

SCENE 5: LET'S HOPE SHE WILL STAY - Parlor

(WINIFRED is at the study door. GEORGE is working at his desk. The CHILDREN and MARY take off their outdoor clothes.)

WINIFRED

Jane and Michael want to say goodnight.

GEORGE

Tell them you've given me the message.

WINIFRED

George, please...

(GEORGE reluctantly comes out into the hall.)

JANE

Oh, Daddy! We've had a fantastic day! We sang with a busker, danced with a statue, and met Queen Victoria! You wouldn't have approved but—

GEORGE

If you know that, then why did you do it?

MICHAEL

Daddy, could I have a kite? A proper one?

GEORGE

Could you fly it?

MICHAEL

You could always teach me.

GEORGE

When would I have the time to do that?

(MICHAEL accepts this with a sad nod. He's used to it.)

JANE

Daddy, who was the father of Neleus?

GEORGE

Would you please let me get on! Goodnight!

(As the children go out, GEORGE returns to the study and takes up his pen with a sigh.)

WINIFRED

Poor Michael. All he cares about is flying kites, and his beloved astronomy of course.

GEORGE

I used to love astronomy at his age. My nanny, Miss Andrew, soon beat it out of me.

WINIFRED

I suppose we do need a nanny, George. It is out of the question to do without one?

GEORGE

Don't be absurd! Of course we need a nanny! All the best people have nannies! So the wives can do charity work and entertain. Which reminds me, how is your tea party coming on?

WINIFRED

I'm not sure. It seems so odd to send out invitations to people I hardly know.

GEORGE

But they're people you should know. Remember: "By your friends shall ye be judged."

WINIFRED

But that's the point. They're not my friends... Actually, I heard today from Clemmie Bunting. She's rehearsing a new play at the moment and I thought I might ask her—

GEORGE

How many times must I tell you? I wish you to sever all connection with that part of your life.

WINIFRED

George, I was an actress. Lots of people might find that interesting... though you always talk as if I should be ashamed of it.

GEORGE

Well, it's not exactly something to be proud of!

(GEORGE has hurt WINIFRED's feelings, which was not his intention.)

Winifred. Dearest. I'm only thinking of you. I want people to admire you, to respect you.

WINIFRED

I know, George. But sometimes it's hard—

GEORGE

It is not hard. It's your job, to be Mrs. Banks.

WINIFRED

And what is your job?

GEORGE

To pay for everything.

(GEORGE turns his attention to the desk again. WINIFRED leans in, startling him.)