

THE SILENT PROMPTER

INTERIOR SCENE:

Table and two chairs up back. Young man and young woman are discovered. She is seated at table. He is standing by her side.

(Near the wing prompter stands — he is thus visible to audience. He is gazing at prompt book on desk at right angles to wing. He follows the dialogue from the book as the sketch progresses. On each occasion a prompt is required, he returns facing the audience when giving the required action. He gives these actions with a little hesitation. He takes the required props from inside the desk. This can all be worked from a small table with props from a box standing at his side.)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Ladies and gentlemen — This dramatic sketch we are now about to show you was only received by us this morning, and we hardly have had time to memorise many of the lines, however the boys have made a tremendous effort as I know you will agree. If the boys do forget their lines (which I know they won't) Joe has agreed to prompt them. I trust this will not take away from the performance, but I have no doubt everything will pass off quite smoothly.

(TABS OPEN)

HE: And so, Ethel, your decision is final.

SHE: Absolutely. It has been plainly proved that we cannot live together as husband and wife, so there is nothing to do but part.

HE: As you wish, but this is a bitter blow.

SHE: It is indeed a bitter blow to me. You seem to be so indifferent. Oh, why are you so... so...(looks off)
(PROMPTER BLOWS IN HIS HANDS)
so cold.

HE: What makes you think that? When you know full well that I am...I am ...*(looks off)*
(PROMPTER TIES A LARGE KNOT IN A ROPE AND HOLD IT UP)
I am not.

SHE: You are now speaking the truth. You have turned against me. During the last year it is easy to see that you have... you have...have... *(looks off)*
(PROMPTER TAKES OFF HIS COAT AND PUTS ON ANOTHER)
you have changed

HE: You are mistaken, Ethel - you know what you are saying is... is... is...
(looks off)
(PROMPTER POINTS TO HIS LEFT HAND AS HE WAVES IT IN THE AIR)
is not right.

SHE: But my memory serves me well. Shall I ever forget that night at the... at the ...
(PROMPTER BOUNCES A RUBBER BALL, AND THEN HOLDS IT UP)
at the ball.

HE: Yes, that was a night I remember well. Shall I ever forget that night of joy. It all comes back to me now and how my heart... how my heart... yes my heart... (looks off)
(PROMPTER PULLS AT HIS TROUSERS)

HE: (looks puzzled) yes how my heart... my heart ... (shrugs his shoulders)
(PROMPTER SCRATCHES HIS HEAD, THEN SHAKES IT, TURNS HIS BACK ON THE AUDIENCE AND PRODUCES A PAIR OF BOXER SHORTS)
how my heart pants.

HE: But words are useless. All this talk is but... but a...
(PROMPTER ENCIRCLES HIS WAIST WITH HAND THEN POINTS TO HIS WATCH)
a waste of time.

SHE: So you admit our marriage is a failure.

HE: Err ... Err...
(PROMPTER TAKES HIS COAT AND DOES ACTION AS IF USING A NEEDLE AND THREAD)
so it seems.

SHE: But you did not think so once, for your own words were that our marriage would be a ... would be a perfect ...
(PROMPTER LIGHTS A MATCH)
match.

HE: True. All our friends considered we were a ... were a happy...
(PROMPTER HOLDS UP A PEAR)
we were a happy pair.

SHE: But that was before we were wed.

HE: It broke my mothers heart when I left home, for I was her... I was her...
(*PROMPTER GETS A TEDDY BEAR AND GIVES IT A CUDDLE*)
cuddly boy and her only... her only... means...
(*PROMPTER HOLDS UP A BRA OR PAIR OF BRACES*)
and her only means of support. It was then that I gave up my old friend
Jim.

SHE: Jim? Jim who?

HE: Jim , ah Jimmmmmm...
(*PROMPTER HOLDS UP OR PRETENDS TO DO EXERCISE AS
THOUGH USING DUMBBELLS*)
Jim Armstrong.

SHE: And we were married in the following... The following...
(*PROMPTER MARCHES UP AND DOWN*)
the following March.

HE: I remember it as though it were but yesterday.

SHE: They were the happiest days in my life, but then my love was... was ...
my love was ...
(*PROMPTER STAGGERS ABOUT AS THOUGH BLIND*)
love was blind.

HE: But tell me, Ethel, have there been other ... other... other...
(*PROMPTER SCRATCHES HIS HEAD THEN GOES OFF STAGE
ONLY TO RETURN WITH A SHOP DUMMY UNDER HIS ARM,
STANDING PROUDLY BESIDE IT*)
other men in your life?

SHE: Oh!! John, how could you suggest such a thing!! You know well that I
have been at home minding the... minding... minding the...
(*PROMPTER HOLDS UP A DOLL*)
minding the baby.

PRODUCER: Cut, cut, cut. That was awful...