

Audition Extract 4. BERTIE & LIONEL

LIONEL'S CONSULTING ROOM

*LIONEL extends his head in welcome. Instead of shaking it, BERTIE hands him his hat.*

BERTIE Please . . . not too close. Five paces is the rule.

LIONEL Make yourself comfortable.

*(BERTIE perches uneasily on the edge of an armchair. In LOGUE's office, BERTIE's stammer returns as it always does with everyone except ELIZABETH.)*

Your wife changed her mind. Why?

BERTIE Can't discuss that.

LIONEL What can we discuss?

BERTIE When speaking with a Royal, the Royal chooses the topic and begins the conversion.

LIONEL You're joking.

BERTIE I admit if one waits for me to start a conversation one can wait rather a long time.

*(Silence. They stare at each other.)*

You call this making me comfortable? Aren't you interested in treating me?

LIONEL Only if you're interested in being treated.

*(More silence.)*

Any idea what you're letting yourself in for?

BERTIE A great deal of rudeness it would appear, Doctor Logue.

LIONEL Lionel.

BERTIE I prefer Doctor.

LIONEL I prefer Lionel. My family calls me far worse. What shall I call you?

BERTIE Your Royal Highness.

LIONEL Oh please.

BERTIE Sir, after that.

LIONEL Much more informal.

BERTIE Prince Albert Fredrick Arthur George? I've lots of names to choose from.

LIONEL How about Bertie?

BERTIE (*flushes*) Only my family uses that.

LIONEL That's what I'll call you then. We must be true equals.

BERTIE If we were equals I wouldn't be here, I'd be at home with my family and no one would give a damn.

(*BERTIE starts to light a cigarette from a silver case.*)

LIONEL Mustn't do that!

(*BERTIE gives him an astonished look.*)

Sucking smoke into your lungs will kill you.

BERTIE My physicians say it relaxes the throat.

LIONEL They're idiots.

BERTIE They've and been knighted.

LIONEL Makes it official then. My castle, my rules. What's your earliest memory?

BERTIE Beg your pardon?

LIONEL First recollection?

BERTIE (*stammer growing in intensity*) I'm not here to discuss personal matters.

LIONEL Why are you here then?

BERTIE (*exploding*) Because I bloody well stammer!

LIONEL Temper.

BERTIE One of my many faults.

LIONEL Well then, do you stammer when you think?

BERTIE Don't be ridiculous.

LIONEL Do you stammer when you talk to yourself?

BERTIE I don't talk to myself!

LIONEL Everyone natters to themselves once in a while, Bertie.

BERTIE Stop calling me that!

LIONEL I won't call you anything else.

BERTIE Then we won't speak!