

***JOHN
GALSWORTHY***

JOY

John Galsworthy

Joy

A Play on the Letter "I"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[GALSWORTHY'S PLAYS](#)

[Links to All Volumes](#)

[FIRST SERIES PLAYS](#)

[By John Galsworthy](#)

[JOY](#)

[A PLAY ON THE LETTER "I"](#)

[IN THREE ACTS](#)

[ACT I](#)

[ACT II](#)

[ACT III](#)

[GALSWORTHY'S PLAYS](#)

[Links to All Volumes](#)

GALSWORTHY'S PLAYS

Links to All Volumes

[Table of Contents](#)

THE FIRST SERIES:	The Silver Box	Joy	Strife
THE SECOND SERIES:	The Eldest Son	Little Dream	Justice
THE THIRD SERIES:	The Fugitive	The Pigeon	The Mob
THE FOURTH SERIES:	A Bit O'Love	The Foundations	The Skin Game
THE FIFTH SERIES:	A Family Man	Loyalties	Windows
THE SIXTH SERIES:	The First and Last	The Little Man	Four Short Plays

FIRST SERIES PLAYS

[Table of Contents](#)

By John Galsworthy

[Table of Contents](#)

JOY

[Table of Contents](#)

A PLAY ON THE LETTER "I"

[Table of Contents](#)

IN THREE ACTS

[Table of Contents](#)



PERSONS OF THE PLAY

COLONEL HOPE, R.A., retired

MRS. HOPE, his wife

MISS BEECH, their old governess

LETTY, their daughter

ERNEST BLUNT, her husband

MRS. GWYN, their niece

JOY, her daughter

DICK MERTON, their young friend

HON. MAURICE LEVER, their guest

ROSE, their parlour-maid

TIME: The present. The action passes throughout midsummer day on the lawn of Colonel Hope's house, near the Thames above Oxford.



ACT I
ACT II
ACT III

ACT I

Table of Contents

The time is morning, and the scene a level lawn, beyond which the river is running amongst fields. A huge old beech tree overshadows everything, in the darkness of whose hollow many things are hidden. A rustic seat encircles it. A low wall clothed in creepers, with two openings, divides this lawn from the flowery approaches to the house. Close to the wall there is a swing. The sky is clear and sunny. COLONEL HOPE is seated in a garden-chair, reading a newspaper through pince-nez. He is fifty-five and bald, with drooping grey moustaches and a weather-darkened face. He wears a flannel suit and a hat from Panama; a tennis racquet leans against his chair. MRS. HOPE comes quickly through the opening of the wall, with roses in her hands.

She is going grey; she wears tan gauntlets, and no hat. Her manner is decided, her voice emphatic, as though aware that there is no nonsense in its owner's composition. Screened from sight, MISS BEECH is seated behind the hollow tree; and JOY is perched on a lower branch hidden by foliage.

MRS. HOPE. I told Molly in my letter that she'd have to walk up, Tom.

COLONEL. Walk up in this heat? My dear, why didn't you order Benson's fly?

MRS. HOPE. Expense for nothing! Bob can bring up her things in the barrow. I've told Joy I won't have her going down to meet the train. She's so excited about her mother's coming there's no doing anything with her.

COLONEL. No wonder, after two months.

MRS. HOPE. Well, she's going home to-morrow; she must just keep herself fresh for the dancing tonight. I'm not going to get people in to dance, and have Joy worn out before they begin.

COLONEL. [Dropping his paper.] I don't like Molly's walking up.

MRS. HOPE. A great strong woman like Molly Gwyn! It isn't half a mile.

COLONEL. I don't like it, Nell; it's not hospitable.

MRS. HOPE. Rubbish! If you want to throw away money, you must just find some better investment than those wretched 3 per cents. of yours. The greenflies are in my roses already! Did you ever see anything so disgusting? [They bend over the roses they have grown, and lose all

sense of everything.] Where's the syringe? I saw you mooning about with it last night, Tom.

COLONEL. [Uneasily.] Mooning!

[He retires behind his paper. MRS. HOPE enters the hollow of the tree.]

There's an account of that West Australian swindle. Set of ruffians! Listen to this, Nell! "It is understood that amongst the share-holders are large numbers of women, clergymen, and Army officers." How people can be such fools!

[Becoming aware that his absorption is unobserved, he drops his glasses, and reverses his chair towards the tree.]

MRS. HOPE. [Reappearing with a garden syringe.] I simply won't have Dick keep his fishing things in the tree; there's a whole potful of disgusting worms. I can't touch them. You must go and take 'em out, Tom.

[In his turn the COLONEL enters the hollow of the tree.]

MRS. HOPE. [Personally.] What on earth's the pleasure of it? I can't see! He never catches anything worth eating.

[The COLONEL reappears with a paint pot full of worms; he holds them out abstractedly.]

MRS. HOPE. [Jumping.] Don't put them near me!

MISS BEECH. [From behind the tree.] Don't hurt the poor creatures.