THE CONSTANT WIFE

by W. Somerset Maugham

AUDITION SIDE — CONSTANCE & BARBARA

Act I

BARBARA. Constance, I've got a suggestion to make to you. You know that my business has been growing by leaps and bounds and I simply cannot get along alone any more. I was wondering if you'd like to come in with me.

CONSTANCE. Oh, my dear, I'm not a business woman.

BARBARA. You've got marvellous taste and you have ideas. You could do all the decorating and I'd confine myself to buying and selling furniture.

CONSTANCE. But, I've got no capital.

BARBARA. I've got all the capital I want. I must have help and I know no-one more suitable than you. We'd go fifty-fifty and I think I can promise that you'd make a thousand to fifteen hundred a year.

CONSTANCE. I've been an idle woman so long. I think I'd find it dreadfully hard to work eight hours a day.

BARBARA. Won't you think it over? It's very interesting, you know. You're naturally energetic. Don't you get bored with doing nothing all the time?

CONSTANCE. I don't think John would like it. After all, it would look as though he couldn't afford to support me.

BARBARA. Oh, but nowadays plenty of women have careers, just as men do.

CONSTANCE. I think my career is looking after John—running his house for him, and making him happy and comfortable.

BARBARA. Don't you think it rather a mistake to put all your eggs in one basket?

Mrs. Culver rises and moves away. Barbara glances at her and then turns again to Constance.

BARBARA. Independence is a very good thing, and a woman who stands on her own feet can look to the future with a good deal of confidence.

CONSTANCE. It's sweet of you, but so long as John and I are happy together I think I should be foolish to do anything to vex him.

BARBARA. Well, I want you to know that if you change your mind the job is open to you.

CONSTANCE. Don't think me horrid if I say I hope I shall never need to accept it.

BARBARA. Of course not. But you've only to say the word. Good-bye, darling.

CONSTANCE. Good-bye, dear.