

Send In The Clowns

An aging actress reflects on the ironies and disappointments of her life. She looks back on an affair years earlier with the lawyer Fredrik, who was deeply in love with her, but whose marriage proposals she had rejected. Meeting him after so long, she realizes she is in love with him and finally ready to marry him, but now it is he who rejects her, citing his responsibility to his new bride. Reacting to his rejection, Desirée sings this song.

The “clowns” in the title are not circus clowns but rather a theater expression meaning “if the show isn't going well, let's send in the jesters/fools”; in other words, “let's distract the audience”. “Don't bother, they're here”, acknowledges that “I'm actually the fool.”

Isn't it rich?
Aren't we a pair?
Me here at last on the ground
You in mid-air.
Send in the clowns

Isn't it bliss?
Don't you approve?
One who keeps tearing around,
One who can't move.
Where are the clowns?
Send in the clowns.

Just when I stopped opening doors,
Finally knowing the one that I wanted was yours.
Making my entrance again with my usual flair.
Sure of my lines.
No one is there

Don't you love farce?
My fault I fear.
I thought that you'd want what I want,
Sorry my dear.
But where are the clowns?
There ought to be clowns.
Quick send in the clowns.

What a surprise.
Who could foresee?
I've come to feel about you what you felt about me.
Why only now when I see that you've drifted away?
What a surprise, what a cliché.

Isn't it rich, isn't it queer,
Losing my timing this late in my career?
And where are the clowns?
Quick send in the clowns.
Don't bother they're here.