before?

JACKIE No, I don't know any of them except Mr Bliss. He's a wonderful person.

RICHARD I wonder if he knows you're here.

JACKIE Perhaps that funny woman who opened the door will tell him.

RICHARD Yes. Allow me. *(taking JACKIE's coat)* It was fortunate that we met at the station.

JACKIE I'm frightfully glad. I should have been terrified arriving all by myself.

RICHARD I do hope the weather will remain good over Sunday. The country here is delightful.

JACKIE Yes.

RICHARD There's nowhere like England in the spring and summer.

JACKIE No, there isn't, is there?

RICHARD There's a sort of quality you find in no other countries.

JACKIE Have you travelled a lot?

RICHARD A good deal.

JACKIE How lovely.

RICHARD Spain is very beautiful.

JACKIE Yes, I've always hear that Spain was awfully nice.

Pause

RICHARD Except for the bull-fights. No-one who ever really loved horses could enjoy a bull-fight.

JACKIE Nor anyone who loved bulls either.

RICHARD Exactly.

Pause

JACKIE Italy's awfully nice, isn't it?

RICHARD Oh yes, charming.

JACKIE I've always wanted to go to Italy.

Pause

RICHARD Rome is a beautiful city.

JACKIE Yes, I've always heard that Rome was lovely.

RICHARD And Naples and Capri. Capri's enchanting.

JACKIE It must be.

Pause

RICHARD Have you ever been abroad at all?

JACKIE Oh yes. I went to Dieppe once.

RICHARD Dear little place, Dieppe.

JACKIE Yes, it was lovely.

Pause

JACKIE Well!

RICHARD Russia used to be a wonderful country. Before the war.

JACKIE It must have been.

I wonder if Mr Bliss knows I'm here.

RICHARD I wonder.

JACKIE Couldn't we ring a bell, or anything?

RICHARD Yes, perhaps we'd better.

JACKIE I don't suppose it rings.

RICHARD You mustn't be depressed.

JACKIE I feel horrid.

RICHARD It's always a little embarrassing coming to a strange house for the first time. You'll like Sorel.
She's charming.

JACKIE I wonder where she is.

RICHARD I expect tea will be here soon.

JACKIE Do you think they have tea?

RICHARD Oh, yes. They must.

JACKIE Oh well, we'd better go on waiting, then.

RICHARD Do you mind if I smoke?

JACKIE Not a bit.

RICHARD Will you?

JACKIE No, thank you.

SIDE 4

JUDITH, RICHARD

JUDITH Shall we sit down again? I want you to talk to me and tell me all about yourself and the things you've done.

RICHARD I've done nothing.

JUDITH What a shame! Why not?

RICHARD I never realise how dead I am until I meet people like you. It's depressing, you know.

JUDITH What nonsense! You're not a bit dead.

RICHARD Do you always live here?

JUDITH I'm going to from now onwards. I've reached an age now when I just want to sit back and let things go on around me - and they do.

RICHARD I should like to know exactly what you're thinking about - really.

JUDITH I was thinking of calling you Richard. It's such a nice uncompromising name.

RICHARD I should be very flattered if you would.

JUDITH I won't suggest you calling me Judith until you feel really comfortable about me.

RICHARD But I do - Judith.

JUDITH I'm awfully glad. Will you give me a cigarette?

RICHARD Certainly.

JUDITH Oh, what a divine case.

RICHARD It was given to me in Japan three years ago. All these little designs mean things.

JUDITH What sort of things?

RICHARD Charms for happiness, luck - and love.

JUDITH Which is the charm for love?

RICHARD That one.

JUDITH What a dear!

RICHARD kisses her gently

JUDITH Richard!

RICHARD I'm afraid I couldn't help it.

JUDITH What are we to do? What are we to do?

RICHARD I don't know.

JUDITH David must be told. Everything.

RICHARD Everything?

JUDITH Yes, yes. There come moments in life when it is necessary to be honest, absolutely honest. The truth must be faced fair and square.

RICHARD The truth? I don't quite understand.

JUDITH Dear Richard, you want to spare me, I know. You're so chivalrous. But it's no use. David has been a good husband to me, according to his lights. This may, of course, break him up rather, but it can't be helped. I wonder - oh, I wonder how he'll take it! Oh, my poor, poor David! Never mind. You'd better go into the garden and wait.

RICHARD Wait? What for?

JUDITH For me, Richard, for me. I will come to you later. Wait in the summerhouse. I had begun to think that Romance was dead, that I should never know it again.

RICHARD Look here, Judith, I apologise for what I did just now. I . . .

JUDITH But now you have come and it's all changed, it's magic! I'm under a spell that I never thought to recapture again. Go along.

RICHARD But Judith . . .

JUDITH Don't, don't make it any harder for me. I am quite resolved and it's the only possible way.

SIDE 5

SOREL, RICHARD

JACKIE HAS JUST LEFT THE ROOM

SOREL The poor girl looks half-witted.

RICHARD She's shy, I think.

SOREL I hope Father will find her a comfort.

RICHARD Tell me one thing, Sorel, did your father and mother know I was coming?

SOREL Oh yes, they were awfully pleased.

RICHARD A rather nice-looking woman came down ~~in a big hat~~ and went into the garden with a young man without saying a word.

SOREL That was Mother, I expect. We're an independent family. We entertain our friends sort of separately.

RICHARD Oh, I see.

Pause

SOREL It was sweet of you to come.

RICHARD I've wanted to come. I've thought about you a lot.

SOREL Have you really? That's thrilling.

RICHARD I mean it. You're so alive and vital and different from other people.

SOREL I'm so frightened you'll be bored here.

RICHARD Bored? Why should I be?

SOREL Oh, I don't know. But you won't be, will you? Or if you are, tell me at once and we'll do something quite different.

RICHARD You're rather a dear, you know.

SOREL I'm not. I'm devastating, entirely lacking in restraint. So's Simon. It's Father's and Mother's fault, really. You see, they're so vague - they've spent their lives cultivating their Arts and not devoting any time to ordinary conventions and manners and things. I'm the only one who sees that, so I'm trying to be better. I'd love to be beautifully poised and carry off difficult situations with a lift of the eyebrows.

RICHARD I'm sure you could carry off anything.

SOREL There you are, you see, saying the right thing! You always say the right thing and no-one knows a bit what you're really thinking. That's what I adore.

RICHARD I'm afraid to say anything now, in case you think I'm only being correct.

SOREL But you are correct. I wish you'd teach Simon to be correct too.

RICHARD It would be uphill work, I'm afraid.

SOREL Why? Don't you like him?

RICHARD I've only met him for a moment.

Pause

SOREL Would you like to see the garden?

RICHARD Very much indeed.

SOREL No, as a matter of fact, we'd better wait until after tea. Shall I sing you something?

RICHARD Please. I should love it.

SOREL I don't want to really a bit, only I'm trying to entertain you. It's as easy as pie to talk in someone else's house, like at the dance the other night, but here on my own ground I'm finding it difficult.

RICHARD I'm sorry.

SOREL Oh, it isn't your fault. Honestly, it isn't. You're awfully kind and responsive. What shall we do?

RICHARD I'm quite happy talking. To you.

SOREL Can you play Mah Jong?

RICHARD No, I'm afraid I can't.

SOREL I'm so glad. I do hate it so.

SIDE 6

JACKIE, SANDY

THE MORNING AFTER THE NIGHT BEFORE

JACKIE Oh, it's only you.

SANDY What's the matter?

JACKIE Nothing.

SANDY I say, don't cry.

JACKIE I'm not crying.

SANDY You were. I heard you.

JACKIE It's this house. It gets on my nerves.

SANDY I don't wonder after last night.

JACKIE What were you doing just now?

SANDY Hiding.

JACKIE Hiding?

SANDY Yes, I didn't want to run up against any of the family.

JACKIE I wish I'd never come. I believe they're all mad, you know.

SANDY The Blisses?

JACKIE Yes - they must be.

SANDY I've been thinking that too.

JACKIE Do you suppose they know they're mad?

SANDY No, people never do.

JACKIE It was Mr Bliss who asked me down and he hasn't paid any attention to me at all. I went into his study soon after I arrived yesterday and he said "Who the hell are you?"

SANDY Didn't he remember?

JACKIE He did afterwards, then he brought me down to tea and left me.

SANDY Are you really engaged to Simon?

JACKIE Oh, I hope not!

SANDY You were last night.

JACKIE So were you - to Sorel.

SANDY Not properly. We talked it over.

JACKIE I don't know what happened. I was in the garden with Simon and he was being awfully sweet and then he suddenly kissed me and rushed into the house and said we were engaged. And that awful Judith asked me to make him happy!

SANDY That's exactly what happened to me and Sorel. Judith gave us to one another before we knew where we were.

JACKIE How frightful!

SANDY hiccups loudly

 I beg your pardon?

SANDY I say - I've got hiccups.

JACKIE Eat a lump of sugar. It's a horrid feeling, isn't it?

SANDY Horrid (*hiccups*)

JACKIE People have died from hiccups, you know.

SANDY Have they?

JACKIE Yes, an aunt of mine once had them for three days without stopping.

SANDY How beastly!

JACKIE She had to have the doctor and everything.

SANDY I expect mine will stop soon.

JACKIE I hope they will.

SANDY (*hiccups*) Damn!

JACKIE Drink some water the wrong way round. (*looks around*) There isn't any water.

SANDY Perhaps coffee would do as well.

JACKIE I've never tried coffee but it might. There you are.

SANDY What do I do?

JACKIE Drink it from the opposite side, sort of upside down.

SANDY I can't reach . . .

JACKIE Look out! Somebody's coming. Quick!

SANDY Bring the sugar. I might need it again. (*hiccups*) Oh, God!

SIDE 7

SOREL, SIMON

SOREL You didn't shave this morning.

SIMON I know I didn't, but I'm going to in a minute when I've finished this. *(drawing)*

SOREL I sometimes wish *we* were more normal and bouncing, Simon.

SIMON Why?

SOREL I should like to be a fresh, open-air girl with a passion for games.

SIMON Thank God you're not.

SOREL It would be so soothing.

SIMON Not in this house.

SOREL Where's Mother?

SIMON In the garden, practising.

SOREL Practising?

SIMON She's learning the names of flowers by heart.

SOREL What's she up to?

SIMON I don't know. Damn, that's crooked.

SOREL I always distrust her when she becomes a Squire's lady.

SIMON So do I.

SOREL She's been at it hard all day. She tapped the barometer this morning.

SIMON She's probably got a plan about impressing somebody.

SOREL I wonder who.

SIMON Some dreary, infatuated young man will appear soon, I expect.

SOREL You don't think she's invited anyone down today, do you?

SIMON I don't know. Has Father noticed anything?

SOREL No, he's too immersed in work.

SIMON Perhaps Clara will know.

SOREL Yell for her.

SIMON Clara! Clara!

SOREL Oh, Simon, I do hope she hasn't asked anyone down to-day.

SIMON Why? Have you?

SOREL Yes.

SIMON Why on earth didn't you tell me?

SOREL I didn't think you'd care one way or another.

SIMON Who is it?

SOREL Richard Greatham. [*"Greth-am"*]

SIMON How exciting! I've never heard of him.

SOREL I shouldn't flaunt your ignorance if I were you - it makes you look silly.

SIMON Well, that's done. (*drawing*)

SOREL Everyone's heard of Richard Greatham.

SIMON How lovely for them.

SOREL He's a frightfully well-known diplomat - I met him at the Mainwaring's [*"Mannering's"*] dance.

SIMON He'll need all his diplomacy here.

SOREL I warned him not to expect good manners, but I hope you'll be as pleasant to him as you can.

SIMON I've never met any diplomats, Sorel, but as a class I'm extremely prejudiced against them. They're so suave and polished and debonair.

SOREL You could be a little more polished without losing caste.

SIMON Will he have the papers with him?

SOREL What papers?

SIMON Oh, any papers.

SOREL I wish you'd confine your biting irony to your caricatures, Simon.

SIMON And I wish you'd confine your girlish infatuations to London and not force them on your defenceless family.

SOREL I shall keep him out of your way as much as possible.

SIMON Do, darling.

SOREL We're so awfully bad-mannered.

SIMON Not to people we like.

SOREL The people we like put up with it because they like us.

SIMON What do you mean, exactly, by bad manners? Lack of social tricks and small talk?

SOREL We never attempt to look after people when they come here.

SIMON Why should we? It's loathsome being looked after.

SOREL Yes, but people like little attentions. We've never once asked anyone if they've slept well.

SIMON I consider that an impertinence anyhow.

SOREL I'm going to try to improve.

SIMON You're only going on like this because you've got a mania for a diplomat. You'll soon return to normal.

SOREL *(standing)* Abnormal, Simon - that's what we are. Abnormal. People stare in astonishment when we say what we consider perfectly ordinary things. I just remarked at Freda's lunch the otherday how nice it would be if someone invented something to make all our faces go up like the Chinese because I was so bored with them going down. And they all thought I was mad!

SIMON It's no use worrying, darling; we see things differently, I suppose, and if people don't like it they must lump it.