

Form and Concepts

Read the following passage very carefully and then answer the questions that follow it, making certain that your answers are entirely relevant to the extract.

This extract is taken from the play, *The Little Foxes*, written by Lillian Hellman. It was first performed at the National Theatre, New York City in 1939.

Characters:

HORACE GIDDENS - a tall man of about forty-five. His face is tired and ill.

REGINA GIDDENS - wife to Horace, a handsome woman of forty.

ALEXANDRA GIDDENS - the seventeen year old daughter.

BIRDIE HUBBARD - a woman of about forty. She is the sister in law to Regina and aunt to Alexandra.

CAL - a middle-aged servant.

ADDIE - a fifty-five year old maid.

ACT III

The play is set in the living room of the Giddens house, a small town in the deep South, the spring of 1900. The room is good looking, the furniture expensive, but it reflects no particular taste. Everything is of the best and that is all. HORACE has recently returned home from hospital with a heart ailment and REGINA is very angry that HORACE has refused to invest his money into the construction of a cotton mill with her two brothers BEN and OSCAR. It is late afternoon and it is raining. BIRDIE and ALEXANDER have been playing the piano and enjoying it.

ALEXANDRA: Why did you marry Uncle Oscar?

ADDIE: That's no question for you to be asking.

HORACE: Why not? She's heard enough around here to ask anything.

BIRDIE (*Places glass on table.*): I don't know. I thought I liked him. He was so kind to me and I thought it was because he liked me, too. But that wasn't the reason. Ask why he married me! I can tell you that: he's told it me often enough.

ADDIE: Miss Birdie, don't ---

BIRDIE: My family was good and the cotton on Lionnet's field was better. Ben Hubbard wanted the cotton and (*Rises.*) Oscar Hubbard married it for him. He was kind to me then. He hasn't smiled at me since. Everybody knew that's what he married me for. Everybody but me. Stupid, stupid me.

ALEXANDRA (*To HORACE, holding his hand softly.*): I see. Pappa, I mean --- when you feel better couldn't we go away? I mean, by ourselves. Couldn't we find a way to go ---

HORACE: Yes, I know what you mean. We'll try to find a way, I promise you, darling.

ADDIE: Rest a bit, Miss Birdie. You get talking like this you'll get a headache and ---

BIRDIE: I've never had a headache in my life. (*Begins to cry hysterically.*) You know it as well as I do. I never had a headache, Zan. That's a lie that they tell for me. I drink. All by myself, in my own room, by myself, I drink. Then, when they want to hide it, they say, "Birdie's got a headache again ---"

ALEXANDRA (*Comes to her quickly.*): Aunt Birdie. (ADDIE *turns to look at them.*)

BIRDIE (*Turning away.*): Even you won't like me now. You won't like me, anymore.

ALEXANDRA: I love you. I'll always love you.

BIRDIE (*Furiously.*): Well don't. Don't love me. Because in twenty years you'll be just like me. They'll do all the same things to you. (*Begins to laugh, hysterically.*) You know what? In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness. Oh, a little, like today with you all. But never a single, whole day. I say to myself, if only I had one more whole day then --- (*The laugh stops.*) And that's the way you'll be. And you'll trail after them, just like me, hoping they won't be so mean that day or say something to make you feel so bad --- only you'll be worse off because you haven't got my mamma to remember ---

ALEXANDRA: I guess we were all just trying to make a happy day. You know, we sit around and try to pretend we are not here. We make believe we are just by ourselves, someplace else, and it doesn't seem to work. (*Kisses BIRDIE'S hand, which she has been holding.*) Come now, Aunt Birdie, I'll walk you home. You and me. *In the hallway* ALEXANDRA *places a raincoat over BIRDIE'S shoulders. They exit, ADDIE and HORACE are silent.*

ADDIE: Well (*Sighs.*) First time I ever heard Miss Birdie say a word. Maybe it's good for her. I'm just sorry Zan had to hear it. (*Picks up glass from table. HORACE moves his head as if he were uncomfortable.*) You feel bad don't you?

HORACE: So you didn't want Zan to hear? It would be nice to let her stay innocent, like Birdie at her age. Let her listen now. Let her see everything. How else is she going to know that she's got to get away? I'm trying to show her that. I'm trying but I've only got a little time left. She can even hate me when I'm dead, if she'll only learn to fear and hate this.

ADDIE: Mr. Horace ---

HORACE: Pretty soon there'll be nobody to help her but you.

ADDIE: What can I do?

HORACE: Take her away.

ADDIE: How can I do that? Do you think they'd just let me just go away with her ---?

HORACE: I'll fix it so they can't stop you when you're ready to go. You'll go, Addie?

ADDIE: Yes, sir, I promise.

HORACE: I'm going to have Sol Fowler make me a new will. Addie, I'd like to leave you something for yourself. I always wanted to.

ADDIE (*Laughs.*): Don't you do that, Mr Horace. A nigger woman in a white man's will! I'd never get it nohow.

HORACE: I know. But upstairs in the armoire drawer there's seventeen hundred-dollar bills. It's money left from my trip. It's in an envelope with your name. It's for you.

ADDIE: Seventeen hundred-dollar bills! My God, Mr. Horace, I won't know how to count that high. (*Shyly.*) It's mighty kind and good of you. I don't know what to say for thanks ---

Outside there is the sound of voices. ADDIE crosses quickly to HORACE, begins to wheel his wheelchair toward the stairs.

HORACE (*Sharply.*): No, leave me where I am.

ADDIE: But that's Miss Regina coming back.

HORACE (*Nods, looking at door*): Go away, Addie.

ADDIE: Mr Horace. Don't talk no more today. You don't feel well and it won't do no good –

HORACE (*As he hears footsteps in the hall.*): Go on. (*She looks at him for a second, then picks up her sewing from the table and exits as REGINA stands in the hall, shakes her umbrella, takes off her cloak and throws it over the bannister. She stares at HORACE.*)

REGINA (*As she takes off her gloves.*): We had agreed that you were to stay in your part of the house and I in mine. This room is my part of the house. Please don't come down here again.

HORACE: I won't.

REGINA: I'll get Cal to take you upstairs.

HORACE (*Smiles.*): Before you do I want to tell you that after all, we have invested money in Hubbard, Sons and Marshall, Cotton manufacturers.

REGINA (*Stops, turns, stares at him.*): What are you talking about? You haven't seen Ben--- When did you change your mind?

HORACE: I didn't change my mind. I didn't invest the money. (*Smiles at the expression on her face.*) It was invested for me.

REGINA (*Angrily.*): What---?

HORACE: I had eighty thousand dollars' worth of Union Pacific Bonds in that safe deposit box. They are not there now. Go and look. (*As she stares at him, points to the box.*) Go and look, Regina. (*She crosses quickly to the box, opens it.*) Those bonds are negotiable as money. (*She closes box.*)

REGINA (*Turns back to him*): What kind of joke are you playing now? Is this for my benefit?

HORACE: I don't look in that box very often, but three days ago, on Wednesday it was, because I had made a decision ---

REGINA: I want to know what you are talking about.

HORACE (*Sharply.*): Don't interrupt me again. (*Regina stiffens.*) Because I had made a decision, I sent for the box. The bonds were gone. Eighty- eight thousand dollars gone. (*He smiles at her.*)

REGINA (*After a moment's silence*): Do you think I'm crazy enough to believe what you're saying?

HORACE (*Shrugs*): Believe what you like.

REGINA (*Stares at him slowly.*): Where did they go to?

HORACE: They are in Chicago with Mr. Marshall, I should guess.

REGINA: What did they do? Walk to Chicago? Have you really gone crazy?

HORACE: Leo took the bonds.

REGINA (*Turns sharply then speaks softly, without conviction.*): I don't believe it.

HORACE (*Leans forward.*): I wasn't there but I can guess what happened. (*Regina sits.*) This fine gentleman, to whom you are willing to marry your daughter, took the keys and opened the box. You remember that day of the fight, Oscar went to Chicago? Well, he went with my bonds that his son Leo had stolen for him. (*Pleasantly.*) And for Ben of course, too.

REGINA (*Slowly nods.*): When did you find out the bonds were gone?

HORACE: Wednesday night.

REGINA: I thought that's what you said. Why have you waited three days to do anything?
(*Suddenly laughs.*) This will make a fine story.

HORACE (*Nods.*): Couldn't it.

REGINA (*Still laughing, takes off hat.*): A fine story to hold over their heads. How could they be such fools?

HORACE: But I'm not going to hold it over their heads.

REGINA (*The laugh stops.*): What?

HORACE: I'm going to let them keep the bonds --- as a loan from you. An eighty-eight thousand dollar loan; they should be grateful to you. They will be, I think.

REGINA (*Slowly, smiles.*): I see you are punishing me. But, I won't let you punish me. If you won't do anything, I will. Now. (*She starts for the door.*)

HORACE: You won't do anything because you can't. (*Regina stops.*) It won't do you any good to make trouble because I shall simply say that I lent them the bonds.

REGINA (*Slowly.*): You wouldn't do that?

HORACE: Yes. For once in your life I am tying your hands. There is nothing for you to do. (*There is silence. Then she sits down.*)

REGINA: I see. You are going to lend them the bonds and let them keep all the profit they make on them, and there is nothing I can do about it. Is that right?

HORACE: Yes.

REGINA (*Softly.*): Why did you say I was making this gift?

HORACE: I was coming to that. I am going to make a new will, Regina, leaving you eighty-eight thousand dollars in Union Pacific Bonds. The rest will go to Zan. It's true that your brothers have borrowed your share for a little while. After my death I advise you to talk to Ben and Oscar. They won't admit anything and Ben, I think, will be smart enough to see that he's safe. Because I knew about the theft and said nothing. Nor will I say anything as long as I live. Is that clear to you?

REGINA (*Nods, softly, without looking at him.*): You will not say anything as long as you live.

HORACE: That's right. And by that time they will probably have replaced your bonds, and then they'll belong to you and nobody but us will ever know what happened. (*Stops, smiles.*) They'll be around any minute to see what I'm going to do. I took good care to see that word reached Leo. They'll be mighty relieved to know I'm going to do nothing and Ben will think it all a capital joke on you. And that will be the end of that. There's nothing you can do to them, nothing you can do to me.

REGINA: You hate me very much.

HORACE: No.

REGINA: Oh I think you do. Well, we haven't been very good together. Anyway, I don't hate you either. I have only contempt for you. I've always had.

HORACE: From the very start?

REGINA: I think so.

HORACE: I was in love with *you* but why did you marry *me*?

REGINA: I was lonely when I was young.

HORACE: You were lonely?

REGINA: Not the way people usually mean. Lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get. Everything in this house was so busy and there was little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world. Then, and then --- (*Smiles.*) Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar.

HORACE: And you married me?

REGINA: Yes, I thought --- but I was wrong. You were a small town clerk then. You haven't changed.

HORACE (*Nods, smiles.*): And that wasn't what you wanted.

REGINA: No. No, it wasn't what I wanted. It took me a little while to find out I had made a mistake. As for you --- I don't know. It was almost as if I couldn't stand the kind of man you were --- (*Smiles, softly.*) I used to lie there at night, praying you wouldn't come near ---

HORACE: Really, it was as bad as that?

REGINA (*Nods.*): Remember when I went to Doctor Sloan and I told you he said there was something the matter with me and that you shouldn't touch me anymore/

HORACE: I remember.

REGINA: But you believed it? I couldn't understand that. I couldn't understand that anybody could be such a soft fool. That was when I began to despise you.

HORACE (*Puts his hand to his throat, glances around at a bottle of medicine on the table, then to her.*): Why didn't you leave me?

REGINA: I told you I married you *for* something. It turned out it was only for this. (*Carefully.*) This wasn't what I wanted, but it was something. I never thought about it much, but if I had, (*HORACE puts his hand to his throat.*) I'd have known that you would get heart trouble so early and so bad. I'm lucky, Horace. I've always been lucky. (*HORACE turns slowly to medicine.*) I'll be lucky again.

HORACE looks at her. Then he puts his hand to his throat. Because he cannot reach the bottle he moves the wheelchair closer. He reaches for medicine, takes out cork, picks up spoon, tries to pour some in the spoon, the bottle slips out of his shaking fingers, and crashes on the table. He draws his breath, gasps.

HORACE: Please tell Addie --- the other bottle is upstairs. (*She has not moved. She does not move now. He stares at her. Then suddenly as if he understands, he raises his voice. It is a panic-stricken whisper, too small to be heard outside the room.*) Addie! Addie! Come --- (*Stops as he hears the softness of his voice. He makes a sudden, furious spring from the wheelchair to the stairs, taking the first few steps as if he were a desperate runner. On the fourth step he slips, gasps, grasps the rail, makes a great effort to reach the landing, he is on his knees. His knees give way, he falls on the landing, out of view. REGINA has not turned during his climb up the stairs. Now she waits a second. Then she goes below the landing and speaks up.*)

REGINA: Horace. (*When there is no answer, she turns, crosses to the door, opens it and calls.*) Addie! Cal! Come in here. (*Starts up the steps, when she is on the first step, ADDIE appears, followed by CAL. Both run toward the stairs.*) He's had an attack. Come up here. (*They run up steps quickly, passing REGINA.*)

CAL: My God! Mr Horace --

SECTION A: UNSEEN PASSAGE

Answer Question 1 (a) **and** 1 (b) **or** 1 (c)

- 1 (a) As a director, provide brief notes for your actors on the significant ideas that you would want to communicate to the audience? [10]

Answer **one** of the following questions:

- (b) How might a design team ensure that the set, costume and props are as appropriate and effective as possible? [15]

OR

- (c) What performance skills do you think are necessary to make the portrayal of REGINA or HORACE dramatically effective? [15]

SECTION C: JACOBAN COMEDY

- 2 “A present day audience would find it difficult to be entertained by watching a Jacobean Comedy.” How far do you agree with this viewpoint and use specific examples from any of the Jacobean Comedy texts that you have studied to support your points. [25]

SECTION D: AMERICAN DRAMA

- 3 “Woman represents human dignity and values: cooperative, moral, humane behaviour as opposed to lawless assertion of self over all others through assumed superiority.” (A critic’s view of Death of a Salesman)

Discuss the presentation of female roles in the American Drama you have studied. Refer closely to the performance detail of particular incidents or episodes to support your answer. [25]

END OF PAPER