

**Note on characters \***

ISABELLA BIRD (1831-1904) lived in Edinburgh, travelled extensively between the ages of 40 and 70.

LADY NIJO (b.1258) Japanese, was an Emperor's courtesan and later a Buddhist nun who travelled on foot through Japan.

DULL GRET is the subject of the Brueghel painting, Dulle Griet, in which a woman in an apron and armour leads a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils.

POPE JOAN, disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope between 854-856. }

PATIENT GRISELDA is the obedient wife whose story is told by Chaucer in *The Clerk's Tale of The Canterbury Tales*.

**Note on layout**

A speech usually follows the one immediately before it BUT:

1: when one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked / .

eg. ISABELLA: This is the Emperor of Japan? / I once met the Emperor of Morocco.

NIJO: In fact he was the ex-Emperor.

2: a character sometimes continues speaking right through another's speech:

eg. ISABELLA: When I was forty I thought my life was over. /

Oh I was pitiful. I was

NIJO: I didn't say I felt it for twenty years. Not every minute.

ISABELLA: sent on a cruise for my health and I felt even worse. Pains in my bones, pins and needles... etc.

3: sometimes a speech follows on from a speech earlier than the one immediately before it, and continuity is marked \*.  
eg. GRISELDA: I'd seen him riding by, we all had. And he'd seen me in the fields with the sheep\*.

ISABELLA: I would have been well suited to minding sheep.

NIJO: And Mr Nugent riding by.

ISABELLA: Of course not, NiJo, I mean a healthy life in the open air.

JOAN: \*He just rode up while you were minding the sheep and asked you to marry him?

where 'in the fields with the sheep' is the cue to both 'I would have been' and 'He just rode up'.

*Top Girls* was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London on 28 August 1982 with the following cast:

MARLENE	Gwen Taylor
ISABELLA BIRD	} Deborah Findlay
JOYCE	
MRS KIDD	
LADY NIJO	} Lindsay Duncan
WIN	
DULL GRET	} Carole Hayman
ANGIE	
POPE JOAN	} Selina Cadell
LOUISE	
PATIENT GRISELDA	} Lesley Manville
NELL	
JEANINE	
WAITRESS	} Lou Wakefield
KIT	
SHONA	

*Directed by* Max Stafford Clark

*Designed by* Peter Hartwell

This production transferred to Joe Papp's Public Theatre, New York, later the same year, and returned to the Royal Court early in 1983.

ACT ONE	Restaurant. Saturday night.
ACT TWO	'Top Girls' Employment agency. Monday morning.
Scene One:	Joyce's back yard. Sunday afternoon.
Scene Two:	Employment agency. Monday morning.
Scene Three:	Joyce's kitchen. Sunday evening, a year earlier.
ACT THREE	

back on its feet and whoosh. She's a tough lady, Maggie. I'd give her a job. / She just needs to hang in there. This country

JOYCE. You voted for them, did you?

MARLENE. needs to stop whining. / Monetarism is not stupid.

JOYCE. Drink your tea and shut up, pet.

MARLENE. It takes time, determination. No more slop. / And

JOYCE. Well I think they're filthy bastards.

MARLENE. who's got to drive it on? First woman prime

minister. Terrifico. Aces. Right on. / You must admit.

Certainly gets my vote.

JOYCE. What good's first woman if it's her? I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if he was a woman. Ms Hitler. Got a lot done, Hitlerina. / Great adventures.

MARLENE. Bosses still walking on the workers' faces? Still Dadda's little parrot? Haven't you learned to think for yourself?

I believe in the individual. Look at me.

JOYCE. I am looking at you.

MARLENE. Come on, Joyce, we're not going to quarrel over politics.

JOYCE. We are though.

MARLENE. Forget I mentioned it. Not a word about the slimy unions will cross my lips.

*Pause.*

JOYCE. You say Mother had a wasted life!

MARLENE. Yes I do. Married to that bastard.

JOYCE. What sort of life did he have? / Working in the fields like

MARLENE. Violent life?

JOYCE. an animal. / Why wouldn't he want a drink?

MARLENE. Come off it.

JOYCE. You want a drink. He couldn't afford whisky.

MARLENE. I don't want to talk about him.

JOYCE. You started, I was talking about her. She had a rotten life because she had nothing. She went hungry.

MARLENE. She was hungry because he drank the money. / He used to hit her.

JOYCE. It's not all down to him. / Their lives were rubbish. They

MARLENE. She didn't hit him.

JOYCE. were treated like rubbish. He's dead and she'll die soon and what sort of life / did they have?

MARLENE. I saw him one night. I came down.

JOYCE. Do you think I didn't? / They didn't get to America and

MARLENE. I still have dreams.

JOYCE. drive across it in a fast car. / Bad nights, they had bad days.

MARLENE. America, America, you're jealous. / I had to get out,

JOYCE. Jealous?

MARLENE. I knew when I was thirteen, out of their house, out of them, never let that happen to me, / never let him, make my own way, out.

JOYCE. Jealous of what you've done, you're ashamed of me if I came to your office, your smart friends, wouldn't you, I'm ashamed of you, think of nothing but yourself, you've got on, nothing's changed for most people / has it?

MARLENE. I hate the working class / which is what you're going

JOYCE. Yes you do.

MARLENE. to go on about now, it doesn't exist any more, it means lazy and stupid. / I don't like the way they talk. I don't

JOYCE. Come on, now we're getting it.

MARLENE. like beer guts and football vomit and saucy tits / and brothers and sisters —

JOYCE. I spit when I see a Rolls Royce, scratch it with my ring / Mercedes it was.

MARLENE. Oh very mature —

JOYCE. I hate the cows I work for / and their dirty dishes with blanquette of fucking veau.

MARLENE. and I will not be pulled down to their level by a flying picket and I won't be sent to Siberia / or a loony bin

JOYCE. No, you'll be on a yacht, you'll be head of Coca-Cola and you wait, the eighties is going to be stupendous all right because we'll get you lot off our backs —

MARLENE. just because I'm original. And I support Reagan even if he is a lousy movie star because the reds are swarming up his map and I want to be free in a free world —

JOYCE. What? / What?

MARLENE. I know what I mean / by that — not shut up here.

JOYCE. So don't be round here when it happens because if someone's kicking you I'll just laugh.

*Silence.*

MARLENE. I don't mean anything personal. I don't believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes.

JOYCE. And if they haven't?

MARLENE. If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?

JOYCE. What about Angie?

MARLENE. What about Angie?

JOYCE. She's stupid, lazy and frightened, so what about her?

MARLENE. You run her down too much. She'll be all right.

JOYCE. I don't expect so, no. I expect her children will say what a wasted life she had. If she has children. Because nothing's changed and it won't with them in.

MARLENE. Them, them. / Us and them?

JOYCE. And you're one of them.

MARLENE. And you're us, wonderful us, and Angie's us / and Mum and Dad's us.

JOYCE. Yes, that's right, and you're them.

MARLENE. Come on, Joyce, what a night. You've got what it takes.

JOYCE. I know I have.

MARLENE. I didn't really mean all that.

JOYCE. I did.

MARLENE. But we're friends anyway.

JOYCE. I don't think so, no.

MARLENE. Well it's lovely to be out in the country. I really must make the effort to come more often.

I want to go to sleep.

I want to go to sleep.

JOYCE *gets blankets for the sofa.*

JOYCE. Goodnight then. I hope you'll be warm enough.

MARLENE. Goodnight. Joyce —

JOYCE. No, pet. Sorry.

JOYCE *goes.*

MARLENE *sits wrapped in a blanket and has another drink.*

ANGIE *comes in.*

ANGIE. Mum?

MARLENE. Angie? What's the matter?

ANGIE. Mum?

MARLENE. No, she's gone to bed. It's Auntie Marlene.

ANGIE. Frightening.

MARLENE. Did you have a bad dream? What happened in it?

Well you're awake now, aren't you pet?

ANGIE. Frightening.