

CAMPBELL / JANE

Act II, Scene 1

43

There are twenty Arabs waiting to shake hands with me in the front hall.
Dora Twenty Arabs! Can I come and watch?
Venables If you must.

Dora and Venables leave by the main door. The ante-room door opens and Jane Rotherbrook comes in closely pursued by Campbell

Campbell Miss Rotherbrook—Jane, please don't go, let me explain.

Jane, now wearing her own dress held together by bulldog clips, moves to the main door but Campbell bars the way

Wait, please.

Jane Wait? For what? To be softened up with whisky so I forget my story?

Campbell You can't go back to your paper in a torn dress, held together by Stationery Office bulldog clips.

Jane But that's all part of my scoop. Think of those headlines—"Undressed Dollies at Number Ten"—"P.M. Tears Off Journalist's Clothes".

Campbell You can't leave—I forbid it! I have a job to do.

Jane And so have I. I was sent here to get a story, and I've got one hell of a story!

Campbell There's a perfectly logical explanation.

Jane Well—explain!

Campbell takes Jane's arm and guides her away from the main door

Campbell That girl was here to give a blood donation.

Jane (*laughing*) I wasn't born yesterday!

Campbell Look, if you wait in the ante-room you'll hear something that'll give you the biggest scoop your newspaper's ever likely to have. The Prime Minister's not your man. There's no story there I assure you. But the Chancellor, haha!

Jane What do you mean "haha"?

Campbell There's a different kettle of fish. How can I phrase it? The Chancellor is *unstable*.

Jane Well he was shouting a great deal but so was everyone else. Unstable in what way?

Campbell *Morally* unstable.

Jane (*insisting*) But in what way?

Campbell Oh, this that, and quite a bit of the other.

Jane (*interestedly*) Really?

Campbell The Chancellor doesn't match up to the P.M.'s high moral standards, I promise you. Haven't you heard the stories of Cramond's private life?

Jane (*amazed*) But—but I always thought he was a pillar of rectitude, a Puritan of the first degree.

Campbell The man's a whited sepulchre.

Jane I can hardly believe it.

Campbell If you write the story you think you've got, you'll make a fool

of yourself. On the other hand, you can take my advice, wait in the ante-room and just *listen*. Remember—*(he steers her into the ante-room)*—Cramond is your man!

Jane goes in unprotesting; he closes the door after her, leaning against it to mop his brow. As soon as he moves away she pops out again

Jane Give me a hint—what is his “thing”?

Campbell His thing?

Jane Well you know—call-girls? Or choir-boys?

Campbell Oh, everything—anything. Bus conductors, charladies—you name it.

Jane My God!

Jane exits into the ante-room, as the main door opens and Dora and Venables enter

Dora I thought those Arabs were rather sweet. Do you know, Moley, one of them tried to squeeze my arm?

Venables I don't think it was your arm he intended to squeeze. Ah, Campbell. Not cracking, are you?

Campbell Not yet, sir.

Venables Have you explained to Miss Rotherbrook that we were all merely having a bit of innocent—er—fun?

Campbell Er—something along those lines.

Venables Well, go and give those Arabs some of my signed photographs, then perhaps they'll go away.

Campbell At once, sir.

Campbell leaves by the main door

Dora Now, Moley, when the Chancellor comes in, don't be browbeaten, remember Mr Churchill—stand firm. The Dunkirk spirit.

Venables Don't worry. You've given me fresh confidence, Dora.

Dora Good. Then get that Budget altered.

Venables Leave it to me. *(He strides over to the Chancellor's door)* I'll walk into him. I really will.

The Chancellor's door opens, and Cramond and Miss Frobisher enter in a rush, colliding with Venables, who steps back hastily

Cramond You want to see me, eh?

Dora Yes, he does.

Cramond glares at Dora

Venables Oh, you have met haven't you? This lady is the Assistant Commandant of the Blood Transfusion Service.

Cramond Is there somewhere we can talk in private, Prime Minister? This place is like the Tower of Babel.

Dora Oh, don't mind me. I'll sit here quietly.

Venables You'll sit quietly in the *library* won't you—er, Commandant?