**Men Should Weep by Ena Lamont Stewart**

*The extract is from Act 2, scene 2.*

**The same. A month later. Afternoon.**

**Alec and Isa are quarrelling in the bedroom: their raised voices are heard off.**

**Isa comes out in a soiled, tawdry neglige with her hair about her shoulders, a cigarette hanging from her lip.**

5 Isa: Aw shut up! I'm sick o yer jawin.

**Alec appears behind her, half dressed**

Alec: I'm tellin ye, Isa, I'll no staun much mair! I'mjist warnin ye. That's a.

Isa: An I'm warnin you ! If you think I'm gaun on like this a ma life, ye've anither think

comin. You' re no the only pebble on ma beach, no by a lang chalk. If you want tae

10 keep me, it's time ye wis makin a bit o dough again. I canna live on air.

Alec: **(placating)** Come an we'll go tae the dugs the night, Isa; mebbe we'll hae a bit o luck.

Isa: Aye. Mebbe.

Alec: Mind the last time I won –

Isa: Aye, an I mind the last hauf dizzen times ye lost ... Whit did ye dae wi yon bag?

15 Alec: I flung it ower a wa.

Isa: Ye stupid fool! I'm needin a bag.

Alec: It's no safe, Isa - ye've got tae get rid o the evidence - the Polis ...

Isa: Three quid and a handfu o coppers ! A fat lot o use that is tae me. Why the Hell did

ye no pick on a toff! We wis in the right district.

20 Alec: She looked like a toff; honest, Isa! She'd on a fur coat ...

Isa: Whit kind o fur? Rabbit? You' re that dumb ye wouldnae ken. Next time, I'm no

jookin up a lane, I'm stayin wi ye.

Alec: No ye're no! It's no safe. Ye've got tae be able tae rin fast.

Isa: Rin! That' s a you're guid for. Rinnin. It's aboot time I wis daein the rinnin. I' m sick

25 fed up wi you. If I'd went wi Peter Robb I'd hae a fur coat an it wouldna be rabbit. An

he's got a caur ...

Alec: You say Peter Robb tae me again an I'll kill ye ! I wull! I'll kill ye !

**He gets hold of her by the throat: she makes strangling noises. He panics and drops her.**

30 Isa: **(frightened first, then angry)** You ... ! Ma Goad! **(Rubbing her throat)** You'll pey for

that!

Alec: Isa ! Did I hurt ye? I didnae mean tae hurt ye - I lost ma heid.

Isa: Get oot! Clear aff oot o ma sight!

Alec: Isa, I' m sorry. I jist see red when ye talk aboot Peter Robb. I canna see naethin but

35 him an you taegether an the way ye wis last night, cairryin oan wi him.

Isa: Aye ! Ye can use yer hauns a right on a wumman; but if ye wis hauf a man, ye' d have

kicked his teeth in last night.

Alec: He's bigger nor me - he'd have hauf-killed me!

Isa: Fancy me mairryin a rat like you. The joke wis on me a right.

40 Alec: Isa, I'll hae plenty again, you'll see ... I've a coupla pals that' s got ideas ... wait on,

Isa ! I'll get ye onythin ye want ... a fur coat an crockydile shoes - ye said ye wanted

crockydile shoes - I proamise, Isa! I proamise! If ye'll stay wi me ... I love ye, Isa;

honest, I dae. I love ye.

Isa: Love! Hee-haw! There's nae sich a thing. There's wantin tae get intae bed wi

45 someone ye fancy ... or wan tin someone 'Il l et ye lie in yer bed an no have tae work;

but there's nae love. No roon aboothere, onyway. Don't kid yersel.

Alec: **(trying to take her in his arms)** That's no true! I love ye. I'm no fit for onythin when

ye're oot o ma sight. I ' m . . . lost waitin on ye comin back. I get tae thinkin ... an

wonderin whaur ye are ... and if –

50 Isa: If I'm behavin masel? Well, hauf the time, I'm no.

Alec: Isa!

Isa: Aw shut up! **(She pushes him away)** Ye're aye wantin tae slobber ower me. If ye wis

onythin decent tae look at it wouldna be sae bad, but ye 're like somethin that's been

left oot a night in the rain. G' on blow! I canna staun yer fumblin aboot - unless I'm

55 canned. Get oot ma way. I'm gonnae get dressed.

**She slams the bedroom door in his face.**

**He stands looking at it.**

Questions

1. What do the stage directions at the beginning of this extract reveal about the character of Isa? 2
2. Alec desperately wants Isa to stay with him. Referring closely to the extract, analyse how Alec tries to persuade Isa and what this reveals about his character. 4
3. This scene would have been shocking to a contemporary audience. Referring closely to the extract, explain why this would be the case. 4
4. Referring closely to this extract, and the play as a whole, discuss the dramatic importance of Alec and Isa’s relationship. 10

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| **Question** | **Expected Response** | **Max Mark** | **Additional Guidance** |
| 1 | 2 marks awarded for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.  1 mark for more basic comment plus quotation/ reference.  0 marks for quotation/reference alone.  (Marks may be awarded 2 or 1 + 1.) | 2 | Possible answers include:   * that Isa is still in night clothes in the afternoon suggests that she is idle, choosing to stay in bed all day, with or without Alec.   **“a soiled, tawdry neglige”**   * Again this emphasises the fact that she has just risen and has done nothing about her appearance. In the 1930s, hair was more formally done and set with pins or curlers. This make size is dishevelled appearance more shocking and emphasises her defiant independent, but rather slatternly character.   **“her hair about her shoulders”**   * It is not a classy look and emphasises the rakish of Isa’s character. She is far from a conventional wife and cares little for it.   **“a cigarette hanging from her lip.”** |
| 2 | 2 marks awarded for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.  1 mark for more basic comment plus quotation/ reference.  0 marks for quotation/reference alone.  (Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 or 1+1+1+1.) | 4 | Possible answers include:   * Alec threatens Isa and tries to assert his dominance over her in a bid to get the upper hand in the relationship.   “I'm tellin ye, Isa, I'll no staun much mair”  “You say Peter Robb tae me again an I'll kill ye ! I wull! I'll kill ye !”   * Alec tries to appease Isa and take her mind off their troubled relationship hoping she will forget all about it.   “(placating)” ; “Isa, I'll hae plenty again, you'll see”  “I'll get ye onythin ye want ... a fur coat an crockydile shoes”   * Alec uses physical violence against Isa as a mean of trying to assert some power and control over her.   **“He gets hold of her by the throat: she makes strangling noises”**   * Alex grovels apologetically, horrified at his behaviour. He does not have the ‘courage’ to see his murderous intentions through.   **“He panics and drops her.”**  “I didnae mean tae hurt ye - I lost ma heid”  “I jist see red when ye talk aboot Peter Robb.”   * Alec makes promises that he can't keep to convince Isa to stay with him in a childish way.   “I'll get ye onythin ye want ... a fur coat an crockydile shoes”  “I proamise, Isa”  “If ye'll stay wi me ... I love ye,”   * Alec shows his need for Isa and desperation that she stays with him, resorting to begging at the end of this extract as none of his other tactics have worked. This has the opposite effect and makes Isa despise him even more.   “I'm no fit for onythin when ye're oot o ma sight.”  “ I ' m . . . lost waitin on ye comin back.” |
| 3 | 2 marks awarded for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.  1 mark for more basic comment plus quotation/ reference.  0 marks for quotation/reference alone.  (Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 or 1+1+1+1.) | 4 | Possible answers include:   * The audience sees Alec and Isa in a state of undress, which suggests they have been in bed together. And, it is the middle of the afternoon!   **“Afternoon.”**  **“soiled, tawdry neglige”**  **“ with her hair about her shoulders”**   * Isa has clearly got Alec involved in mugging people in order to fund her lifestyle and the pair talk about the robbery without qualm or conscience.   “I flung it ower a wa”  “ I'm needin a bag.”  “Three quid and a handfu o coppers”  “Why the Hell did ye no pick on a toff!”  “Next time, I'm no jookin up a lane, I'm stayin wi ye.”   * Isa’s taunts of Peter Robb and her openness about her infidelity would provoke a strong response in the audience. This, combined with the insulting way in which she talks to Alec and the way in which she talks of sex so flippantly which shocked the audience as it goes against the conventional ideas of love and shows a tough, cynical hardness to Isa’s character.   “If I'd went wi Peter Robb I'd hae a fur coat”  “cairryin oan wi him.”  “if ye wis hauf a man, ye' d have kicked his teeth in last night.”  “Fancy me mairryin a rat like you.”  “Love! Hee-haw! There's nae sich a thing. ….Don't kid yersel.”  “If I'm behavin masel? Well, hauf the time, I'm no.”  “! I canna staun yer fumblin aboot - unless I'm canned” |
| 4 | Candidates should discuss the dramatic importance of Alec and Isa’s relationship. | 10 | Reference could be made to the following:  Commonality:   * Isa is in control of Alec for the most part, contrasting with Maggie and her relationship with John. This develops the theme of the role of men in the play. * Isa’s attitude to love and relationships sharply contrasts with Maggie’s, or even Jenny's. This bitter mercenary attitude may be the product of survival at the time. Lily's attitude to love is equally cynical.   Extract:   * Alec and Isa’s relationship provides the most dramatic moment of the whole play - that of the strangling of Isa. This open demonstration of domestic violence and the poverty and crime that surround the couple would make for compelling and thought provoking watching. * Alec shows, through his desperation negotiation with Isa that he is weak, silly and lacking in self respect. The audience may feel more distaste for the character after this scene in which he alternately grovels and threatens violence. His character is not one worthy of respect. The fact that he does not kill Isa is one of his few redeeming features. * The audience can see from the way that Isa talks to Alec that she really cannot stand him. This makes his desperate attempts to keep her even more pitiful.   Elsewhere:   * Alec and Isa’s presence put a huge strain on the Morrison family; the young children, including the ill Bertie, have to share their already cramped beds with the pair. Isa is open with Maggie about Maggie's dislike of her, creating a difficult and uncomfortable atmosphere and heightening the tension at crucial points in the play. * Isa plays with John, enjoying making him uncomfortable by the way she walks around in revealing clothing and also revelling in the fact that he is undoubtedly noticing her ‘attractions’. This, too, put pressure on Maggie. * Raises the theme of what it is to be a man as Alec is clearly at the mercy of Isa. Alec has been spoiled by his mother and has grown up to be idle, weak and lacking in the cheerful toughness which characterised the men with whom he has grown up. * Isa’s attitude to love contrast with Maggie and John's lasting relationship. Hers is a cynical, tough understanding of relationships. For Isa, a sexual relationship is a commercial exercise which works on the principles of money or sexual attraction. Nothing else is relevant. Isa is survivor. Her callousness perhaps indicates that life has taught her not to be sentimental - she is a product of her time and place. * Alec and Isa show another aspect of working-class Glaswegian life which is perhaps not so heartwarming to the audience. They steal, drink, lie, and connive and cause problems in the Morrison family. * Isa is seen to encourage Jenny in her plans to leave home, causing pain to both Maggie and John. She and Jenny show they are not willing to live the lives their mothers did, living in a slum and struggling with innumerable children. Both girls, Isa and Jenny, are seen to survive, despite their break from tradition and their own assertion of their independence, of a sort. |