**Mrs Eynsford-Hill, Clara, Freddy**

CLARA. [*in the space between the central pillars, close to the one on her left*] I’m getting chilled to the bone. What can Freddy be doing all this time? He’s been gone twenty minutes.

MRS E-H. [*on her daughter’s right*] Not so long. But he ought to have got us a cab by this.

A Bystander [*on the lady’s right*] He won’t get no cab not until half-past eleven, missus, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

MRS E-H. But we must have a cab. We can’t stand here until half-past eleven. It’s too bad.

The Bystander. Well, it ain’t my fault, missus.

CLARA. If Freddy had a bit of gumption, he would have got one at the theatre door.

MRS E-H. What could he have done, poor boy?

CLARA. Other people got cabs. Why couldn’t he?

*Freddy rushes in out of the rain, and comes between them closing a dripping umbrella. He is a young man, in evening dress, very wet around the ankles.*

CLARA. Well, haven’t you got a cab?

Freddy. There’s not one to be had for love or money.

 MRS E-H. Oh, Freddy, there must be one. You can’t have tried.

CLARA. It’s too tiresome. Do you expect us to go and get one ourselves?

Freddy. I tell you they’re all engaged. The rain was so sudden: nobody was prepared; and everybody had to take a cab. I’ve been to Charing Cross one way and nearly to Ludgate Circus the other; and they were all engaged.

MRS E-H. Did you try Trafalgar Square?

Freddy. There wasn’t one at Trafalgar Square.

CLARA. Did you try?

Freddy. I tried as far as Charing Cross Station. Did you expect me to walk to Hammersmith?

CLARA. You haven’t tried at all.

MRS E-H. You really are very helpless, Freddy. Go again; and don’t come back until you have found a cab.

Freddy. I shall simply get soaked for nothing.

CLARA. And what about us? Are we to stay here all night in this draught, with next to nothing on? You selfish pig —

Freddy. Oh, very well: I’ll go, I’ll go. [*He opens his umbrella and dashes off, but comes into collision with a flower girl, who is hurrying in for shelter, knocking her basket out of her hands. A blinding flash of lightning, followed instantly by a rattling peal of thunder, orchestrates the incident*]