

EDWARD: The point is that music is all around us. All you have to do is write it down.

ALICE: If it were that easy, we'd all be writing music.

EDWARD: It is easy. It's in the air.

WINDFLOWER: Like birdsong?

EDWARD: Yes.

WINDFLOWER: Or the ripple of water?

EDWARD: Yes.

WINDFLOWER: Or the wind in the trees?

EDWARD: Anything. Blasting in a quarry, come to that.

ALICE: No wonder modern music's so ugly.

EDWARD: Music isn't just sounds, Al. It's tone, rhythm and pattern. Colour. If a painter looks about him, he sees pictures. The urchin on the street corner. The train rushing over a bridge. Well, a composer sees pictures too. He doesn't just hear birdsong or plashing water; he sees the flight of the bird, soaring, dipping, wheeling and diving; the translucency of the water; the droplets caught in the sun; the shape of the waves breaking on the shore, their colour, their regularity, every seventh wave higher than the others. Or the lie of the furrows on a hilly field, leading down to a broad, placid, meandering river. And as for trees – (to WINDFLOWER) you've only to look out there. Well? What do you see?

ALICE: The London basin. Didn't you know I wrote about geology as well?

WINDFLOWER: No.

ALICE: It's the study of rocks.

WINDFLOWER: I know what it is, darling. I'm surprised, that's all.

ALICE: Why? Because Edward makes me out to be some kind of simpleton? The world beneath our feet has always intrigued me as much as the world of feeling. Perhaps because when I was a girl, I could look out of my window and see a stretch of scenery to rival any in England. Grassy slopes, stands of trees, old timbered farmhouses, smoke from cottages hidden in coppices. And Edward's musical Malverns. But when I looked at them, I didn't see tunes, I saw words. Or rather, they made me want to find the words to describe them concisely, accurately. In those days we valued words. We knew our grammar and our syntax, and we expected our readers to be able to follow what we wrote. Now no one has any stamina, and everything has to be pithy sayings.

WINDFLOWER: I hope you didn't give up words on Edward's account.

ALICE: Have you never noticed that if you give up a small thing, you gain a larger in return?

WINDFLOWER: No.

EDWARD: How do you know about Dora Penny?

WINDFLOWER: Alice mentioned her.

EDWARD: Alice mentions all sorts of things.

WINDFLOWER: Was Dora one of my predecessors on this wobbly pedestal?

EDWARD: If she was, it was a much shorter pedestal.

WINDFLOWER: Alice said she danced.

EDWARD: She did. And when she'd done with dancing, she'd sit with her hands round her knees and listen. And turn pages without my having to ask. And laugh when I laughed, and be silent when I was silent.

WINDFLOWER: Someone else you should have married.

EDWARD: Oh! She was a child. A breath of woodland air. A sprite.

WINDFLOWER: How many more of your Variations were you in love with?

EDWARD: Well, in one of them, I'll confess I was thinking of two women at once. That's why I wrote the three dots.

WINDFLOWER: Three women called Dot?

EDWARD: Two into three won't go.

ALICE: And now?

EDWARD: Now I'm bunkered. Bunkered at the diminished seventh. Hatless in the blazing sun.

ALICE: I'm sorry.

EDWARD: Sorry? You're sorry?

ALICE: Yes.

EDWARD: I'm sorry. Played three. Won one, drawn one, lost one. Not a brilliant record, even for a provincial. Especially when I shall be best remembered for Land of Old and Poorly.

ALICE: No, Eddoo. You'll be remembered for the rhythms of the land and the wind in the trees.

EDWARD: Only by the trees.

ALICE: And the reeds by the Severn and the Teme.

EDWARD: I'll take my stick to them if they forget.

ALICE: And what shall I be remembered for?

EDWARD: You won't be. Unless I am.

ALICE: Then we shall both die miserable.

EDWARD: And what happens in the meantime, before that blessed reunion?

ALICE: You'd better ask your muse.

EDWARD: Hallo, Muse. Can you toss me down another string quartet? See? Not a quaver.