

NELL. Johnny?

DRYDEN. My cousin. Everyone's always 'Jonathan this, Jonathan that – isn't Jonathan dazzling.'

NELL. He's a playwright?

DRYDEN. He wants to be. Though his work's quite unstageable. He's got this idea about a shipwrecked man who gets marooned in a land full of tiny people. How do you put that on stage?

NELL. He should write it as a book instead.

DRYDEN. Good idea!

NELL. Why do you fret about what folk think anyway? You don't get nervous, do you?

DRYDEN. No. *(Beat.)* Yes! Yes I do actually. I get this ringing in my ears, it's damnable. I'm not like you.

NELL. I haven't been on yet.

DRYDEN. But you're not afraid. And you have a way, when we're watching you.

ROSE. She's always had that.

DRYDEN. I, on the other hand, have to wrench this out like a rotten tooth, a pussing carbuncle, yeurch.

*He holds the scrunpled piece of paper at arm's length.*

NELL. What's wrong with it?

DRYDEN. It's predictable! Boy meets girl, girl resists, boy persuades her. Kiss. Marriage. Happy ending.

NANCY. Read it to us.

DRYDEN. Oh, I couldn't.

ROSE. Go on.

DRYDEN. Alright. So – it is night. The air is chilly, stars pepper the sky and, in the park, the masked lady reveals herself as Florimel. *(Playing Celadon, surprised.)* 'Florimel?!' *(In a lady's voice, as Florimel.)* 'At your service. The same kind and coming Florimel you have

described.' *(As Celadon.)* 'Florimel?! Ha! I knew at once that we were good for nothing but each other. Let us be married at once!' *(As Florimel.)* 'Married at once?' *(As Celadon.)* 'By Jove, yes. And do you consent?' *(As Florimel.)* 'Yes!' Then they embrace and... *(From NELL's expression.)* What?

NELL. She says yes? To that?!

DRYDEN. What's wrong with it?

*Pause. The girls erupt into laughter.*

NELL. There's no 'boom!'

DRYDEN. Boom?

NELL. Spark. Gunpowder.

DRYDEN. What are you saying? It lacks fire?

NELL. Yep.

DRYDEN. Not even a flicker? A tiny glow? An ember?

NELL. Nope.

DRYDEN *looks to* NANCY *and* ROSE.

NANCY. Nope.

ROSE. Sorry.

DRYDEN. I knew it, it's just kindling!

NELL. Don't sulk.

DRYDEN. It's just a romance, no one listens anyway –

NELL. So make 'em listen. Grab 'em by the scallies.

DRYDEN. Sorry?

NANCY. And stop apologising.

DRYDEN. Sorry.

NELL. Mr Dryden! Yet again, some gallant falls for a wilting, waifish woman without a bean of personality or a single funny line, but hey, it doesn't matter, cos she's pretty –

DRYDEN. Now wait a minute –