# THE CONSTANT WIFE

by W. Somerset Maugham

**AUDITION SIDE — JOHN & MARIE-LOUISE**

***Act I***

**MARIE-LOUISE.** What fools men are. They never will see that it's the small things that matter. I tell you I'm frightened out of my wits.

**JOHN.** You know there's a devil of a distance between suspicion and proof.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** Oh, I don't think he could prove anything. But he can make himself awfully unpleasant. Supposing he put ideas in Constance's head?

**JOHN.** She'd never believe him.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** If the worst came to worst I could manage Mortimer. He's awfully in love with me. That always gives one such an advantage over a man.

**JOHN.** Of course you can twist Mortimer round your little finger.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** I should die of shame if Constance knew. After all, she's my greatest friend and I'm absolutely devoted to her.

**JOHN.** Constance is grand. *(Easing away.)* Of course I don't believe there's anything in this at all, but if there were, I'd be in favour of making a clean breast of it to Constance.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** Never!

**JOHN.** I expect she'd kick up a row. Any woman would. But she'd do anything in the world to help us out.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** A lot you know about women. She'd help you out, I daresay. But she'd stamp on me with both feet. That's only human nature.

**JOHN.** Not Constance's.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** *(moving towards John)* Upon my word, it's lucky I'm fairly sure of you, John, or the way you talk of Constance would really make me jealous. *(She smiles a little.)*

**JOHN.** Thank God you can smile. Now you're getting your nerve back.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** *(close to him)* It's been a comfort to talk it over. It doesn't seem so bad now.

**JOHN.** I'm sure you've got nothing to be frightened about.

**MARIE-LOUISE.** I daresay it was only my fancy. It was a stupid risk to take all the same.

**JOHN.** Perhaps. Why did you look so devilish pretty?

**MARIE-LOUISE.** Oughtn't you to be getting back to your wretched patients?

**JOHN.** I suppose so. Will you stop and see Constance?

**MARIE-LOUISE.** I may as well. It would look rather odd if I went away without saying how d'you do to her.

**JOHN.** I'll leave you, then. And don't worry.