

LILY DALE

a child, if she wanted to.

LILY DALE: My God Almighty, Will!! *(She goes to couch, begins to cry again.)* I wish you wouldn't tell me things like that. God knows what kind of terrible dreams I'll start having now.

WILL: Honey, I only told you so you could understand that married people don't always have to have children if they don't want to. *(He sits with her.)*

LILY DALE: I don't want to, I mean, I want to, but I'm scared to.

WILL: Then we'll never have them.

LILY DALE: Do you promise?

WILL: I promise. Does that make you happy?

LILY DALE: Yes, it does. It certainly does. *(She hugs him.)* You are so sweet. You are the sweetest person in this whole world.

WILL: *(Returning hug.)* You're mighty sweet yourself. *(They hug for a few moments. Lily giggles as Will puts his hand on her leg. She pushes it away. More hugs and giggles.)*

LOVERS (WINNERS)

by Brian Friel

Joe (17) - Maggie (17)

The Play: *Lovers* consists of two one-act plays: *Winners* and *Losers*. *Winners* is about a young Irish couple on an afternoon just before final examinations. Joe is trying to study, but Maggie keeps distracting him, and their talk soon turns to the future and their imminent marriage. Maggie is pregnant, perhaps only a month. Two rather dispassionate narrators sit at the side of the stage and offer commentary on the lives of the lovers. Before long it becomes clear that the couple will be killed in an accident by the end of the day. Yet the couple are "winners," for we learn much about life and love through them. *Losers*, the companion piece, is about a pair of much older lovers.

The Scene: Joe has been studying for his final examinations while he waits for his girlfriend, Maggie. Joe is an excellent student although not brilliant; he is hard working and industrious. Maggie, while intelligent, is no scholar; she is scattered. They are in love and are to be married in two weeks' time.

Special Note: Focus attention on developing the character relationship rather than trying to master an Irish dialect, which is not necessary to the scene.

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(JOE glances up from his work and scans the land below him. No sign of MAGGIE. He returns to his book. Now MAGGIE creeps up behind him and pounces on his back, trying to push him to the edge of the hill so that he will roll down. They wrestle for a few seconds.)

JOE: Come on! Cut it out, will you! That'll do!

MAG: Ha! You leaped like a rabbit!

JOE: I was looking for you. Where were you?

MAG: Waiting for you. You're late.

JOE: I was here at ten exactly.

MAG: I've been here for at least half an hour.

(She throws herself on the ground in exaggerated exhaustion, produces cigarettes, and begins talking. During most of this episode JOE is studying, or trying to study. But occasionally he tunes in to her prattle. By throwing in an occasional word he gives her the impression he is conversing with her.)

JOE: Did you walk it?

MAG: The bike's lying at the foot of the hill.

JOE: I didn't see it.

MAG: Sure you're half blind! God, my tongue's hanging out for a reek after that! *(Inhales and exhales with satisfaction.)* Aaaaah, bliss!

Sister Pascal says: You may search the lists of the canonized but you will search in vain for the saint that smoked. Maybe you'll be a saint, Joe.

JOE: Let's get started.

MAG: I read in a book that there are one million two hundred thousand nuns in the world. Isn't that fierce? Imagine if they were all gathered in one place—on an island, say—and the Chinese navy was let loose at them—cripes, you'd hear the squeals in Tobermore! I have a wicked mind, too. D'you ever think things like that, Joe? I'm sure you don't. I think that women have far more corrupt minds than men, but I think that men are more easily corrupted than women.

JOE: We'll get a couple of hours done before we eat.

MAG: *(With excessive disgust)* Food!—I don't care if I never see another bite ever again. My God, I thought I was going to vomit my guts out this morning! And this could keep up for the next seven

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months, according to Doctor Watson. The only consolation is that you're all right. It would be wild altogether if you were at it too. Sympathetic sickness, they call it. But it's only husbands get it. Maybe you'll get it this day three weeks—the minute we get married—God wouldn't that be a scream! D'you know what Joan O'Hara told me? That all the time her mother was expecting Oliver Plunket, her father never lifted his head out of the kitchen sink. Isn't it crazy! And for the last three days he lay squealing on the floor like a stuck pig and her mother had to get the police for him in the end. I love this view of Ballymore: the town and the fields and the lake; and the people. When I'm up here and look down on them, I want to run down and hug them all and kiss them. But then when I'm down among them I feel like doing that *(she cocks a snook into JOE'S face)* into their faces. I bet you that's how God feels at times, too. Wouldn't you think so?

JOE: I don't know how God feels.

MAG: Why not?

JOE: Because I'm not God.

MAG: Oh, you're so clever! Well, I'll tell you something: there are occasions in my life when I know how God feels.

JOE: Good for you.

MAG: And one of those occasions is now. *(Puffing her cigarette regally.)* At this moment God feels...expansive...and beneficent...and philanthropy.

JOE: Philanthropic.

MAG: *(After momentary setback)* And we will not be put into bad humor by grubby little pedants.

JOE: Look, Mag: we came up here to study. What are you going to do first?

MAG: French. And then maths. And then Spanish. And then English language and literature. And after lunch geography and the history of the world. I have planned a program for myself. The important thing about revising for an examination is to have a method. What are you starting with?

JOE: Maths.

MAG: Then what?

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JOE: That's all.
 MAG: Only maths?
 JOE: Huh-huh.
(She considers this absurd idea for a second. Then, because JOE is wiser in these things than she, she readily agrees with him.)
 MAG: Then that's what I'll do too. *(Really worried)* My God, if the volume of a cone doesn't come up, I'm scootrified! Not that I care—I can afford to go down in one subject. *(Pause.)* Joe...
 JOE: What?
 MAG: What's the *real* difference between language and literature?
 JOE: You're not serious, Maggie?!
 MAG: Don't—don't—don't tell me... I remember now... One is talking and the other is...books!
 JOE: Talking...?
 MAG: That's it.
 JOE: That's no definition! Language is—
 MAG: Don't say another word. I have it in my head. But if you start lecturing, I'll lose it again. I have my own way of remembering things. Joe, last night again Papa asked me to let him get the flat painted for us before we move in.
 JOE: *(Doggedly)* I said I'll paint the flat.
 MAG: That's what I told him. And I was thinking, Joe...
 JOE: What?
 MAG: If we put a lace curtain across the kitchen window, we wouldn't actually *see* down into the slaughterhouse yard.
 JOE: And if we wore earplugs all the time, we wouldn't actually *hear* the mooing and the shooting!
 MAG: *(Softly to herself)* And even if a curtain did make the room darker, it'll still be lovely.
 JOE: I signed the lease yesterday evening.
 MAG: *(Absolutely thrilled)* It's ours now? We own it?
 JOE: Old Kerrigan was so busy working he wouldn't take time off to go into the office; so we put the document on the back of a cow that was about to be shot and that's where we signed it. Cockeyed old miser!

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MAG: He's not!
 JOE: What?
 MAG: Cockeyed.
 JOE: I'm telling you. And crazy, too. In a big rubber apron and him dripping with blood. And cows and sheep and bullocks dropping dead all around him.
 MAG: Oh God, my stomach!
(JOE realizes that his tale is successful. He gets up on his feet to enact the scene. MAG listens with delight and soon gets drawn into the pantomime.)
 JOE: "Drive them up there! Another beast. Come on! Come on! I haven't all day. And what's bothering you, young Brennan? Steady, there! Steady! Bang! Bang! Drag it away! Slit its throat! Slice it open! Skin it!"
 MAG: Stop—stop!
 JOE: "Another beast! Get a move on! What am I paying you fellas for?" You told me to call about the flat, Mr. Kerrigan. "Steady—bang! Bang! Damn it, I nearly missed—bang!—that's it. Drag him off. What are you saying, young Brennan? The lease? Oh, the lease! Oh, aye. Here we are." *(JOE produces an imaginary document from his hip pocket.)* "Best flat in town. Hell, it's all blood now." *(JOE wipes the imaginary document on his leg.)* "Come on! Another animal! There's a fine beast for you, young Brennan! Look at those shanks! Bang! Bang! Never knew what hit him! I sign here, son, don't I?" *(JOE pretends to write; but the pen does not work and he flings it away.)* "Hell, that doesn't write."
 MAG: Bang! Bang!
 JOE: "Keep behind me, young Brennan. This is a dangerous job."
 MAG: Let's sign it in blood, young Brennan.
 JOE: "Finest view in town. And the noise down here's great company. Bang! Bang!"
 MAG: Like living in Dead Man's Creek.
 JOE: There's a bullock that looks like the president of Saint Kevin's.
 Bang! Bang!
 MAG: A sheep the image of Sister Paul. Bang! Bang!

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JOE: Drag 'em away!
 MAG: Slice 'em open.
 JOE: Joan O'Hara's white poodle, Tweeny.
 MAG: Bang! And Philip Moran's mother.
 JOE: Bang! Bang! Doctor Watson.
 MAG: A friend. Pass, friend, pass.
 JOE: Skinny Skeeahan, the solicitor.
 MAG: Bang-bang-bang-bang! Look—reverend mother!
 JOE: Where?
 MAG: To the right—behind the rocks!
 JOE: *(Calling sweetly)* Mother Dolores.
 MAG: *(Answering sweetly)* Yes, Joseph?
 JOE: *(Viciously)* Bang-bang-bang!
(MAG grabs her stomach and falls slowly.)
 MAG: Into thy hands, O Lord—
 JOE: Bang!
(The final bullet enters her shoulder.)
 MAG: O shite—!
(MAG rolls on the ground, helpless with laughter.)
 JOE: The town clerk—bang! All the teacher—bang!
 MAG: The church choir—
 JOE: Bang! Everyone that lives along snobby, snotty Melville Road—bang-bang-bang-bang-bang!
 MAG: A holy-cost, by God.
(JOE listens attentively. Silence.)
 JOE: Everything's quiet. Now we'll have peace to study. Back to the books.
 MAG: I'm sore all over. *(Searching)* Give us a fag quick.
 JOE: *(Bashfully)* I'm afraid—I—sort of—sort of lost my head there, ma'am.
 MAG: Does your mother know you act the clown like that?
 JOE: Does your father know you smoke? Look at the time it is! I came here to work.
(He goes back to his books. He is immediately immersed.)
 MAG: Joe...

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JOE: What?
 MAG: The flat's ours now?
 JOE: Isn't that what I'm telling you.
 MAG: You're sure you wouldn't like the top floor in our house?
 JOE: Positive.
 MAG: *(After a moment's hesitation)* So am I. I just wanted to know if you were, too.
 JOE: Goodbye.
 MAG: It's only that Papa'll be lonely without me. For his sake, really. But he'll get over that. And it's just that this is the first time he'll ever have been separated from me, even for a night. But he'll get over it. All parents have to face it sooner or later. *(Happily)* Besides, I can wheel the pram over every afternoon. *(She looks at JOE, lost in his books: and again she has the momentary dread of the exam.)* I'm like you, Joe. When I concentrate, you could yell at me and I wouldn't hear you.
(She opens a book—almost at random. Looks at the sky.)
 It's going to be very warm...
(She takes off her school blazer, rolls up the sleeves of her blouse, and stretches out under the sun.)
 If we didn't have to work, we could sun-bathe.
(Pause)
 MAG: That Easter we were in Florence, I kept thinking about your father and how good the sun there would have been for his asthma. I read in a book that asthma is purely psychosomatic and that a man with asthma has a mother-fixation. Crazy the things they dig up too. I'm glad Papa's not a doctor or he'd be watching me for symptoms all the time. Your parents are such wonderful people, Joe. I'm crazy about them. And I'm going to treat my own parents with...with a certain dignity. My God, the things they said to me—they seared my soul forever—
(And without drawing a breath she hums a few bars of a popular song. She has a book before her eyes—but her eyes are closed.)