

# EMBASSY SUCCESSES

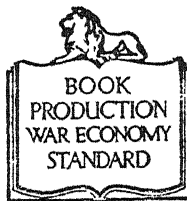
I

1945 - 1946

Worm's Eye View  
Father Malachy's Miracle  
Zoo in Silesia

LONDON  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.





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# Foreword

by

ANTHONY HAWTREY

I AM very happy to see the publication of *Embassy Successes of 1945-1946* (I and II) for many reasons.

Two years ago, our theatre was derelict—an early victim of German bombing. At mid-summer 1944, however, we decided to begin the job of resurrection—flying-bombs or no flying-bombs.

When I say “We”, I am referring to a large number of friends and acquaintances who, by entirely voluntary labour at a very difficult time, made the restoration of the Embassy Theatre possible.

It was absolutely due to their efforts that we were able to reopen the theatre to the public as early as January 1945—and I only wish that it were possible for me to thank everyone concerned, publicly.

Since then, we have presented at the Embassy twenty new plays, of widely-differing types. Selecting the plays to fill these two volumes was no easy task—there were so many which we wanted to include!

I am not going to say that the six which we did finally choose are necessarily the best which we have done at our theatre—but I do think that the collection is truly representative of the work which we are trying to do, and that each one of the six is an exceptionally good play to read.

The two biggest successes by commercial standards in these books are, of course, *No Room at the Inn*, and *Worm's Eye View*, which, as I write, are filling the Winter Garden and Whitehall Theatres, respectively.

*Father Malachy's Miracle* and *Zoo in Silesia*, on the other hand, were artistic successes, which, for various reasons, did not break box-office records at the Embassy.

*National Velvet* was one of the most charming plays we have done, while Jan de Hartog's *Skipper Next to God* was remarkable for its sincerity.

If I were forced to name a favourite among this collection, I may say, quite frankly, that I should choose *No Room at the Inn*. I consider

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Miss Joan Temple's timely and full-blooded drama of what *can* happen to child evacuees in war-time to be one of the most perfectly-constructed plays of recent years, as well as being a most exciting play to produce, and one with enormous scope for a producer.

One curious thing about *No Room at the Inn* is that I think it is the only play I have ever been connected with in which nothing ever went wrong, from the first rehearsal to the opening night.

I cannot express sufficient admiration for Freda Jackson's magnificent and unvarying performance in the arduous part of the frightening Mrs. Voray, whose calculated and heartless behaviour towards the evacuee children under her charge forms the play's focal situation.

I have, too, a very soft spot for *Father Malachy's Miracle*. Adapted by Brian Doherty from Bruce Marshall's novel of the same name, this was the play which really put us on the London theatrical map. It was a great prestige success, and attracted a remarkable amount of press and public comment, most of it extremely favourable.

*Father Malachy's Miracle* is a large-scale play, with thirty-five characters and four sets, and one or two people accused us of trying to do too much within the confines of the 700-seater Embassy. It seems to me that we ought, occasionally, to be ambitious.

The 72-year-old Irish actor, W. G. Fay, gave, I thought, a wonderful performance as the Catholic priest whose adventures in a tough Edinburgh dance-hall provide the amusing background to the play, which Brian Doherty adapted so deftly.

*Father Malachy's Miracle*, which had been seen previously in New York with some success, was at one time due to transfer to a West-End theatre, but owing to "circumstances", this never materialised. However, I have every intention of reviving it at some future date, as I am sure that it is a play of such worth that it deserves a wider audience than it has yet had in this country.

Another play which I should like to see done again is *Zoo in Silesia*, Richard Pollock's detailed and truthful picture of prisoner-of-war life, in which that first-rate actor, Hugh Williams, chose to make his return to the stage after an absence of six years.

I have never been able to understand the reception given to this play by the London critics, the majority of whom wrote to the effect that they did not believe a word of it, despite the fact that the producer, Wallace Douglas, had been a prisoner-of-war, as well as the author.

When *Zoo in Silesia* went to Bristol, the reverse happened, the play received an ovation, and the critics there acclaimed it for what I feel it is—"real life, raw life—written with a fine sense of the theatre".

I recommend careful reading of *Zoo in Silesia*. The author ostensibly deals with a world surrounded by barbed wire, but if you look closely

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enough, I think you will realise that he is also dealing very much with our world. The analogy is there.

For the production of every play there is a right and a wrong moment, and I think it likely that we chose the wrong one for *Zoo in Silesia*.

Another play with a great deal more depth in it than is generally realised is R. F. Delderfield's *Worm's Eye View*, which has been convulsing (I believe that is the word) audiences at the Whitehall Theatre for many months, and will probably go on doing so for many months to come.

On the face of it a farcical comedy of low *genre*, *Worm's Eye View* has some direct and forceful things to say about the way some of our troops were treated some of the time in some of the billets.

At cursory examination, it would be difficult to name two plays more different than *Worm's Eye View* and *No Room at the Inn*. A closer inspection might, perhaps, show that, radically, they have many points of similarity. It is simply a question of treatment!

*Worm's Eye View*, in any case, is a thoroughly workmanlike comedy, well-constructed, full of realistic dialogue and characterisation, and I am delighted to see the success which it has made.

R. F. Delderfield, its author, has written several serious plays so extremely good which have failed to make any money or attract much attention, that one admires him all the more for being able to write a first-rate comedy to pulverise the box-office.

*Worm's Eye View* was first presented at the Embassy in conjunction with *Skipper Next to God*, as part of an experiment for running two plays each night, in an attempt to combat the shortage of theatres.

The idea was not entirely successful, owing to the unwillingness of present-day audiences to attend a show beginning later than eight o'clock in the evening, and it is possible that the extremely serious *Skipper Next to God* suffered, in consequence.

This play, written with a sort of smouldering fervour by a young Dutchman, Jan de Hartog—he also played the principal part—deals with the problem of Jewish refugees, the author finding his inspiration in an actual case, around which he built his ideas on the subject, which were considerable.

De Hartog unfolds his case for the Jews with immense sincerity and compassion through the eyes and the mind of a fanatically religious young sea-captain, who is determined to land his boatload of unwanted human cargo somewhere along the American coastline. The play traces his efforts to do this, in the face of inhuman bureaucratic opposition.

The author of *Skipper Next to God* had a very great deal to say on a very large subject, and he said all of it with very great feeling—but I have always thought that had he been content to say just a little bit

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less, his play would have been improved—although I have never, for one moment, regretted doing it at our theatre.

The remaining play in these volumes, *National Velvet*, Enid Bagnold's own adaptation from her famous novel, and film, is, I think, a beautifully-written and entirely charming play.

This story of a butcher's daughter, crazy about horses, who wins "The Piebald" in a shilling raffle, and how she eventually rides the horse to victory in the Grand National, is, I suppose, fundamentally ridiculous—but, personally, I think this criticism away from the point.

Nearly all stories, boiled down, are absurd—it is surely the treatment that matters. I think that Miss Bagnold's characters are so warm, so human, and her dialogue so utterly delightful, that her story becomes entirely convincing.

A certain number of people, I believe, would not come and see the play because they thought that it would be impossible to present the Grand National adequately on the stage. I think that anyone who did see our production will agree that the way this *was* done, obliquely, by means of a wireless set in the jockey's changing-room, was most effective and extremely exciting.

I believe *National Velvet*—and the other plays in these books—to be good, interesting "theatre".

People often ask me, "What is your policy at the Embassy?" The answer is simple. Our policy is this.

To present new plays dealing with aspects of today's world—in terms of *entertainment*. If these plays are written by new playwrights, so much the better.

I am aware that the English theatre cannot properly thrive unless there is a constant supply of fresh dramatists. At the Embassy, we shall always do everything in our power to foster this supply.

ANTHONY HAWTREY

*Swiss Cottage,  
London, N.W.3.*

*Sept., 1946.*

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WORM'S EYE VIEW

A COMEDY

BY

*R. F. Delderfield*

# C A S T

## The Characters :

POP, <i>A last war airman, re-enlisted</i> . . . . .	Jack Hobbs
THE DUKE, <i>An Aircraftman awaiting aircrew training</i>	Anthony Bazell
MARK, <i>Corporal in charge of the billet</i> . . . . .	John Varley
MRS. BOUNTY, <i>The landlady</i> . . . . .	Janet Barrow
THELMA, <i>Mrs. Bounty's maid</i> . . . . .	Lorraine Clewes
MR. BOUNTY, <i>Mrs. Bounty's husband</i> . . . . .	John E. Coyle
SYDNEY, <i>Mrs. Bounty's son</i> . . . . .	Christopher Banks
TAFFY } <i>Recruits, newly arrived</i> . . . . .	Eric Davies
PORTER } . . . . .	Ronald Shiner
BELLA, <i>Mrs. Bounty's daughter</i> . . . . .	Diana Dawson
S/LDR. BRIARLY, <i>C.O. of the Unit</i> . . . . .	Bruce Seton

First presented at the Embassy Theatre on Tuesday, December 4th, 1945

Produced by RONALD SHINER

All applications for performing rights in this play should be addressed to the author's agents, Messrs. Margery Vosper, Ltd., 32 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.1.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

'Albert House', residence of the Bountys, at Sandcombe, in the winter of 1942-3

### ACT I

*Scene 1.* A winter afternoon in the billetees' room at 'Albert House', Sandcombe, in 1942.

*Scene 2.* The same : morning, a few days later.

### ACT II

*Scene 1.* The same : tea-time, a month later.

*Scene 2.* The same : tea-time, three days later.

*Scene 3.* The same : about 11 p.m. the same evening.

### ACT III

*Scene 1.* The same : following afternoon.

*Scene 2.* The same : the next day.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

### *Act One: Scene I*

*The billetecs' room at Albert House, an Edwardian, semi-detached building near the sea-front of Sandcombe, a north country holiday resort. It is early evening, and the blackout has been drawn. Tea has been partially laid. The room is quite large, but furnished with cheap, tasteless furniture. There is a staircase right of stage, and a window downstage right, which has lace, as well as thicker curtains, and a roll-type black-out blind. By the window is an armchair, while behind this, on a small table, stands a telephone with coin-box on wall above it. There are two doors, one upstage, which leads into the hall and street, and one D.L. leading to the kitchen. Left, upstage of the door are a fireplace and gas-fire, and over the mantelpiece, are a mirror and two gas-brackets. There are two pictures on the walls, while the inevitable aspidistra stands at the top of the staircase. Backstage on the right of centre door, stands an old upright piano, while left of the door is a sideboard; in front of the sideboard, by the fireplace is an old settee. The table is centre. Various knick-knacks adorn the piano, mantelpiece, and sideboard.*

POP, a grey-haired leading-aircraftman, about forty-seven years of age, is discovered at 'phone.

POP: We're in a *new* billet. Moved in Saturday. Bloody awful. I said it's not very nice, darling. Heard from the boy? Well, don't worry, letters are taking a hell of a time. They're getting the Red Cross parcels, though. Sergeant's brother's in the same place. How's Monica? What? Leaving the factory? No, you tell her to stick it. How's the garden looking? No, stick to flowers, you'll wear yourself out.

*Enter DUKE B.C. wearing his overcoat and respirator. His cap shows the white flash of an aircrew trainee. He is a good-looking boy, about twenty-four, aggressively cheerful, but good natured, and fairly well educated.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

DUKE : I sat in the saddle for hours and hours  
I stuck it as long as I could  
I stuck it and stuck it——

POP : Shut up.

DUKE : Oh, sorry old boy.

POP (*into 'phone*) : It's all right, it's only the Duke, just back from a dirty week-end.

DUKE *grins*. *Takes letter from rack, goes out B.C. to hang his coat on coat-rack.*

Oh, blast. There go the pips. Good-bye, darling. Look after yourself. I'm O.K. Yes, of course. Bye-bye.

DUKE *comes in again, talking.*

DUKE : Is everything O.K.?

POP : Wife's a bit worried over the boy. (*Sits.*) Three months now since we heard.

DUKE : You'll get half a dozen letters together. They're coming like that.

POP (*sitting*) : Hope so. Got a match?

DUKE : Yes. Silly little woman. (*Tears up letter, and throws it over his shoulder.*)

POP (*nonchalantly*) : Who was it this time?

DUKE (*looking up*) : Drop that "tell-me-if-you-think-I-ought-to-know" act old boy—you're just dying for spicy details, you dirty old man!

POP : Girl at cash-desk of the cinema, wasn't it?

DUKE : That Salome? Not on your life. I like 'em single. Besides—*that* little piece of homework is A.C.O.

POP : A.C.O.?

DUKE : Aircrew Only, old boy.

POP : Well, you're almost aircrew.

DUKE : Nothing to show for it. Just wait 'til I get my wings! I'll make Casanova look like a celibate monk. (*Stands.*)

DUKE *is foraging in his respirator case ; it seems to contain everything but a gas-mask.*

POP : What the blazes have you got in there?

DUKE : Handy little haversack isn't it? Might have been issued for a crafty forty-eight hours' leave.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

POP: You'll catch it right in the neck one of these days when the C.O. holds a spot respirator check.

DUKE: As long as he doesn't find anything worse than shaving tackle in mine I'm easy, old boy. Pyjamas! (*Holding up the jacket.*) Wonder why I took those?

POP (*seriously*): Beats me how you can go birding up and down the country the way you do. Don't you ever want to settle down?

DUKE *stares at him.*

DUKE: Settle down? Now? Talk sense old boy. Where's the sense of settling—when you're going aircrew? Give the flesh a break, old boy, give the flesh a break.

POP: Rot! That's what they used to say in the trenches last war but most of 'em came home all right.

DUKE: My matches, please. Where's Mark?

POP: Interviewing the landlady about the busted window.

DUKE: Isn't that settled yet?

POP: Mrs. Bounty wants us to pay for it.

DUKE: Pay for it? The damned frame was worm-eaten—it fell out when you opened the sash, didn't it?

POP: That's right.

DUKE: Well then——

POP: She said we had no business to open it.

DUKE: Look here—we're ruddy airmen not Bevin boys. The place stank when we came here on Sunday.

POP: All right, don't panic. It'll all come out in the wash.

DUKE: Chap on the train envied us being in civvy billets. Streuth! What must a camp be like? Hulloo——

POP *rises at MRS. BOUNTY'S entrance.* MRS. BOUNTY is a thin, tall, austere woman about fifty-five. She has a very definite personality, and gives the impression that she is endeavouring to improve upon her working-class north country background by conquering her accent. The attempt is partially successful—until she gets excited. She is not at all pleased at being compulsorily billeted with airmen, as she gave up taking visitors some time ago on acquiring a small legacy. Having got the billetees, however, she is determined to keep them under rigid control.

MARK TRELAWNEY, the corporal, who follows her in, is a sensitive-looking man about twenty-five. His expression, usually alert and interesting, is somewhat clouded today, by his worries as N.C.O. i/c the billet.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

DUKE : I don't quite get you, old boy.

MARK : Don't you see, with a place like the Lake District so near, we ought to give them some sort of taste and feeling. A country that produces Browning and Shelley and Shakespeare. Yet they flock here, to Sandcombe, this ghastly town, and toll their pennies down silly little slots and grooves then go home with a celluloid doll and a stick of pink rock, and think they've had a good time. I tell you it's crazy, it's absolutely crazy!

DUKE : I'm getting the fan-tods, Corp.

POP : Come on, let's have tea.

DUKE : Tea! And when I think what I had yesterday!

POP : One shouldn't generalise, Mark. There's a billet in Inkerman Road, where the landlady got them a thirty-seven pound turkey at Christmas. Yes, and weeps on their shoulder when one of 'em's posted.

DUKE : Strewth! What number Inkerman Road?

POP : Forty-three, I think. No, forty-four.

DUKE : She got any daughters?

POP : One, I think.

DUKE : I'm looking for a place like that.

POP : You've got enough on your plate; it wasn't the girl from the cinema pay-box, Mark, it was the girl from the Compass Café.

MARK : I know her. She used to go around with a Polish officer. What was she like, Duke?

DUKE : Lush! As a matter of fact, she had a peculiar trick of——

POP : Tea-time, isn't it?

DUKE : Thelma, and the Queen's husband are getting it.

MARK : Poor old Bounty. I feel sorry for him.

DUKE : S'funny. I sometimes wonder how a woman like her manages to snare a harmless little beggar like him. But they always do. Sadistic urge, I suppose, poor little blighter.

VOICE, SCALES.

*Upstairs, quite audibly, a female voice begins to practise operatic scales. With one accord they look towards the ceiling.*

All this and opera too! (*Casually.*) That's the daughter, isn't it?

MARK : Yes, that's her.

DUKE : Where's she get to? I never see her.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK (*quietly*): You lay off. We've got enough to cope with without disentangling you from the arms of the landlady's daughter.

DUKE: I can't imagine *her* daughter being worth my while.

MARK (*meditatively*): She's not bad—frightened sort of kid—pretty hair.

DUKE (*ruminating*): I don't see the good of a dame having nice hair. They never let you stroke it—afraid you'll mess it up. And then, if you do get as far as that, ten to one the first thing they do is put a damned great fish-net over it.

POP and MARK *laugh*.

*Enter MR. BOUNTY D.L. from kitchen. He is carrying three plates of meat. He is a mild pleasant little man, a trifle waggish but somehow pathetic. He is on good terms with the boys, who treat him as one of themselves. He walks to table.*

DUKE (*as Bounty enters*): Hallo, Bounty, old boy. When does the mutiny start? Heavens above, what on earth is this?

BOUNTY: That's brisket. Don't you like it?

DUKE: Don't think I'm going to. Looks like something left over from the Siege of Stalingrad.

VOICE. *More scales upstairs.*

ALL *look up*.

MARK (*seriously*): That's Bella practising, isn't it?

BOUNTY: Aye, that's Bella.

DUKE: What the . . . (*Laughing.*)

*He is about to make a facetious remark but something in MR. BOUNTY'S expression stops him.*

BOUNTY: All right. You can laugh at her if you want to. I laugh myself sometimes—not in front of her tho'. (*Up to sideboard for sugar and butter-dish.*) She's very easily hurt poor lass.

*This has the effect of sobering them a little. They are all silent for a moment. BOUNTY reflects a little. Then he says—*

(*Back to table*): I don't think she'd've thought of it herself!

MARK: Thought of what, Mr. Bounty?

BOUNTY: Singing—making a job of it. You've got to be reet good, haven't you? Besides, they don't go in for that sort of singing nowadays—it's all this Yankee stuff, isn't it? Eeee, she'll only get hurt, it's daft!

MARK: Does she want to do anything else?



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BOUNTY (*who is not sure*): I don't know. Come to think of it nobody ever asked her. She was just told—like me.

MARK (*as they eat*): Have you always done (*he extends his hand towards the crockery*) this?

BOUNTY (*shocked*): Good Lord, no. No, no, no! Only since the war. This isn't any sort of job.

MARK: What did you do before?

BOUNTY (*impressively*): I inspected drains!

HE *waits for the effect. THEY ALL stop eating and look at him.*

DUKE (*apologetically*): You did say "drains", old boy, didn't you?

BOUNTY (*a shade aggressively*): That's what I said. It's no fool of a job I can tell you. There's a lot in drains.

DUKE: I'll bet there is—in Sandcombe's drains.

HE *emphasises this remark with a long sniff.*

BOUNTY (*annoyed*): You're like all of 'em. You think it's a messy job. *He* thought it was.

MARK: Who?

BOUNTY: *Him!* That boy of her's—Sydney. Not quite nice you know with him being assistant Town Clerk. Didn't do to have a step-father in drains. Persuaded me to resign. She backed him up, too. But I was never ashamed of it—used to be good at it, too—knew the whole layout in every side-street—branch sewers, standpipe points and all. Now they've got a chit of a boy doing it and they're always having trouble.

HE *moves towards the kitchen door.*

What's wrong with drains? Someone's got to look after 'em I say.

HE *goes out into the kitchen.*

MARK (*getting up*): Gosh, I'd like to crown Sydney!

DUKE (*prodding with fork*): I'd sooner ram some of this brisket down his throat. That'd take some of the bounce out of him.

POP: What's up, Mark?

MARK: I'm browned off—no, more than usual—it's this town, this billet—all this petty, idiotic strife. (*Turning.*) Damn it, we're all in this together, aren't we? Everything I cared about pushed on one side because . . .

POP (*gently*): Steady on, Mark.

MARK *shrugs and comes across to the table again. Sits.*

MARK: Sorry. I'm a bit off colour, I suppose.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

POP: Sure. I know how you feel. But don't start anything here. The Police Headquarters is only just across the road and if you got into a brawl with civvies—especially one like Sydney, your commission would go for a Burton. It's worth waiting a bit longer, isn't it?

MARK: Sometimes I wonder. Six months since my Air Ministry interview—what the hell?

DUKE: Why not buttonhole the C.O.? I've smacked in three applications in a row about my aircrew. You're in the Orderly Room, easy enough to bring it up when you go in with the correspondence in the morning.

MARK: Not me. I'm blowed if I'll crawl to a twerp like the Adj.

DUKE (*easily*): Oh, I don't mind a good, healthy piece of crawling—

THELMA *enters*.

if it's all in a good cause. Why blow me down if it isn't the local glamour girl—come to Daddy, Thelma!

*He makes a bound at her and pulls her on to his knee, where he makes a pseudo-passionate pass at her. THELMA is a stringy girl of about seventeen, heavily and clumsily made up. She enjoys DUKE'S frolics whilst protesting.*

THELMA (*screaming*): The tea! You'll spill the tea!

POP: Let her go, Duke, or we'll have the old girl in.

DUKE: Let her go? I couldn't. When I'm holding Thelma in this position my hot, Southern blood surges up and down my veins like NAAFI tea.

THELMA (*in a broad Northern accent*): Eeeee! You are a one—let me go. I'm all made up to go out and you're messing me about.

*She sets down the tea and gets off his knee.*

DUKE: That's a very serious accusation to make, Thelma. And you under age and all. (*Pouring tea.*)

THELMA (*indignantly*): I'm not under age.

DUKE (*sternly*): And who are you making free with tonight? A Pole or a Dutchman I'll be bound. And with three lusty Englishmen on the doorstep! Tch, tch, tch! Why don't you support home industry?

THELMA (*pouring tea*): Because he's a real gentleman that's why. He's an American and he's not what you think, either. He always behaves himself proper. (*To Mark.*)

DUKE (*wiping his mouth*): I bet he does with that lipstick of yours.

THELMA: I can look after myself, thank you.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : Well, see you do!

THELMA (*annoyed*) : Here what's the idea? If you think . . .

MARK : I don't think anything. I only said look after yourself.

THELMA : Well, why shouldn't I? We only go to the pictures and then on to the ballroom. There's nothing in that (*to Pop*) is there? That's more'n you get out of the Air Force—boy from a billet in Balaclava Road made a date with me last Sunday and when I turned up he suggested we went for a walk!

MARK (*grimly*) : I don't suppose it occurred to you he didn't have the money to do anything else did it?

THELMA : Well, lumme! Two tuppenny tickets on the pier wouldn't 've bust 'im would it? Give me the Yanks anytime. They do make a girl feel she's worth spending a bit on.

MARK : You make me sick!

THELMA (*stung*) : Here! You can't talk to me like that—I'll tell Mrs. Bounty of you!

MARK : Oh, tell who the hell you like!

THELMA : I will an' all. I'll tell my American.

THELMA *on the verge of tears, hurries into the kitchen. There is a short awkward silence.*

DOOR-BELL.

DUKE (*doubtfully*) : You ought to go easy a bit, Mark. The kid's got a perfect right to go out with anyone she pleases.

MARK : Nobody's got any dignity or decency left—everyone's out for themselves.

POP : Got a match?

DUKE : Yes, here you are.

*Abrupt entry of MRS. BOUNTY who marches in, B.C., at the head of two recruits, both loaded with kitbags and equipment. The recruits are TAFFY and PORTER. The one is an under-nourished and rather shy Welsh boy about twenty, the other a sharp, aggressively confident Cockney—pert and hardbitten.*

MRS. BOUNTY : They've just arrived—two new ones.

DUKE (*rising*) : Whoopee! Recruits—

PORTER and TAFFY enter.

MRS. BOUNTY : There's no more brisket—they've eaten the lot. You'll have to make do with seedy cake.

DUKE : Lucky devils.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MRS. BOUNTY: You'd better see they behave themselves properly, Corporal. They'll be going into the big bedroom—the one in the annexe. I've put two camp beds over against the window. They'd better have their tea now and fetch the rest of their kit later, can't keep meals hanging about all hours. (*Turning to recruits.*) Now then you two! You'd better study t'rules—there's a copy on the hallstand—in by ten o'clock sharp, names to be written on a slip of paper, and placed in the hallstand drawer. Extra half-hour on Saturday—meals sharp to time—seven-thirty, one o'clock and six—supper if you pay for it—2d. for cocoa, 1d. for a slice of bread and butter. Bath night, Fridays—between eight and nine—bath to be scrubbed out with wire-brush hanging behind the door. Washing up by turn and turn about. Lights to be turned off by last one down. No candles to be used in bedroom without saucers, night lights preferred. (*She turns and makes an abrupt departure.*)

PORTER *stares after her.*

PORTER (*with immense feeling*): Blimey!

DUKE (*resuming tea*): Now you know!

PORTER: Candles upstairs! What's the idea? There's electric here!

DUKE: There's electric there but she's taken the bulbs out!

PORTER (*relieved*): Well, that's all right—we can soon lift a bulb out of one o' the cafés on the sea-front.

DUKE: There speaks a man of enterprise! My matches, please.

PORTER (*making himself at home*): Well, 'ere we are Taff—(*Taking off equipment.*) Strewth! Glad to get shut of this little lot.

MARK: Where are you from? Two Wing?

PORTER: That's it—come over from Reception Centre this afternoon—six weeks square-bashin' now, ain't it?

POP: Five really—last week's all lectures.

PORTER: Might be worse. Six weeks ain't a lifetime. Get six years in the Army. That's why I wangled me way into this lot. This is Taffy—comes from Wales.

MARK: My name's Mark—Mark Trelawney—I'm Corporal i/c the billet. This is the "Duke" and this is Brownlow—"Pop" for short.

POP: We're all on the permanent staff. Sit down and have some tea.

PORTER: Go on greedy.

TAFFY *rushes to table.*

*The two recruits take chairs and POP pours tea. PORTER to haversack.*  
Can't say as how I'd mind settling here for the duration—they can't

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

check up on you like they can on a camp. Besides—chance to make a bit on the side in a place like this.

MARK : Make a bit ?

PORTER : A bit o' the "ready"—cash—silk stockings, hair-oil—"Soldiers Friends", too, if you want 'em—'arf a tick—Wait till I get my wonder box open. Not a bad line eh ?

DUKE (*taking a pair of stockings*) : Not half bad. What do they sell at ?

PORTER : Six and six a pair—six bob to you seeing as we're in the same billet.

DUKE : Where'd you get 'em ? (*Over to C.*)

PORTER : 'Ere—'arf a mo, 'arf a mo, did I ask you if your mother was married ?

DUKE (*slapping down the money*) : 'Nuff said! Porter, you're a welcome addition to Albert House—first time I've ever seen a Black Marketeer in uniform!

PORTER : Matter of fact they're from my stall in Petticoat Lane—brother-in-law's looking after it—'e's subject to bronchitis, lucky so-and-so. They won't get their claws into 'im in a hurry. What's this ?

DUKE : Seedy cake.

PORTER : For crying out loud.

POP : What part of Wales, Taffy ?

TAFFY, *who has been wolfing food at a good steady rate, looks up and smiles. He has a strong accent.*

TAFFY : From the Rhondda Valley, L.A.C. (*Eating.*)

POP : You needn't call me L.A.C. here, call me "Pop". I'm a relic of the last war.

TAFFY (*respectfully*) : My father and two of my brothers were killed in the last war.

POP : Really ? What part of the line ?

TAFFY : We never heard.

POP : Tough on your mother, wasn't it ?

TAFFY : Oh, I don't know—there were five more of us besides the two girls—it was all right before the pits closed.

MARK (*brightening*) : You a miner ?

TAFFY : Not really, tho' I've worked in the pits as a lad. Then I got a job on top. Let them as want the coal go down and get it, that's what I say.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : I thought mining was supposed to run in families.

DUKE : Yes, I heard that, once a miner, always a miner.

TAFFY : Don't you believe it—a miner's life is hard and dangerous.

PORTER : When he's down under it is. But 'e an't 'ardly ever there according to the papers—'e's always out on strike.

TAFFY (*with spirit*) : Well and suppose he is—how is a miner to get justice done him if he does not strike for better conditions ?

PORTER : Yes, but blimey, he didn't oughter start striking in the middle of a war—'ow the 'ell are we going to win the war without coal ?

TAFFY : If he didn't threaten to strike now, what notice would they take of him when the need for coal wasn't so great ? You people have strange ideas. You sell silk stockings on the sly and cheat the Government taxes and then condemn the miner for standing up for a decent wage.

DUKE : He's got you there, old boy.

PORTER : No, but blimey, it's diff'rent—I'm on'y making a bit on the side—those miners are stoppin' us getting enough shells to lam into Hitler. Use yer loaf, mate!

TAFFY (*warmly*) : I am using it. It is you who are the hypocrite. You are not going into the firing-line, are you ?

PORTER : Not if I can 'elp it. I'd sooner 'em say "There he goes" than "'Ere he lies" about me.

MARK (*getting interested*) : You a Communist, Taffy ?

TAFFY : No, no, indeed, I always thought they were too violent. "Those that take to the sword shall die by the sword" our minister used to say, but striking is different—there is no other way of making them listen.

*Upstairs BELLA begins to practise again. THEY look up.*

PORTER : Somebody gargling ?

POP : That's the daughter of the house practising.

PORTER (*getting up*) : Well, we can do better'n that, can't we ? What's wrong with the old Joanna ? (*He indicates the piano near the window.*)

MARK : It's always kept locked and she keeps the key.

DUKE (*as MR. BOUNTY comes in*) : Whose turn is it to wash up ?

PORTER *strolls across to the piano and sits on the stool.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BOUNTY: You don't want to worry, son—she's out, so's the boy. I'll wash up.

DUKE: There's a gentleman for you! I always said you deserved better than this, Bounty, old boy. Look here, why don't you go down South and get on a munitions firm—man with your technical experience could make a mint of money.

BOUNTY (*clearing*): Don't say I haven't thought of it. Give her a nasty shock it would. But you want contacts to land a job like that; no use trying without contacts.

DUKE: Yes, that's true. Well, use me—(*taking out a card*)—here you are—go to my old firm. I'll lay 100 to 1 they could use a man like you right now. Look, I'll write on it. (*Jotting on the back of the card.*) "I have known Mr. Bounty many years and can thoroughly recommend him as a first-class sanitary engineer." How's that?

BOUNTY *takes the card doubtfully and reads it.*

BOUNTY: One day perhaps—I've always wanted to go to London; she'd never go tho'—always said there was nothing to see in London you couldn't see better up here. You see . . .

*He is interrupted by a sharply picked-out one-fingered melody—*  
"Colonel Bogey" *on the piano. PORTER has managed to open the lid. DUKE bounds to his feet.*

DUKE (*going to piano*): He's got it open—boy, oh boy, what an asset! Where did you find the key?

PORTER: Key? I didn't need no key. There's nothin' to a lock like that. I did it with a hairpin.

DUKE: Well, chaps—since the old girl's out, what about a spot of swing. You don't mind, Bounty, old boy, do you?

BOUNTY: Bless your life, no. I don't mind. I never heard you.

DUKE: Can you play, Porter?

PORTER: Not me—I didn't stick to me musick lessons. But I've got a mouth-organ and I can do twiddly bits and all on that.

DUKE: Well, isn't there anyone who can play now that we have got the ruddy piano open?

MARK (*quietly*): I can play—a bit.

DUKE (*boisterously*): Well, come on then—let's raise the roof off the Gestapo Headquarters opposite.

TAFFY: Mr. Bounty, can I have a drop of hot water, please.

MARK *is led to the piano. POP, his pipe alight, strolls to piano. DUKE lounges on upright.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK: What shall I play?

DUKE: Anything lively. Something we all know. "Bless 'em all".

PORTER: That's it, "Bless 'em all".

BELLA *practising above.*

ALL: Bless 'em all, bless 'em all,  
The long and the short and the tall,  
Bless all the sergeants and W.O. ones  
Bless all the corporals and their blinking sons——

*Enter TAFFY with bowl.*

PORTER: What about something sentimental, just for old Taffy's sake, 'ere.

POP: All right, what about "Nellie Dean"?

TAFFY: Yes, "Nellie Dean".

TAFFY and PORTER *roll up trouser legs and bathe feet.*

THEY *sing one rendering of "Nellie Dean".*

PORTER: Come on, let's have it again.

*As he begins to sing, the door B.C. opens and BELLA BOUNTY, unobserved by all for a moment, enters very softly. She is a pretty, fragile girl, who looks even younger than she is—twenty-one. Usually extremely self-conscious she has momentarily forgotten to be shy and has almost hypnotised herself into joining the party. She is very simply dressed and is not obviously made-up; her clothes and hair-style are far too school-girlish for her age, and this fact, together with her shyness, tend to make her appear awkward. She advances towards the piano and takes up the song in a sweet but "small" voice.*

BELLA (*as the DUKE dries up*):

" . . . And the waters as they flow  
Seem to whisper, sweet and low.  
You're my heart's desire—  
I love you,  
Nellie Dean! "

*The effect of her entry is to fix everyone's eyes upon her and MARK cannot take them off again. But immediately the song finishes the spell is broken and despite tremendous applause and cheers, BELLA is suddenly overwhelmed with confusion and makes as though to hurry from the room. MARK is too quick for her and seizes her by the hand.*

MARK: No . . . please don't go . . . we'd like you to stay——

BELLA (*timidly*): Oh, no, I shouldn't . . . if mother came in . . .  
I was just practising and I felt . . .

MARK: You can't practise in this uproar.



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BOUNTY (*warmly*): It's all right, Bella—they're both out—stay and 'ave a bit o' fun. (*Door D.L.*)

MARK: Do stay, we've never even set eyes on you . . . (*Introducing.*) This is the Duke.

DUKE *makes an attempt at a Prussian bow and attendant heel-click.* And this is Pop, our Father Confessor.

POP (*inclining*): Glad to see you, Miss Bounty.

MARK: And these are two new ones—rookies—Porter and Taffy.

PORTER *stands up in the bowl and TAFFY tries to screen his feet.*

TAFFY: Pleased to meet you I'm sure, Miss.

PORTER (*grinning*): Excuse the "disabille", Miss—just softening up the old plates of meat—your sea-front's a bit 'ard on 'em.

DUKE: Come on, let's have another song. "Coming round the Mountain".

PORTER: Don't sing the right words, though.

THEY *start "Coming round the Mountain".*

POP: No. No. That's wrong. She'll be flying in formation when she comes. (*Singing.*)

*The others take it up.*

She'll be flying in formation when she comes.

She'll be flying in formation, flying in formation

Flying in formation when she comes.

*They sing the second verse. The last note, a long-drawn out and melodious one, suddenly dies out as the party suddenly realise that MRS. BOUNTY and SYDNEY are framed in the doorway. Their attitude is one of extreme disapproval.*

SYDNEY: Bella.

MRS. BOUNTY: Bella, how could you.

*There is instant confusion. MRS. BOUNTY'S eye lights on her bowl.*

My bowl! My best china bowl!

*This remark precipitates PORTER, who knocks TAFFY out of the bowl in which he is standing and the water pours on to the floor. MRS. BOUNTY screams with rage.*

My carpet! My best, dining-room carpet!

*Her shriek only increases the panic. The two recruits make a frenzied attempt to wipe up the water. MR. BOUNTY bolts to the kitchen for a cloth, returning almost immediately and busying himself, head down. Only POP, imperturbably smoking, looks on unmoved.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SYDNEY (*advancing C., with great pomposity*): Corporal, I thought we had agreed to keep the piano closed? I knew this would happen.

MRS. BOUNTY: I gave orders for it to be locked and Thelma said it was—look (*fumbling in her handbag*), I've got the key here!

SYDNEY: We'll settle this once and for all.

*HE takes the key and strides to the piano.*

MRS. BOUNTY (*suddenly re-aware of Bella*): Bella! Go to your room at once! How dare you disobey me directly my back's turned.

BELLA: Mother, I only came down for a . . . (*Moves towards MRS. BOUNTY.*)

SYDNEY: Do as your mother tells you, Bella! At once!

*She exits hall door.*

SYDNEY *slams down the piano lid and locks it with a magnificent gesture.*

That'll show you we haven't the slightest intention of turning the house into a bar-parlour. And you, Corporal—obviously you're not to be trusted to keep these men under control. Any more of this and I shall refer the matter to your C.O. That piano is *not* for communal use.

*Exit C.*

MRS. BOUNTY: And bring that bowl along with you when you've finished, Bounty. I've never heard of such a thing. Never!

*Exit C. She sweeps out after SYDNEY, leaving a thoroughly depressed group.*

MR. BOUNTY (*mumbling*): Always in 'ot water—that's me—always in hot water. (*Desperately as he sits back on his heels.*) When they say they're going to the Mayor's parlour why the 'ell don't they go to the Mayor's parlour? (*He slaps cloth into the bowl, splashing Porter and Taffy.*)

*Exit D.L.*

PORTER (*to Taffy*): What the hell did you want to jump up like a ruddy rocket for the minnit she looked at you?

TAFFY (*hotly*): It was you that put your clumsy great foot on the bowl. I was sitting perfectly still indeed!

PORTER (*astounded*): Blimey! I'd finished. I was just reaching out for a towel when you . . .

MARK (*savagely*): Oh *shut up*! What the hell does it matter which of you upset the blasted bowl?

PORTER (*pacifically*): All right, Corp, all right. Blimey, this place—it's enough to drive you into a nut house.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK: We've got to live here! This is the place we have to come back to after working from morning to night. (*Explosively.*) I'd like to . . .

*The door B.C. opens and BELLA hurries in, crossing to him. R. of MARK.*

BELLA: I'm sorry . . . I'm so sorry . . . here's the dining-room clock key. It fits. You can use the piano whenever you like, as long as they're out. (*Defiantly.*) It's my piano anyway!

*She presses the key into his unresisting hands and turns, hurrying out before anyone can speak. Exits.*

MARK (*dumbfounded*): Well, thanks . . . thanks . . .

*HE is suddenly aware that all eyes are on him and dries up in acute self-consciousness. Suddenly there is a general shout of laughter.*

PORTER (*capping it*): Lower the lifeboat! *Man overboard!*

*MARK, his humour miraculously restored, gives him a playful push in the face amid renewed laughter.*

## CURTAIN

### Act One : Scene 2

*The same room, about 8.30 a.m. a few days later.*

*The airmen have gone on parade and the Bountys, for the sake of convenience, are using the room for their breakfast. MRS. BOUNTY sits at the head, paying special attention to SYDNEY, at the far end. MR. BOUNTY is sitting at the table sideways, his back half turned to audience. He is intent on a newspaper which he uses as a sort of screen and misses none of the conversation. BELLA is sitting facing. THELMA, looking rather grubby, is going to and from the kitchen. SYDNEY carries himself with great dignity at the breakfast table. He is assisted, almost consciously, by his gleaming collar, morning coat and striped trousers. THELMA moves out as curtain rises.*

MRS. BOUNTY: I'm sorry we had to have breakfast in here, Sydney, but the sweep's come to do the other room.

SYDNEY: That's all right, Mother, but I do wish you'd get Thelma to wear a clean apron, I saw the surveyor looking at her when he was here to tea the other day.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MR. BOUNTY: He wasn't looking at her *apron*.

MRS. BOUNTY: I dairen't risk upsetting her, dear. I'm sure to have trouble in keeping her. They're bound to want her for the WAAF or factories, or something stupid.

SYDNEY: Wouldn't take much persuading either, with outrageous wages in the factories, and an unlimited supply of men in the Forces. She's not far off being a you know what, if you ask me.

MRS. BOUNTY: Shhhh! (*With a glance in Bella's direction.*) Get on with your breakfast, Bella, so's you can start your practice before Professor Malletti comes.

BELLA: Mother, I was going to ask you . . .

MRS. BOUNTY: Well?

BELLA: Couldn't I stop having the Professor?

MRS. BOUNTY: Stop your singing lessons?

BELLA: No—go to him twice a week instead of him coming here every moining.

MRS. BOUNTY: But why?

BELLA: Well, I . . . I'd rather like to get a job.

THEY *all stare at her*; even MR. BOUNTY *lowers and raises his paper*.

MRS. BOUNTY: Good Heavens, Bella!

SYDNEY: That's the airmen again I'll be bound. . . .

BELLA (*indignantlly*): The airmen had nothing to do with it. It's my own idea. This singing . . . I don't seem to be getting anywhere and I never *see* anybody . . .

SYDNEY: You see us, don't you?

BELLA: It's not that—I never make any friends . . . practising all morning, going walks all afternoon when everyone's at work: I saw Margaret Bannerman last week, she's got a commission in the ATS—she told me Joan Tyson was married and having a baby in June.

MRS. BOUNTY (*shocked*): Bella!

BELLA: Well, there's nothing wrong in having a baby if you're married, is there? Everyone seems to do it. Thelma said . . .

SYDNEY: How can you discuss a thing like that with the maid?

BELLA: Well, there's no one else to discuss it with.

MRS. BOUNTY: Why do you want to discuss it at all. There's me spending all that money on singing lessons, after sending you to that expensive school, same as I did for Sydney.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SYDNEY: If you wanted a situation, why didn't you consult me about it?

MRS. BOUNTY: Bounty, for goodness sake put that paper down, and show some interest in your family.

SYDNEY (*using*): Well as a matter of fact, Mother, she'll have to take a job eventually, she's only reserved until she takes her exams in February, so I've already arranged for her to take a job.

BELLA: You have, where?

SYDNEY: You can come into the Municipal buildings as a clerk.

BELLA: A clerk.

SYDNEY (*putting coat on*): You can learn shorthand at evening class and typing on the office typewriter. Local Government isn't fussy these days, can't afford to be.

BELLA (*doubtfully*): Where would I work?

SYDNEY: You'll work under me, of course—as my private secretary.

MRS. BOUNTY: Why, Sydney, that's splendid. What should we do without you.

SYDNEY *goes to hall for hat, coat, umbrella, and brush from hall-stand.*

Let me give you a brush, dear.

*He stands to be brushed.*

SYDNEY (*to MR. BOUNTY*): And I could do the same for you if you'd pull yourself together.

MRS. BOUNTY: Bounty, Sydney's talking to you.

MR. BOUNTY: I 'eard. And it's t'awd job, or nowt.

SYDNEY: You're not going back to drains while I'm assistant Town Clerk.

*He exits.*

MRS. BOUNTY: Now won't that be nice—working in Sydney's office. You're a lucky girl to have such a brother to look after you. (*Sharply.*) Put that paper away, Bounty, and help Thelma with the dishes—never mind how t'Russians are doing.

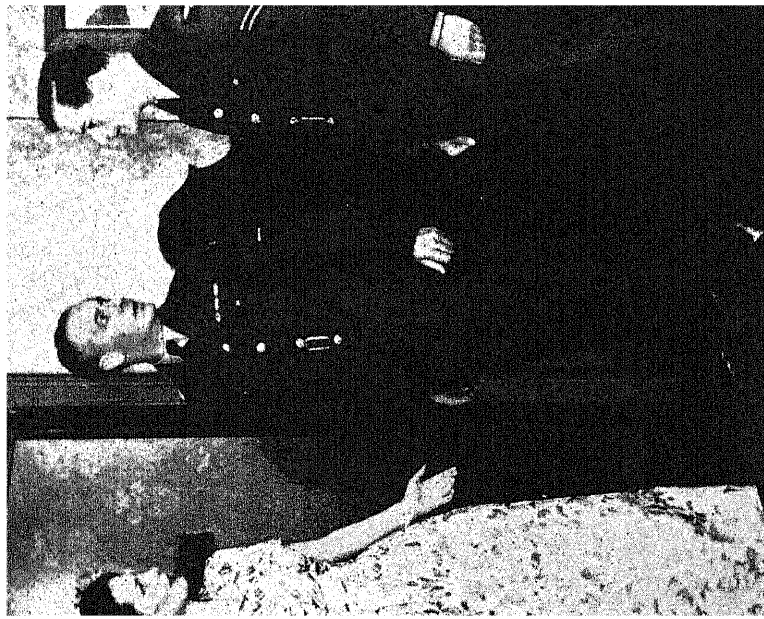
BOUNTY *up to sideboard.*

BELLA: I'll help wash up.

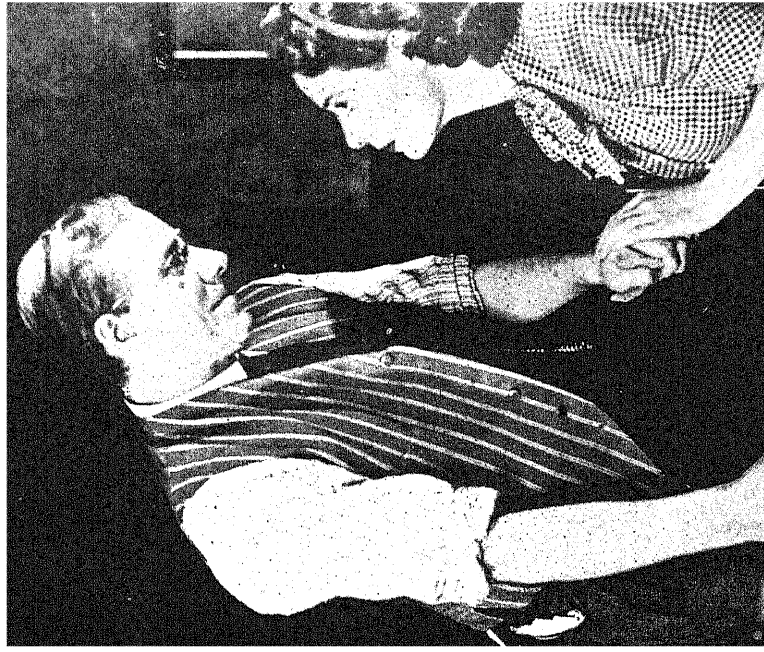
BOUNTY *brings down tray.*

MRS. BOUNTY: Indeed you'll not—you'll get on with your practice while I'm out—I've got one of the airmen to clean the windows.

POP: Well—er, I must be off!  
*DIANA DAWSON, JACK HOBBS,*  
and *JOHN FARLEY.*



Right: MR. BOUNTY: Brave? Ee lass, ah'm not  
brave, ah'm desperit!  
*JOHN E. COYLE and DIANA*  
*DAWSON*





## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA (*eagerly*): Which one?

MRS. BOUNTY: Never you mind which one and don't start talking to him! They don't need much encouragement. I'll not be away long.

*Exit. SHE bustles off.*

MR. BOUNTY *to table and starts clearing.*

BELLA: Daddy, I don't want to go.

MR. BOUNTY (*awkwardly soothing her*): There, lass, don't take on so, tha' won't go if tha' doesna want.

BELLA (*not reassured*): Secretary in *his* office—it'll be awful . . . oh, I oughtn't to say it, I know, because he's really a sort of brother, but I hate him, I can't help it, I hate him!

MR. BOUNTY (*profoundly*): Aye.

BELLA (*calming a little*): You hate him too. You *do*, don't you?

MR. BOUNTY *swallows hard · puts her from him.*

MR. BOUNTY: Bella, luv . . . Ah'm going away.

BELLA *draws back, alarmed and incredulous.*

BELLA: No!

MR. BOUNTY (*enjoying the effect*): Yes. Just for a time. (*Hastily.*) I'll come back, make no mistake . . . I'll come back and happen things'll be different when I do!

BELLA: But you can't! You can't leave me. I'd be miserable here without you. I couldn't bear it.

MR. BOUNTY: It'll be better for both of us in t'long run. You see, Bella, ah've an idea—a big idea—and I've got to see how it works out. I'm going to London to find out.

BELLA (*aghast*): To London!

MR. BOUNTY: It isn't so far as all that and I've been there before. (*Reminiscently.*) Eec, it were a grand day that—the time United were in t'final. Fower in the morning we got there and all had breakfast in a restaurant that would ha' made Alhambra on t'sea-front look like our scullery.

BELLA: But what are you going to do?

MR. BOUNTY: Happen it's better tha' doesn't know, Bella—they'd only worm it out of you if you did. I'll just leave a note saying ah've gone.

BELLA (*overawed*): There'll be a terrible scene!

MR. BOUNTY (*chuckling—clearing*): Aye, that there will an' all—a right to-do, tha'll have to give me full account when I come back.



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA: You will come back—promise.

MR. BOUNTY: O' course I'll come back, but I won't write. Not to you anyway—happen to one o't lads. I'll have to disguise me hand-writing though. That Sydney doesn't miss much. He got a proper eye-ful the other day, reading words that had come through on't blotter from one o't lads letters.

BELLA (*shocked*): No?

MR. BOUNTY: Aye, he did an' all . . . held it up to the mirror and read the words.

BELLA: What were they?

MR. BOUNTY: He read as how a bloke named Sydney was t'biggest twerp this side o' Marble Arch!

BELLA (*laughing*): Sydney? A twerp?

MR. BOUNTY *clears his throat.*

MR. BOUNTY: Well—Ah'm off to t'Post Office to draw out and you're to stay here and pass word to that saucy airman—"Duke" they call him . . .

BELLA: I know.

MR. BOUNTY: Well, tell him your father's taken his tip—that's all, he'll understand—he's a smart one, he is. I'll write note to mother and you can leave it on t'dressing table upstairs, but I'll have to look sharp before she comes back—you go upstairs and pack a few things in the old Gladstone bag and leave it in the shed at the back.

BELLA: I'll do it, but it's going to be awful when they find out. (*She hesitates a moment.*) Will you come in for the bag?

MR. BOUNTY: Not back here—she'd catch me—I'll just take it from shed.

BELLA: Then I won't . . . I won't see you again after this?

MR. BOUNTY: Not for a bit, lass, but I'll be back.

BELLA (*tearfully*): I think you're terribly brave.

MR. BOUNTY: Eeeee, lass, ah'm not brave—Ah'm desperate!

HE *kisses her.*

SHE *gulps back her tears and hurries out C. head held high. The moment she has gone PORTER, in shirt-sleeves, appears at the window. He slips up the sash, pushes his legs through, sits on the sill and begins a leisurely polishing. Keeping time he begins to whistle "Nellie Dean" but soon stops and whistles a penetrating "Coo-eee". THELMA makes a cautious entry from the kitchen D.L.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER (*brightening*): Oh, hullo—thought you'd forgotten.

THELMA: Have you got 'em?

PORTER (*delving into his pocket*): Yes. 'Ere you are. And no coupons!

HE *throws her a brown paper parcel.*

THELMA: Oh good. It is good of you, Sam. You are nice.

SHE *tears off the paper and the gift is revealed: it is a set of underwear—cheap but gaudily attractive. SHE is enraptured.*

Oh, Sammy—how luvly! They're scrumptious. Whizzzzo!

PORTER (*modestly*): Let's see how you look in 'em.

THELMA (*shocked*): Sam! Not here!

PORTER: I didn't mean put 'em on! Blimey, what do you take me for—I meant 'old 'em up against you . . .

SHE *holds up the petticoat: he makes a gesture of impatience.*

Not that 'arf—the frilly 'arf!

SHE *complies, shyly, and he gives that peculiar whistle, denoting extreme satisfaction—a downward note of "Ph-pheeeeeeeew!"*

Put 'em away. Comin' out to-night?

THELMA: Thank you for gettin' 'em, Sam, it's real sweet of you. How much do I owe you?

PORTER: Now come orf it—I promised you a present for scrounging that cake for us, didn't I? All right—you can give me a kiss for 'em.

THELMA: Not here, I daresn't.

PORTER: Come on . . .

THELMA: No, to-night.

PORTER: We're going to the pictures to-night and we'll never get back seats by the time I get off.

THELMA: Well, there's after.

PORTER: No, there ain't—S.P.s'll be patrolling and I've gotter be off the streets by ten. (*Grabbing her.*)

THELMA: All right, we can go down the back lane behind the house. (*She pushes him off.*)

PORTER (*doubtfully*): You wouldn't be stalling me, would you?

THELMA (*losing ground*): No, but . . .

PORTER (*advancing*): Carm onnnnn!

HE *grabs her and she surrenders. They kiss, conventionally, as learned on films, her arm circling the back of his neck. BELLA, carrying a small Gladstone bag, enters C. and stops, abruptly.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA: Oh!

*THEY leap apart but relax on seeing it is only her.*

Thelma! Really.

PORTER (*easily*): No 'arm done, miss—just settling a little account, she was.

THELMA (*a little abashed*): I've got to peel the potatoes.

*Collects undies, quick exit D.L.*

PORTER: I'll come and give you a hand. (*Makes to follow.*)

BELLA: No, just a moment . . . is the L.A.C. in, the younger one?

PORTER: What—the Dook?

BELLA: Yes, that's him.

PORTER: No, he ain't, miss—he's on clothing parade this morning trying to wangle two new towels in exchange for some razor blades I sold 'im. Corp's in tho'—it's his day oif.

BELLA: Oh—well, would you . . . could you ask him to come down here for a moment?

PORTER (*a little mystified*): In here? With you?

BELLA: Yes—just for a moment—he'll come, won't he?

PORTER: You bet your sweet life he will.

BELLA (*uncomfortably*): Oh no, perhaps you hadn't better . . .

*But PORTER has gone to the stairs and shouted.*

PORTER: Corp!

MARK'S VOICE (*off*): Hullo?

PORTER: Come down here a minnit—I've fixed up a date for yer! (*To Bella.*) He'll be here in two ticks, miss. Don't worry about the missus, I'll keep an eye on the back door while I'm doing the spuds with Thelma.

BELLA: Yes, but I say . . .

PORTER: That's all right you relax. (*As he exits.*) Thelma, have you got a spare potato?

*HE goes out D.L. BELLA hurries across to the mirror over the mantelshelf and puts a few feminine touches to her hair.*

MARK (*seeing only her, hesitates*): Porter said somebody wanted me. (*Top of stairs.*)

BELLA: Well, it was the L.A.C. I really wanted. (*D.L.*)

MARK (*disappointed*): Oh.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA (*perhaps too anxiously*): Oh no—only to give him a message from father—something private.

MARK: Is it written?—I could give it to him.

BELLA: No, it isn't. Father just said . . . oh, it doesn't matter, I'll see him dinner-time.

MARK: Yes, of course.

HE *turns to go*: BELLA *makes a wild attempt to stop him*.

BELLA: Could you—would you like a piece of cake?

MARK *hesitates*.

MARK: Yes. Yes, I would, thank you very much.

HE *comes cautiously into the room*.

BELLA: It's all right. There's no one here but me.

*Going to the sideboard and getting a slice of cake on a plate.*

They won't notice. It's going to be put away again. Sydney takes a piece to have with his morning coffee. There. (*Giving it him*.) I made it myself. See how you like it.

MARK (*taking it gingerly*): Thanks. (*Takes cake off plate*.)

BELLA: You'd better have a plate.

MARK (*about to take a bite*): No, it doesn't matter.

BELLA: The crumbs.

MARK: Oh, of course—sorry. (*He takes it*.)

*She watches him closely.*

It's good.

BELLA: You can't get all the things that ought to go in it.

MARK: No, of course not.

BELLA: I like cooking.

MARK: Do you really? I'm so glad.

BELLA: Yes.

*There is another awkward silence.*

BELLA: Have you had any more sing-songs?

MARK: No, but I've never had a chance of thanking you for the key. It was very good of you, we all thought so.

BELLA: I never use that piano now. I've got a baby grand upstairs.

MARK: How are you getting on with your singing? (*Moving to Bella*.)

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA: Oh, all right I suppose—the maestro—that's my singing master, says I'm all right, but he would, wouldn't he?

MARK: Well, not unless you really were good, would he?

BELLA: Oh yes, you see he gets 7s. 6d. a lesson and he wouldn't want that to stop, would he?

MARK: It depends what sort of a maestro he is, doesn't it?

BELLA *considers this. When she speaks it is with a conscious effort.*

BELLA: Corporal . . . (*She stops.*) It sounds silly, doesn't it?

MARK: Yes. Call me Mark.

BELLA: Mark. I like that. Better than mine . . .

MARK: Is your's Arabella?

BELLA: No, I wish it was. It's Isobel. People always make that stupid joke about it.

MARK: Joke?

BELLA: Is a bell necessary on a bicycle.

BELLA: } Would you like to—

MARK: } I was wondering if you— (*Together.*)

MARK: Oh. What were you going to ask me?

BELLA: Well, mother's got an idea of me becoming an opera singer and singing in Covent Garden and places and I . . .

MARK: Yes?

BELLA: I don't think I'm good enough that's all. What do you think?

MARK: Doesn't the maestro know?

BELLA: Well, he's always rather vague. (*Confidentially.*) I don't think he's a proper macstro. I found out his real name the other day. It isn't Professor Malletti at all—it's Entwistle.

MARK (*grinning*): Oh, they all have professional names—even the best of them.

BELLA: But what do *you* think?

MARK: Look here, this isn't fair—I've only heard you sing "Coming Round the Mountain" and half the chorus of "Nellie Dean"! You'd have to sing something serious—you've got a very *sweet* voice.

BELLA: Yes, but "sweet" isn't enough, is it?

MARK: Not for places like the Albert Hall. If you don't want to sing, what would you like to do?

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA : That's what's so awful about it—I don't know and I don't seem to be able to find out.

MARK : You're only young, Bella, you've got plenty of time.

BELLA : I'm twenty-one. Did you know what you wanted to do when you were twenty-one ?

MARK : Well—yes, but I was a special case—I always knew. I started right away.

BELLA : What at ?

MARK : Teaching. I went to a University—then I got some pupil teaching experience, then I got a good school right away.

BELLA (*happily*) : Tell me about it.

MARK : There isn't much to tell. It was a small public school right up in the moors of North Devon—grand country and the kids were grand too : I loved it.

BELLA : What did you teach—everything ?

MARK : Good Lord, no. Only English literature.

BELLA : And poetry—did you get them to like poetry ?

MARK : Well, you can't make them like it—that's a sheer impossibility. But I tried to get them to like reading it and find out more for themselves later on.

BELLA : Did it work ?

MARK : With some of them—about two in each form.

BELLA : Is that all ?

MARK : Oh, the others absorbed a little—straight-forward story-telling stuff like Tennyson and Macaulay.

BELLA : I wish I could talk to you more often.

MARK : Well you can—any time.

BELLA : No, I should get into a terrible row. And they'd take it out of you, too.

MARK : Don't your mother and step-brother like airmen ?

BELLA : They hate having to have billetees. They think it is common. They've been that way ever since Sydney became an official on the Council. You must think we're awful.

MARK : No, not you and Mr. Bounty. You've been very kind.

BELLA : You must hate it here after Devon.

MARK : It's a bit stuffy somehow.

BELLA : I've always wanted to live in the country.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK (*too eagerly*): Have you? I'm so glad.

BELLA: Glad?

MARK (*awkwardly*): You're the sort of person who ought to, I mean.

BELLA: Am I? Why?

MARK: Oh, never mind.

BELLA: Tell me what you were going to say.

MARK: It'll sound silly I'm afraid.

BELLA: I'm sure it won't.

MARK: Well, it's just that you look so—fresh and young and unspoiled—not at all the sort of person one would expect to find in a place like this.

BELLA (*expecting more and liking it*): Yes?

MARK: That's all.

BELLA: Do I seem—very young?

MARK: Yes, Bella.

BELLA: Like a—child you mean.

HE *is silent.*

You do, don't you? Everybody thinks that. It's almost as though there was something the matter with me—something strange.

MARK (*earnestly*): No, no, not like that at all—it's a wonderful quality. I wouldn't have you without it—it's what attracted me from the first. (*Checking himself.*) There. Now it's out, isn't it!

BELLA *is wonderstruck for a moment, hardly daring to believe he is actually attracted to her. Then a new thought strikes her and she turns away, sadly.*

BELLA: You're laughing at me, aren't you? (*Rising.*)

MARK: Laughing? (*Rising.*)

HE *sees that she finds his admiration incredible and the realisation overwhelms him with tenderness. For a moment he speaks quite free of restraint.*

Does it seem as unlikely as all that? Haven't you ever guessed when I waited for you to pass on the landing? I never dreamed that here—in this place—there could be anyone so . . . so . . .

*His caution catches up with him.*

I can't say anything more, I can't say what I want to.

BELLA (*brightly*): Oh, please do—please, Mark.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : No, you see, Bella—I never meant it to happen like this. You see, Bella—I . . .

*The total inadequacy of words overwhelms him. HE hesitates a second and then seizes her in his arms. She is so close, with face upturned, that the movement is very simple. She neither resists or responds. He kisses her, generously. PORTER appears at the door D.L.*

THEY break apart, guiltily : PORTER gives a warning sound.

PORTER : Cave—'ere comes the missus.

MARK (*urgently*) : This afternoon—my day off—the café at the corner of Inkermann Road, opposite the bandstand. (*Running to stairs.*)

BELLA : Oh no, no, I couldn't—what time ? (*Following.*)

MARK (*as he runs up*) : Three—two-thirty—no, two o'clock.

*Exit.*

BELLA picks up the bag.

BELLA : Hide this—please . . . put it in the shed the moment she's gone.

SHE throws it, and, without question, PORTER takes it, runs across to window and throws it out. BELLA dashes off C, just as MRS. BOUNTY with shopping bag, enters D.L. PORTER begins to whistle and to polish as she crosses stage. Unconcernedly he croons "Nellie Dean". She stares at him balefully as she crosses and Exits C. PORTER goes on whistling. PORTER sings at window "Nellie Dean", finishing with "I love you, Mrs. B. Get out of it!" just as she reaches door B.C.

## CURTAIN



WORM'S EYE VIEW

*Act Two: Scene I*

*The billetees' room about a month later.*

*After tea. DUKE is at table, writing letters. Magazines, letters, etc., strewn all over table. PORTER is on the sofa. TAFFY at table L. POP at telephone.*

POP: Yes, still here. Oh, about the same. Nothing much. You've not heard yet. Well keep your pecker up you're bound to hear soon. How's the garden? What? Not that bed in front. They won't grow there. I've tried 'em before, neighbour's hedge keeps all the sun off. How's Monica? She has. Didn't I tell her to stick it. There go the pips. Thursday then, unless there's anything special. Good-bye darling. Yes, of course. Look after yourself.

*HE rings off and comes to armchair R.*

DUKE: What's new? (*Sits C. table.*)

POP: Wife's trying to grow peas in the flower-bed in the front garden. Damn silly. Neighbour's hedge keeps all the sun off. She never trims it.

DUKE: Going to trim it for her?

POP: You bet, next leave. Got a match?

*DUKE complies.*

TAFFY: How much does it cost to ring your wife on the telephone?

POP: One and four.

TAFFY: And how often do you ring in a week?

POP: Three times.

TAFFY: That's four shillings a week in 'phone calls. How long have you been ringing?

POP: Eighteen months.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

TAFFY: If I was you I'd have the 'phone taken out and write longer letters.

POP: Letters aren't the same somehow.

DUKE (*whistling for matches*): Talking of money, want to earn a tanner, Taff?

TAFFY: Yes, indeed. (DUKE *pitches his tunic across to him.*)

DUKE: Do the buttons.

TAFFY: I'll do overcoat and cap for ninepence.

DUKE (*half-rising*): Will you? (*Sinking back.*) Hell no, I'm not dancing in my overcoat.

TAFFY (*with cunning*): No, indeed, but you'll not feel like cleaning them in the morning for C.O.'s staff inspection.

DUKE: Sevenpence for the lot.

TAFFY: Ah no—my price is ninepence.

DUKE: You impenitent thief!

TAFFY: Look here. You quibble about paying me an extra twopence but you would not think twice about spending fifty twopences on your old girl friends.

DUKE (*to Pop*): How much is fifty twopences?

POP: Er . . . 8s. 4d.

DUKE (*to Taffy*): 8s. 4d.! Then you don't know much about girl friends. O.K. Ninepence, but they've got to shine.

TAFFY *takes the coat and goes out C. to fetch the overcoat and cap.*

PORTER: Gosh, this room's chilly, why can't we have the fire on?

POP: Because the gas is turned off at the main—they cook by electric.

PORTER (*getting up*): Blimey, we can soon fix that.

*Exit.* PORTER *goes out L.*

DUKE: Don't forget to come down and let me in to-night, Pop.

POP: I'll not forget—come in through this window—back door bolt's too noisy.

DUKE: Sure. Where's Mark?

POP: Don't know. Getting spruced up.

DUKE: Is he going out on the tiles?

POP: Not on the tiles: out with Bella, I think.

DUKE: Beats me what he can see in that type—they're so pure.

WORM'S EYE VIEW

POP : Isn't that a recommendation ?

DUKE : Not with me it isn't.

PORTER *returns D.L.*

PORTER : The gas is on and the old gul out!

POP : How about Sydney ?

PORTER : Well, we ought to be able to hear anyone coming and stand in front until the red glow dies down.

*As TAFFY comes in with overcoat and cap C.*

DUKE : Got a bob for the gas, Taff ?

TAFFY : Don't ask such stupid questions.

PORTER : You don't need no shilling. I've got a filed two franc piece here.

DUKE : Won't fit, will it ?

PORTER : Always has before.

DUKE : If you've used it before how the blazes do you get it back ?

PORTER : Blimey, there ain't nothin' to that gas-meter lock, mate.

POP : You'll drop the lot of us right in it one day if you go on monkeying with that meter.

PORTER : I don't pinch nothing out of it—I only get me franc piece back. It ain't no use to the Gas Company is it ?

TAFFY (*piously*) : It's stealing all the same.

PORTER : It's what ?

TAFFY : It's stealing I said.

PORTER (*squarely*) : Look mate. Ain't you Reds a bit cockeyed one way and another ? Suppose I do pinch a bob's-worth o' gas—that juice is owned by the workers according to you ain't it ? And ain't we workers ? 'Course we are—when they're a-watchin' of us.

POP (*interested*) : What do you say to that, Taffy ?

TAFFY : I'll tell you what I say. I say that . . .

DUKE : Stick the franc in, Porter, we might as well argue this out in the warm. If Taffy convinces me we'll fish it out again and sit in the cold.

*Fire go.*

PORTER, *with TAFFY looking on in stern disapproval, inserts the coin in the meter beside the fire. He then lights the gas.*

TAFFY : The Rev. Rhys Thomas used to say "What is morally

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

wrong cannot be politically right". So until the gas is the property of the State the workers must pay for it as they use it.

PORTER (*exasperated*): But, blimey, if your party 'ad their way they wouldn't stop at a shilling's-worth o' gas, they'd pinch the ruddy gasometer! I don't 'old with all this social reform—blokes like you'll be the finish o' blokes like me.

DUKE (*lazily interested*): How do you make that out? You've got nothing to lose.

PORTER (*facing him*): Not yet I ain't but I might 'ave. Do away with private enterprise they would.

TAFFY (*polishing vigorously*): Aye and a good thing, too.

PORTER: Oh no, it ain't—if this is wot you blokes call Capitalism it's okay by me—why? Because I know me way rahnd it that's why. Put the ruddy Socialists in power and you know what would happen?

DUKE: What?

PORTER: They'd slap blokes like me in clink before I could so much as fill out one o' their blinkin' forms.

TAFFY (*roused*): You see how it is? How can we people hope to make progress when we are weakened by greedy people like that in our midst. I tell you, if you had to spend a week in the Rhondda. . . .

(*He points violently at Porter.*)

PORTER: Don't point at me, it's rude. Hold up, somebody coming.

DUKE (*springing to his feet*): Quick—fire—

*The political argument dissolves. THEY all co-operate. DUKE switches off the gas which glows red; PORTER and TAFFY stand in front of it to screen the glow. They are scorched but only wriggle. POP and DUKE assume innocent poses. Enter MARK first—PORTER and TAFFY move from fire but at remark "Sydney" from MARK dash back and put fire out.*

SYDNEY makes a pompous entry C. after MARK.

MARK (*grimly*): Everyone here? Spooner's got something to say.

DUKE: Fancy!

SYDNEY (*looking round, distastefully*): Now that my stepfather has gone, and the maid isn't all she should be, Mrs. Bounty and I do rely on you to keep this place a little tidier. It doesn't reflect much credit on the Air Force to find it like this you know. Still, that's by the way.

*There is a glum silence. TAFFY and PORTER remain in position.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK *sits down, hands deep in pockets.* DUKE *begins to write a letter.*

POP *stolidly puffs his pipe.*

(*To Duke*): Nobody heard from Mr. Bounty, I suppose?

POP: Why should we hear?

SYDNEY: Oh, I just wondered—thought I recognised his hand-writing on an envelope in here. (*To Duke.*) Yours I believe.

DUKE: Sorry, old boy, next time I'll have the G.P.O. re-address my mail to you. Oversight on my part.

SYDNEY: There's no need to be offensive, L.A.C.—surely Miss. Bounty and I are entitled to know of Mr. Bounty's whereabouts. If you do happen to have his address wouldn't it be a kind thing to relieve my mother's mind on the subject? Anxiety is making her ill.

DUKE: Sorry, old boy—I think a bottle of medicine would do her more good than my private correspondence.

SYDNEY (*carelessly*): Of course, it's up to you.

DUKE (*looking up at Sydney*): Yes, I think it is—sorry and all that you know.

MARK: Is that all you wanted?

SYDNEY: Not quite. There's another little matter . . . it has come to my notice that—er—my sister Isobel has been keeping company with an airman lately.

DUKE: Oh, I *say*.

SYDNEY: Now don't misunderstand me—there are a good many airmen in the town and it is not impossible that the man might be unknown to you and to me. However, if that is not the case I think we might as well understand one another on the matter.

MARK (*grimly*): What do you mean—understand one another?

SYDNEY (*shrugging*): Need I elaborate? I thought my views on the . . . er . . . existence of two separate establishments here were well-known. In the matter of Thelma the maid, my control is limited, but as regards my sister . . .

MARK (*quietly*): I think you must be referring to me, Mr. Spooner.

SYDNEY (*surprised*): To you!

MARK: I have been—out with your sister.

SYDNEY: Well . . . I'm beginning to understand. Now, look here, young man . . .

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : Mr. Spooner. If you do intend to discuss this matter I'm afraid I must ask you to do it in private. None of the others are concerned.

SYDNEY : What I've got to say concerns you all.

POP : I'm afraid it doesn't. Come on, you chaps.

HE goes out upstairs. DUKE follows.

PORTER : Come on, Taff. Standing there poking yer nose into other people's business. Get up them stairs!

*Exit.*

MARK : Now, Mr. Spooner ?

SYDNEY : You realise this has got to cease at once.

MARK : I'm afraid I don't.

SYDNEY : You're going to force me to be unpleasant ?

MARK : Not necessarily, but you'd better say what you feel.

SYDNEY : In the first place Bella has been behaving very peculiarly of late.

MARK : Yes ?

SYDNEY : She has ceased to show any interest whatever in her work.

MARK : Do you mean her singing ? She always practises regularly. (*Breaking away to sofa.*)

SYDNEY : I wasn't thinking of her singing—not entirely. She is about to take an executive post under me in Local Government.

MARK : That was your idea rather than Bella's, wasn't it ?

SYDNEY (*sharply*) : What the devil has that got to do with you ?

MARK : A good deal I think, Mr. Spooner—you see, I don't altogether accept your self-appointed guardianship of Bella. She's legally of age in any case. And furthermore, I'm far from satisfied that your sister is happy here.

SYDNEY (*taken aback*) : You've got a damned impudence!

MARK (*controlled*) : I don't think so—I've got a certain amount of consideration for other people, and, frankly, it seems to me that Bella is having a hell of a time one way and another.

SYDNEY (*sarcastically*) : Have you quite finished ?

MARK : Practically. Now, I'm not going to "state my intentions" as they put it, because I don't think they enter into the matter at this stage, but seeing that Bella is over twenty-one I feel she is well able to choose her own friends and what happens after this is entirely dependent upon her. Any sort of pledge you try and extract from me won't have the slightest effect.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SYDNEY: Is that all, Corporal?

MARK: Yes, I think so, except that I can assure you—if it's any satisfaction to you—that there's nothing wrong with our friendship.

SYDNEY (*who has now recovered his poise*): Well, it's rather fortunate we had this . . . er . . . chat, Corporal. I must say I'm rather surprised at the attitude you take and I think I can promise you you'll regret it before very long.

MARK: I'll chance that.

SYDNEY: As for Bella, I shall attend to that. And I think I can predict a slight . . . er . . . cooling off as regards yourself.

MARK: You must do as you think best about that, Mr. Spooner.

SYDNEY (*beginning to lose his temper*): I can assure you I will!

*HE turns and moves to the door C.*

MARK: There's just one thing—as a matter of interest—I don't suppose you'd be good enough to tell me your objections to me, personally?

*SYDNEY looks him steadily up and down.*

SYDNEY: I don't think that's necessary—we have plans for Bella, and you don't happen to enter into them: you see (*with studied effect*) it isn't as if you were commissioned, is it? And as far as I can see you don't even wear wings!

*He turns and walks out. The final remark stung MARK and it can now be seen that the interview has shaken him; towards the end of it he was making a very conscious effort to control himself. He stands trembling near the window.*

*The others appear looking over balustrade—1. POP; 2. DUKE; 3. PORTER; 4. TAFFY.*

POP: How'd it go, old boy?

*MARK suddenly strides across the floor and into the hall, slamming one door and—after a second's pause—the front door, on his way to the street. DUKE whistles.*

DUKE (*D.C.*): This is getting interesting.

POP: Let him alone. He'll be late back I expect. I'll let him in if he signals. (*Crosses to front of sofa.*)

PORTER (*C.*): Reminds me of an 'im we uster sing at the Mile End Road Band of 'Ope when we was kids. "There is beauty all around when there's luv at 'ome."

*TAFFY R. of PORTER.*

*Silence.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

Come on, Taff, fer Gawd's sake—let's go to the pictures before Thelma spots me; I can take *you* in the ninepennies. (*He catches hold of Taffy's arm.*)

TAFFY and PORTER *exit C.*

POP (*without looking up*): Don't forget to put your names in the hallstand drawer.

PORTER: Blimey—as if we should forget that. Hurry up, Taff. Get your skates on.

POP: Have you got a match, Duke.

PORTER and TAFF *go out. Offstage the front door slams. DUKE is putting the finishing touches on himself.*

DUKE: You can keep that box, there's only three in it. Pity Mark doesn't seek his love-life further afield. There's so much trouble with home-grown——

*The 'phone rings.*

POP: See if that's for me.

DUKE: Yes, of course, old boy. Hallo, (*To Pop.*) No, it's for me. My lovely! (*Into 'phone.*) Hallo, *darling*. Darling, you don't mean that—— But, darling, you couldn't mean that—— (*Pause.*) So ends another episode in my life. Thank God! Cheerio, Pop.

*Exit C.*

BELLA's head *appears at door C.*

BELLA: Are you all by yourself?

POP (*rising*): Yes—come in, please.

BELLA *makes a timid entry C.*

BELLA: Has—Sydney been here?

POP: Yes. He saw Mark.

BELLA: What happened?

POP: I don't know. Mark saw him alone.

BELLA: Oh. Was it . . .

POP (*smiling*): About you? Yes, I'm afraid it was.

BELLA: Somebody must have seen us out. They kept on at me to tell, but I didn't.

POP: Mark was quite open about it.

BELLA (*breathlessly*): No!

POP: Why not? You aren't ashamed of being seen out with him are you?



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

BELLA: Oh no, please don't think that—he's so clever and . . . gentle. No one's ever treated me like he does. But it only leads to trouble. You see, they aren't like other people, they're so stuck-up and now mother's pretending to have a breakdown.

POP: Don't let that worry you. She'll get over it.

BELLA (*hesitantly*): Pop . . . you don't mind me calling you Pop, do you?

POP: Of course not, they all do.

BELLA: You're so much older than any of us.

POP: Here, wait a minute—not that much older.

BELLA: Well, you're married and you've got a grown-up son and daughter, haven't you?

POP: The daughter is just as old as you.

BELLA: Well, there's nothing wrong in my going out with Mark is there? I mean—if you found Mark taking your daughter out you wouldn't be frightfully upset, would you?

POP (*amused*): I should say not. He'd be a big improvement on some of the young men I've seen scuffling round the back gate. I think I'd even ask him in to supper.

BELLA: But suppose you caught them . . . kissing.

POP: Well, I don't think I would. I'd look the other way.

BELLA: My word! I think she's frightfully lucky to have a father like you.

POP: You'd probably have an outsize job to convince her of that.

BELLA: Are you and your wife happily married?

POP: Happier than a lot of people I think. We've grown out or cuddling one another in the pictures you know, but we haven't started fighting yet.

BELLA: Is marriage like that—you know—just "getting on"?

POP: Happy marriages generally are.

BELLA: It's not very romantic, is it? Not like you read about.

POP: Oh, it is at first.

BELLA: But don't you get terribly miserable when it—stops?

POP: Well, it doesn't stop all of a sudden, it sort of crystallises and gets more comfortable. You get round to preferring a chair *each* if you see what I mean.

BELLA: Yes, I think I do. It sounds so much nicer than all this.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

POP: Oh, hang on to "all this" as long as you can. It only comes once, you know.

BELLA: It's so easy to talk to you, Pop. You're like Mark, you know about things.

POP: Don't you know whether you're in love with Mark?

BELLA: Well—no, not really, one can't be sure first time, but whatever it is it's so nice I want it to go on all the time and never stop.

POP (*solemnly*): I'm afraid it's love all right.

BELLA: Well, suppose it is—for me, I mean—it just seems impossible that he (*rises*) I mean, look at the girls he must have met.

POP: I don't think he's met very many, Bella.

BELLA: But he must've, he's twenty-five; besides, he knows what girls think.

POP (*laughing*): What do they think?

BELLA (*sits again*): Well, he knows how they feel then; when we were out on the Burrows last Sunday afternoon he . . . (*stopping*) Well, we'd kissed you know. Just a peck it was. There's always people coming and going up there, and you don't get very long.

POP: No.

BELLA: It was all frog in my throaty, and butterflies in my tummy, oh, I don't know!

POP: That's a good sign.

BELLA: Oh? Why?

POP: I don't quite know. But it's a very good sign.

BELLA: Do you think it means—do you think Mark is in love with me, too?

POP: Why, of course he is.

BELLA: Oh! (*She is thrilled.*)

*There is an awkward pause.*

POP: Would you like to see a photograph of my wife and daughter.

BELLA: Oh, yes, I would.

POP (*he produces one from wallet*): There they are. That was taken on the porch.

BELLA: Oh, they're awfully smart, aren't they?

POP: They always look nice.

BELLA: Have you a lot of money.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

POP: Well . . . er . . . not a lot. They were all dressed up for a party when that was taken.

BELLA: Mark asked me out to a party at a big hotel to meet his old headmaster and wife.

POP: Oh, that'll be nice. Are you going?

BELLA: Well, no. You see I haven't got an evening frock.

POP: Oh, that's a pity.

BELLA: Even if I had, mother wouldn't let me stay out late.

POP: Couldn't you stay with a friend for the night.

BELLA: Oh, I could stay at my aunt's.

POP: There you are. (*Thoughtfully.*) The dress . . .

BELLA: Oh, it's not only the dress. It's shoes and hair and bag and everything. All the girls will look like magazine covers and mother thinks it's fast to dress like that.

POP: You tell Mark you'll go.

BELLA: What?

POP: Please, I want you to. What's to-day?

BELLA: Monday. Why?

POP: Meet me on the top landing Wednesday mid-day—just before lunch.

BELLA: Whatever for? (*Rises.*)

POP: I might have some good news for you. Will you be there? (*Moving upstage.*)

BELLA: Yes, but . . .

POP: And fix up that alibi with your aunt understand? (*Moving upstage.*)

SYDNEY (*off*): Bella! Bella!

BELLA: Oh dear, he's missed me, he's coming down. (*Crosses down L.*)

POP: Slip round the back and come through the front.

SYDNEY (*off*): Bella.

BELLA (*breathlessly*): Good-bye and thank you, it was sweet of you . . . you are a darling. You are you know.

POP: Oh no.

*She hurries off D.L. He hesitates, thinking . . .*

SYDNEY: Bella, where are you? (*Off.*)

*. . . for a second and then moves to the 'phone.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

POP: Trunks please. (*Slight pause.*) It that trunks? I want Primrose 2474—reversed charges. . . . My name, Brownlow --B-R-O-W-N-L-O-W.

*Enter* SYDNEY.

Thank you.

SYDNEY: L.A.C.—

POP: Sssh!! Yes, Brownlow. Reversed charges. (*To Sydney.*) Yes?

SYDNEY: I thought I heard my sister in here.

POP: In here?

SYDNEY: Oh, she's probably upstairs.

BELLA *passes across open back door and waves to* POP.

*Exit* SYDNEY.

POP: Yes, most probably. (*To himself.*) I hope, by now. (*Into 'phone.*) Hello, is that you, darling? Now listen. You know that romance I told you about? Well, it's doing O.K. He's asked her out to a dinner on Thursday, but she can't go because she hasn't any clothes. *Clothes.* About Monica's size I should say. (*Pause.*) But, darling, I couldn't measure her hips and b—

## QUICK CURTAIN

### Act Two: Scene 2

*The airmen are at tea once again; it is three days later.*

*As curtain rises the two recruits are making a hasty meal and the two permanent staff, POP, DUKE, discovered.*

DUKE: Is that all the jam there is?

PORTER (*mouth full*): That's all, mate. I told Taffy 'e was havin' more'n his rightful share. Think o' the others I said . . .

TAFFY (*wrathfully*): It's telling lies you are—you've had four slices to my two!

PORTER: So I might 'ave, but I didn't plaster it on like you did.

DUKE: Look here you two. This is getting a bit thick. By the time the permanent staff come in, you rookies have been through the house like a plague of locusts.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER: Who'd be a locust in this house? You'd thin down to a gnat in a fortnight!

DUKE: When I was a recruit.

POP: How long ago was that? Six weeks?

DUKE: Six weeks nothing—I've been in eighteen months—nearly.

PORTER: What you been doing all that time?

DUKE: Oh, stooging around you know. Fly with the R.A.F. they said.

*He makes the noise of a 'plane engine, brings his arm round, and knocks TAFFY, who is on his left, off his chair.*

Then they sent me to bump the floor of three-wing Naafi.

POP: I thought you were the registry runner.

DUKE: Good Lord, no. I lost that job three weeks ago. Station Warrant Officer caught me asleep on the pier.

*Enter THELMA with hot-water jug.*

Shove over that frightened looking bit of cake, Taff.

THELMA: Here's your hot water.

PORTER: Oh, thank you, duck.

(THELMA moves *L.* again.)

POP: Jam—jam—

PORTER: Leave 'er to me, mate. (*Rising.*)

*THELMA comes in with some more hot water.*

I've got something for you, Glamour! 'Ere you are. (*Producing a small pot of face-cream.*) Foundation cream—last pot, pre-war stuff.

*He holds it up. She is interested.*

THELMA: What brand?

PORTER (*reading*): "Fresh and Fragrant—An ee-senshul foundation for cool loveliness"—ninepence!

THELMA: I can't pay while Saturday.

PORTER: Always willing to oblige reg'lar customers.

*SHE reaches out.*

'Arf a minnit—one good turn . . . how's the jam stakes tonight?

THELMA: There's a pot of home-made raspberry on the top shelf of the larder.

PORTER: She'll miss a new pot.

THELMA: It's been opened—I put it by for a rainy day.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER: Well, it's pouring aht—let's 'ave it! Here! (*He tosses her the pot, which she catches and goes out L.*)

DUKE: That was decent of you, old boy.

PORTER (*sitting table*): Don't be silly—the pot was a sample and she can get the same for sixpence in the Stores. (*To Taffy.*) Now what's the matter with you?

TAFFY: Another of your sly tricks—I won't have any of the jam purchased by lies! (*Rise.*)

PORTER: All right, mate, we don't want to put no strain on your conscience, me'n the Duke'll have your share.

TAFFY, *who has finished anyway, pushes his plate aside and goes out C.*

MARK (*from top of staircase*): Got a new blade anyone, mine's like a saw.

POP: You can use my electric—I'm coming up.

*Rises—Exits upstairs.*

MARK: Thanks.

THELMA *hurries in, dumps a jampot on the table and hurries out again.*  
*They both grab for it and stop, hands outstretched.*

DUKE: Après-vous, Alphonse.

PORTER: What's that in English, sounds rude.

DUKE: Means you go first.

PORTER (*jerking his head towards the kitchen*): You know Sydney and the old girl wangled her out o' the call-up I s'pose.

DUKE: Oh?

PORTER: Saw the application form in the Orderly Room—hard luck story, five airmen and no 'elp—got the C.O. to confirm. (*Putting jam on bread.*)

DUKE: Seive 'em damn well right if Thelma joined up.

PORTER: She'd take a bit o' persuading—might be done tho'. (*Reflectively.*) Smack in the eye for the old girl if we could manage it, eh?

DUKE: I'll lay you six to four in half-crowns you couldn't.

PORTER: Done! How long do I get?

DUKE: A week and I'll lend a hand.

PORTER: Blimey, she's almost in uniform. Glamour, can you spare a minute? (*To DUKE, as THELMA enters.*) This'll open your eyes. (*Up.*) Hear your exemption's through, Glamour.

THELMA: Yesterday. What about it?

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER (*airily*): Oh, nothing . . . on'y I was just tellin' the Duke. It ain't fair.

THELMA: What isn't fair?

PORTER: Well, pullin' strings to do you outer your post-war credits.

DUKE: Oh, I don't know—if Thelma wants to make a career of housework . . .

THELMA: Who said I wanted to make a career of housework?

DUKE: Well, you must be doing—you've practically bound yourself to it for the rest of your life haven't you?

THELMA: I've what? (*Horrified.*)

PORTER (*sententiously*): Don't tell 'er, Duke, it'll only unsettle her.

THELMA: What are you trying to hide from me? What's going on?

PORTER: Well, it ain't through Parlyment yet, but the Duke 'ere 'ad a letter from 'is boss yesterday; it was all about the noo Domestic Service Act—'is boss runs an agency see?

THELMA: Well, what about it?

PORTER: Well, it seems that girls who get exemption from the Forces and waiwork on special grounds such as yours, are liable to stay with their present employers for—er—five years after the war.

THELMA: No!

PORTER: Yers!

DUKE: Tell her the truth while you're at it, Porter. It's seven years unless they marry, five if they do.

THELMA: Stay here, five years after t'war? It's slavery!

PORTER: That's what I said. Especially when you think of them post-war credits you're missing.

THELMA: Post-war credits. What's them?

DUKE: A.M.O. 72/1942.

PORTER: Oh, that's just a little inducement to get you fillies to volunteer—a sort've lump sum you get on—

DUKE: Armistice Day.

PORTER: Yes. Armistice Day.

THELMA: How much.

PORTER: Well, that depends on how long you've been in. My sister joined in '41 and she's due for 'er—£190.

THELMA: £190. Why didn't you tell me this afore?

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER : Well, how did I know the old girl was going to do the dirty on you ?

THELMA : I don't see how I'm bound. You see I might get called up later on.

PORTER : Ah! Now there's the rub. You don't get no credits if you're called up. You gotter volunteer like my sister Dais.

THELMA : Do you reckon I oughter have it out with the old girl.

PORTER and DUKE (*grabbing her*) : No!!!!

PORTER : No, don't do that. Go down to the depôt and sign on. Ats, Wrens, Waafs, factory-work, anything you like. Once you've volunteered they can't touch you.

THELMA (*to Duke*) : What do you say to that ?

DUKE : Horse-sense!

PORTER : There you are, he says it's horse-sense.

THELMA : Yes, well, reckon I'll go to bed and sleep on it. £190, it makes you think, don't it ?

PORTER : It do, don't it ? And think of that lovely uniform. Everything found. (*Taking her D.L.*)

THELMA : Not everything ?

PORTER : Yes, everythin'.

THELMA : Ooooh!

*Exit THELMA D.L.*

DUKE and PORTER *sit at table.*

DUKE : By God, Porter, you're a boy wonder!

PORTER : That's nothing, mate. You oughter hear me selling fifty tins of beans to a bloke wot wants a second-hand motor bike !

DUKE (*laughing*) : I'd love to, old boy, love to.

PORTER : It's the touch o' sorrer that does it—gets 'em rahnd to thinking you're goin' miles outer your way to do yourself dahm for 'em—keep it under your thatch and we'll present 'em with a fate-accomply.

DUKE : A what ?

PORTER : A bit of orlright.

*Enter MARK and POP. MARK to fireplace. POP to armchair R. DUKE and PORTER get up.*

DUKE (*stretching*) : Well—beiter scrape the old whiskers off myself—heavy date tonight. (*Rises.*)



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER: Me too—dog-racing—any hot water left?

MARK (*putting on his collar*): Some in the jug if Taffy hasn't used it all.

PORTER: Right.

*Exit upstairs.*

POP (*subtly*): Going anywhere special tonight, Mark?

MARK (*shyly*): Well . . . er . . . was as a matter of fact.

*HE pauses in his toilet for a moment; makes a sudden decision.*

MARK: Pop!

POP (*mildly*): Yep?

MARK: I'd like to talk to you a bit—personal stuff—hope you won't think I'm an ass.

POP: Go ahead. But before you start—got a match?

MARK *tosses him a box of matches: he catches them and lights his pipe.*  
Well?

MARK: It's about Bella.

POP: Yes?

MARK: I'm taking her out tonight.

POP: Dance?

*HE tosses the matches back.*

MARK: No. No, you see, it isn't just a question of a night out—at least, I don't think it is.

POP: Serious?

MARK: Yes. (*With a note of challenge as if scenting criticism.*) She's different—I've not had much to do with women in the past—it was all male staff at the school, bit of a monastic life in a way, looking back on it.

POP: Yes.

MARK: I suppose I'm old-fashioned, but I've never felt like the Duke about women—well, I suppose I lived too much in books and got soaked in old-fashioned chivalry and what not. (*Laughing at himself.*) Sounds pretty priggish, doesn't it?

POP: Not a bit. It's a good line. Women love it, they tell me. My wife'd fall for it hook, line and sinker. How's Bella react?

MARK: Well, I don't really know—I've kissed her once or twice but—well—she's so like a child—I don't believe she knows what I mean.

POP: Well, what do you mean?

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK (*a trifle irritably*): Well, I've told you I'm serious.

POP: Why don't you tell her, you mutt? What's the good of telling me?

MARK: If I told her anything like that she . . . she'd run for a policeman or something.

POP: She didn't run for a policeman or something when you kissed her, did she?

MARK: No, but it's different. A kiss, to Bella, is only a sort of intimate handshake if you see what I mean. She's terribly shy. If she thought you knew about us she'd never be able to look you in the face again.

POP *chokes*.

POP: Sling over your matches again, old chap.

MARK (*explosively*): Oh, damn you and your matches. Put your ruddy pipe down for a minute and listen to me. I'm coming to you for advice.

POP *obediently lays down his pipe*. THEY *laugh*.

MARK: What do you think I ought to do?

POP: Bella's twenty-one. If she doesn't know the difference between a kiss and an intimate handshake, it's high time she did.

MARK: I like her like that. I don't want her to change—not till we're married anyway.

POP: Well, with all due respect, Mark, she'll have to change then or your honeymoon's going to be a terrific flop.

MARK: You can laugh. You can all laugh. But I know what I want, and I'm sick of these horsey, brassy women who know how to look after themselves. I . . . I didn't think there were any women left like her.

POP: All right. There's only one thing to do. Tell her tonight.

MARK: I can't. We're going to have dinner with my old headmaster and his wife at Winterbury's. They're a dear old couple and I thought it might help to give her more confidence.

POP: Good idea.

MARK: But I can't propose to her in front of them, can I?

POP: Hardly—bring her back here after the dinner, after Sydney and the Lady Bountiful have gone to bed.

MARK: But she's supposed to be staying at her aunt's in Shoreham.

POP: Well. You needn't stay there. Come in by this window. Duke often comes in that way. No one will see you in the black-out, you can take her back to her aunt's afterwards.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : Damn it I will! If she'll come. You know, Pop, she was queer about this dinner tonight. Turned me down at first, and then got suddenly keen on the idea.

POP : Extraordinary thing!

MARK : Yes, and after saying she'd got nothing to go in.

POP : Mark, she's going to knock you flat.

*Enter C. BELLA, a new BELLA is revealed on the threshold. She is wearing a simple but extremely becoming evening gown, a little coatee and handbag to match and her hair has been newly waved. She has even made up a little—somewhat unskilfully, for her cupid's bow is slightly lop-sided. MARK is speechless and even POP loses something of his imperturbability.*

MARK : Great Scott!

POP : I—er—Gosh! Excuse me—— (*He is speechless.*)

POP dashes out.

MARK : Bella! Good heavens, Bella!

BELLA : What's the matter, Mark?

MARK : It's just extraordinary!

BELLA : But it is right, isn't it? I mean for where you're taking me?

MARK : Right? Oh Bella, you look wonderful.

BELLA : Oh Mark, I'm so glad.

MARK (*taking her hands*) : Come on, let me have a look at you. You're so sweet, I just can't help wanting to kiss you.

BELLA : Not here, it'll all come off on you.

*But MARK takes her in his arms, and kisses her. One feels the others haven't counted. He finally puts her from him.*

MARK (*breathlessly*) : Come on . . .

THEY make for door centre.

## CURTAIN

WORM'S EYE VIEW

Act Two : Scene 3

About 11 p.m. the same evening.

Stage is in darkness. From stairs PORTER and TAFFY make a cautious entry and stand inside without switching on the light. Moving downstage

PORTER stumbles against a chair.

PORTER (*stumbling against chair*): Now I've broken the blinking bulb. Get the light on, Taff, it's as dark as a coal-mine down here.

TAFFY: How can you say that now, when you were never down the pit in your life?

PORTER: Don't stand there arguing the toss. Get the light on.

TAFFY: I can find my way to the pantry blindfold. (*Crash.*) Ow!

PORTER: Sounds as though you can.

TAFFY *up to switch. Lights go.*

What have you got your hat on for? We're not going on parade.

TAFFY (*moving D.S.L.*): There's a draught in that pantry and I've had an R.A.F. haircut today . . . it's like a convict I am.

PORTER (*following*): Well, ain't we all? Blimey, it's cold down 'ere—ought to have brought our socks we did.

TAFFY: It's for food we came, not warmth—let's take what we can find back to bed and be done with it.

BOTH *by kitchen door. PORTER R.*

PORTER: Strewth! Hark at the rain! It's pouring aht.

TAFFY: And what about Mark and Bella, and she in all that finery too. My, what a pity it is. Such a pretty thing she looked, I must say.

PORTER: All right, well don't go all sloppy over it. They're probably tucked up in one of the shelters in the town.

TAFFY: There's no seats in them. Besides, they would be occupied by this time.

PORTER: 'Ere—wait a minute. 'Ow the blazes do you know so much about the shelter position at night?

TAFFY: I read Daily Routine Orders, don't I? It's all about them in there.

PORTER: Come on then. I'm that hungry I could even tackle some of her ruddy brisket. Turn the glim out, Soppo. (*Opening kitchen door.*)

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

TAFFY (*to switch*): Hey, Porter, the switch. It's stuck.

PORTER: Don't talk like a twerp! (*Going to him.*) Blimey so it is! Hold up. (*Knocks switch out.*)

*Lights out.*

TAFFY: Come on, Porter.

PORTER: Wait for me, Taff.

TAFFY: Oh, come *on*, Porter man!

PORTER: Yes, it's all very well for you ruddy pit-ponies! Why can't you wait for a fellow!

*Exit D.L.*

*Sash of window is raised and a torch is flashed into room.*

MARK'S VOICE: It's all right. No one here. Don't move, you'll fall over something. Just a minute, I'll put table lamp on. Where's the switch——

*Go. Switches on lamp.*

Give me your coat and I'll put the gas fire on. It'll be all right as long as we don't wake any of the boys. You'd have got your death of cold standing in that bus queue. (*Lights fire.*) Thank God for Porter's two-franc piece.

*Go gas.*

Come and stand over here.

BELLA: You're wet, too.

MARK: We'll both stand against it—backs first—then fronts. I'm sorry about the rain, Bella.

BELLA: Silly. You couldn't help it.

MARK: Yes, but not being able to get a taxi and you getting so wet and cold. I've made a frightful mess of it.

BELLA: No, Mark, I've had a lovely evening, it's been . . . so exciting, so different. It's only that . . .

MARK: What?

BELLA: These clothes . . . the hem's so muddy. You see . . . they aren't mine.

MARK (*surprised*): Not yours!

BELLA: No. Pop got them for me. They're his daughter's.

MARK: Well, I'll be . . .

BELLA: You aren't upset about it, are you?

MARK: Of course not, but . . .

BELLA: Don't you see. I couldn't have gone without Pop's help.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

You know I've nothing to wear. He got me the dress and arranged the whole thing.

MARK (*laughing*): Good for Pop.

MARK *sits on settee*, BELLA *on a cushion on floor, he puts his arm round her.*

Come and sit down in front of the fire. You needn't have got dressed up like that for me—I'd have liked taking you out in any old thing.

*She curls herself on the floor in front of the settee. He sits down and she rests her head against his knee. He looks down at her, with compassion.*

BELLA: I'd like . . .

MARK: Yes?

BELLA: I'd like this to go on for ever.

*He is silent but strokes her hair.*

What are you thinking about, Mark?

MARK: I was thinking it ought to; and could. But things like this don't. Only the sad things go on for ever.

BELLA: Like the war?

MARK: No, that'll end sometime—I meant things like people being unkind to one another.

BELLA: Someone's always there to spoil lovely things. It happens in all sorts of funny ways—almost as if it was meant to.

MARK: How do you mean?

BELLA: Well, just before you came here I remember looking out of my bedroom window at a lovely sunset over the bay, all purple and orange and smoky. It was so quiet and sweet you could even hear the birds twittering in that funny old tree in next door's garden, you know, the one with coconut shells swinging on it.

MARK: Yes?

BELLA: Then some trippers went by singing and shouting, a policeman went up to them and started a scuffle and one was dragged off swearing and nobody looked at the sunset at all . . . anyway it was all spoiled and horrid.

MARK: Bella—it's just extraordinary—the way you think and feel the same way as I do. And I knew it, I knew it the moment I set eyes on you.

BELLA: You believe in things too, don't you?

MARK: In things like that sunset you saw and in people generally; yes, people are all right, I've met so many I've liked since I joined up—

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

little, unimportant people with all the qualities one ought to associate with greatness—affection for one another, loyalty, courage, patience. But they don't get much of a chance. It's like you say, there's always somebody there to spoil things.

BELLA (*hugging her knees*): When the war's over, wouldn't it be possible to . . . to build a wall round yourself and only see what you wanted to see and shut out everything else?

MARK: That's what the cynics call escapism.

BELLA: I don't care what they call it, I'd like to do it.

MARK: There's something better than that. A man ought to fight for what he believes and go on fighting, but one always gets so discouraged—alone. (*Suddenly intense, leaning forward in a kneeling position by Bella.*) Don't you see, Bella, we could do it together—after the war . . . I'd come back for you.

*There is a slight pause. She is frankly incredulous and has difficulty in speaking.*

BELLA: You mean—for always?

MARK: For always. I could never be happy with anyone else. Never! Won't you . . . think about it?

BELLA (*giddy with joy*): I can't imagine anything like this happening to me.

MARK: It has happened.

THEY *rise*.

I'm asking if you'll marry me—when I come back and it's all over. Will you, Bella?

BELLA: Oh yes—yes! Please, Mark.

*They move involuntarily into one another's arms but the door D.L. opens and the spell is shattered by TAFFY, still in his incongruous attire and carrying a plate with jelly, behind him is PORTER, with a large slice of cake. MARK wheels on him, angrily and moves for the main switch.*

MARK: What the devil are you doing down here?

PORTER (*apologetically*): Look, Corp, I'm sorry to 'ave to butt in but me'n Taffy 'ave been standing out on that ruddy concrete floor for twenty minutes and if we don't get something on our feet we'll be knocked orf with noo-monia inside forty-eight hours. There's poor old Taff 'ere shivering like a jelly.

*Lights go.*

TAFFY: We just came down to look for something to eat, Corporal—my stomach was rumbling with emptiness after that tea . . .



*Act Two.*

MRS. BOUNTY (*in foreground*): Help!  
Help! Police! They're murdering  
my son!





## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : You two buzz off back to bed and if you bring down Sydney or Mrs. Bounty I'll slap the pair of you on a charge, you see if I don't!

PORTER (*pacificaly*) : Oil right, oil right, keep your hair on, Corp—  
*He is interrupted by a voice, in the advanced stages of inebriation, singing outside the window. It is the DUKE.*

DUKE (*off*) : " We've had a jolly ever-ning  
In spite of all the rain.  
We look like having another now  
OOOP she comes again! "

MARK (*wildly*) : It's the Duke, the crazy fool—he'll wake up the entire neighbourhood.

PORTER : 'Ere I'm of—no one'll ever believe I've been sleep walking.

MARK : No you don't! If the Duke's tight, you hang on a moment and give me a hand with him.

PORTER : But . . .

*There is a sharp rapping on the window pane and the DUKE, employing what he imagines to be a fond tone calls :*

DUKE : Oh Papaaaaaaaa!

*Then he begins to sing again, using the same chorus.  
His next words are lost in a wild panic ensuing inside the room.*

BELLA : Do something, Mark—make him stop! (C.)

MARK : What can I do ?

BELLA : Let him in—anything—get me out . . .

TAFFY *at door C.*

MARK : Hold the blackout outwards and let me get the sash up.

PORTER *hurries to comply. Outside the DUKE "Coo-ees" and raps again. The blackout blind eludes PORTER and falls down. MARK hurls the sash upwards and the DUKE is revealed sitting on the sill, obviously the worse for drink. He wears a sailor's hat and chaplet of paper flowers, slung round his neck Hawaiian fashion.*

DUKE : Peep-bo!

MARK : Grab him, Porter.

*THEY take hold of him and try and drag him over the sill. He clings hold of the sash and immediately begins to sing snatches from the "Volga Boatman".*

DUKE : Heave-heave-ho, heave-heave-ho!

MARK : Let go you idiot, let go.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER : Get the ruddy blackout down, it's like a blinkin' lighthouse!

A STERN VOICE (*off*) : Put that light out!

*Knock.*

DUKE, *at length pulled from the sill, lets go his hold so suddenly that he is precipitated into the room, they put him in armchair.*

*Enter POP from stairs.*

POP : Get up, get up, you lout!

DUKE (*in one breath*) : Good old Pop, dear old Pop, heave-heave-ho!  
VOICE.

VOICE (*off*) : Put that light out!

BELLA (*still Centre, frantically*) : Do something about the blackout.

MARK (*by window, to TAFFY who has retreated centre*) : Turn out the light. Don't stand there like a fool.

TAFFY (*wrestling with switch*) : The switch. It's stuck again.

POP : The bulb, take out the bulb, you idiot.

VOICE : Put that light out. (*Renewed knocking.*)

*TAFFY gets on PORTER'S shoulders, and reaches for the bulb.*

TAFFY : The bulb is hot, man.

PORTER : Well use your ruddy handkerchief.

*The Tableau is as follows.*

*Bella.*

*Duke.*

*Pop.*

*Mark.*

*Sydney. Mrs. Bounty.*

*Taffy. Porter.*

DUKE *is still sitting in the armchair. In the excitement of trying to reach the bulb, TAFFY has placed his foot in the jelly. PORTER'S head is between TAFFY'S legs.*

*Enter SYDNEY and MRS. BOUNTY.*

SYDNEY : What is the meaning of this extraordinary scene?

MRS. BOUNTY : Bella. What are you doing here? Why aren't you at your auntie's, and where did you get those clothes from?

VOICE : Put that light out.

*PORTER removes his head from between TAFFY'S legs.*

MRS. BOUNTY : My shape! They've been stealing my shape.

*She advances to the table and extricates TAFFY'S foot from the sticky mess. She then puts the plate on sideboard.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SYDNEY : Leave me to deal with this, Mother. The gas-fire's burning too, I notice.

PORTER (*wearily*) : Turn the gas-fire out, Taff.

SYDNEY : This little business will need a lot of explaining away.

BELLA : Stop making all this fuss. We haven't done anything.

SYDNEY : How can we be sure of that I should like to know? We find you down here at this time of night, dressed up in that provocative manner. Have you lost all sense of dignity and discretion?

MARK : Oh shut up, you pompous ape!

SYDNEY : Now look here, I've had about enough of this.

MARK : You've had enough of it. My God, what about us?

POP : Shut up, Mark.

MARK : No, I'll be damned if I'll shut up.

MRS. BOUNTY (*scenting danger, L. of table*) : Don't argue with him, Sydney, he's drunk, they're all drunk.

BELLA (*behind table*) : We're nothing of the sort—how dare you, Mother . . .

SYDNEY (*to Bella*) : Go to bed this instant, this instant, d'you hear me?

MARK (*beside himself*) : Who the devil are you to order us about, you tin-pot Hitler—I've a good mind to take a poke at you.

BELLA : Mark, please . . .

SYDNEY (*glad to turn on Bella*) : Leave the room this instant, you little slut!

MARK *hits* SYDNEY. *As he falls back, POP catches him and pushes him back to Mark.*

PORTER : Go it, Corp. Knock 'is block off.

SYDNEY *kicks* MARK.

VOICE : Put that light out! (*Knock off.*)

MRS. BOUNTY (*rushing back to window*) : Help. Police. They're murdering my son!

DUKE *grabs her legs.*

VOICE : Put out that light! (*knock off.*) Put that light out. (*Knock.*)

DUKE *grabs* MRS. BOUNTY *as she rushes to window. He pulls her onto his lap and kisses her.*

DUKE : Mabel!

## CURTAIN

WORM'S EYE VIEW

*Act Three : Scene I*

*The same room soon after lunchtime the following afternoon.*

THELMA *is doing some perfunctory tidying.* SYDNEY, *revealing a black eye, makes a moody entry from up L. carrying notice, which he pins on the notice-board.*

THELMA : 'Ave you seen Mrs. Bounty, Mr. Sydney ? (*D.L. dusting mantelpiece.*)

SYDNEY (*irritably*) : No, I haven't.

THELMA : I've got to see her—it's important.

SYDNEY : Well you can't see her now, she's busy.

THELMA (*independently*) : All right, I on'y asked a civil question. Just because you've got a bit of a hangover . . .

SYDNEY (*who was on the point of leaving, turning*) : I beg your pardon! What did you say ?

THELMA (*coolly*) : I said just because you've got a bit of a hangover. (*Turning.*) You have, haven't you ?

SYDNEY : How dare you suggest I've got a hangover. Have the goodness to get on with whatever you're doing and mind your own business. We're expecting an officer to call in a moment—tidy up the room, and then go away.

THELMA : I don't care who she's seeing and who's coming, I've got to see her this afternoon. (*Up to Sydney.*)

SYDNEY : Whatever you want to see her about can wait ; we're too busy to be worried by your affairs now.

*He goes out C.*

THELMA (*to the door*) : That's what you think!

PORTER *makes a quiet sound to attract attention.*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER : Psst! (*At window.*)

THELMA *turns on him with some exasperation.*

THELMA : Hi—what's goin' on around here ?

PORTER : Strewth—doncher know ?

THELMA : 'Course I don't know—on'y that the whole lot of you have been hanging around without coming in all the morning, and Miss Bella don't seem to have got up, and the missus is in the drawing-room pretending to 'ave fainting fits and Sydney looks as tho' 'e's been over that Commando course on t' golf-links—has there been a bust-up ?

PORTER : Bust up! Blimey, there's been a revolution and a police purge—what the papers'd call a coop-de-tatt.

THELMA : Who kyboshed Sydney ?

PORTER : Corp.

THELMA : Coo . . . what for ?

PORTER : Well, I dunno reely, I s'pose you might say it was fer casting nustershuns on the 'onner of 'is girl-friend.

THELMA (*R. of table*) : Was Bella there ?

PORTER : 'Course she was—but look 'ere, I can't waste no time arguing the toss in 'ere—we aren't supposed to leave the yard at the back—I just popped in to see how the land lies and get you to slip Bella this note . . .

*He passes her a sealed envelope.*

. . . it's just a letter tellin' 'er what to say so's she keeps 'er story in line with ours. Don't let no one see it.

THELMA : Right—oh, there's an officer comin' in a moment so Sydney says.

PORTER : That'll be the C.O.—well, he won't get nothing out of us—we've had all the morning to cook up a yarn and we all know it be heart . . .

THELMA : Where's Mark, isn't he with you ?

PORTER : Of course, he ain't—he's in the mush.

THELMA : In the where ?

PORTER : Blimey, don't you understand plain English ? Mush—clink—jug—cooler ! Prison !

THELMA (*understanding*) : Oh.

*The front door bell rings.*

THELMA : That'll be the officer—buzz off.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER : Don't forget that note. (*At window.*)

THELMA : No.

*Exit* PORTER.

*She covers the note with a duster and straightens her apron, preparatory to going to the door. She then leaves C.*

(*Off*) : Oh, good afternoon, sir. Will you come this way ?

*and returns almost immediately, ushering SQUADRON-LEADER BRIARLY into the room. He is an elderly, pleasant-looking man, with greying hair.*

I'll fetch Mrs. Bounty, sir, if you'll wait here.

SQUADRON-LEADER : (*looking round with interest*) : Thank you.

THELMA *picks up the duster and note and goes out ; she is heard calling in door.*

THELMA : The gentleman's come, ma'am.

*During the brief interval that follows the SQUADRON-LEADER makes a dignified but minute tour of inspection. He looks at the gas-fire, blows on his hands, sits down in the armchair, finds it rather less yielding than he expected and gets up again in time to greet SYDNEY who advances to shake hands.*

SYDNEY : Good afternoon, sir—I, er . . . think you'd probably find it more comfortable in our room across the hall.

SQUADRON-LEADER : That's all right, Mr. Spooner . . . I think we'd better stay here, we might have occasion to have one or two of the men in.

SYDNEY (*a little put out*) : Just as you like. . . . (*He goes to door C.*) In here mother.

MRS. BOUNTY *comes in.*

MRS. BOUNTY (*purposefully*) : Good afternoon, sir—this is my son—he was the victim of the dastardly attack, just look at his poor eye.

SQUADRON-LEADER (*gravely*) : I'm extremely sorry it should have happened, believe me, Mrs. Bounty.

MRS. BOUNTY : And him the assistant Town Clerk and this War Weapons Week.

SQUADRON-LEADER (*uncomfortably*) : Well . . . er . . . I think we'd better talk it over, hadn't we ? Shall we sit down ?

THEY *sit by mutual consent, MRS. BOUNTY sits sofa, also SYDNEY, SQUADRON-LEADER sits R. of table.*

SYDNEY : There's not much to discuss as far as I can see—I was

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

the victim of a savage and unprovoked attack and I expect the guilty person to be properly punished.

MRS. BOUNTY: And the others as well. Nice behaviour. After all we've done to make them comfortable!

SQUADRON-LEADER: Yes, of course, Mrs. Bounty. Now I should be interested to know what disagreement led up to the assault.

MRS. BOUNTY: My son didn't touch him, did you, Sydney?

SYDNEY: Certainly not.

MRS. BOUNTY: They were all down here carrying on. Stealing the food, burning the gas, letting one another in and out.

SYDNEY: Blind drunk, if you ask me. Nice goings-on for a respectable neighbourhood. I must say. Hang it all, sir, there is a limit.

SQUADRON-LEADER: The report that I received from the police states the corporal to have been sober, Mr. Spooner. None of the others were taken into custody. I think, perhaps, they would have if there had been any question of drunkenness. Besides . . . er . . . I understand your daughter was with them at the time.

MRS. BOUNTY: I don't see what my daughter's got to do with it.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Well, to put it bluntly, you don't suggest Miss Bounty had been drinking.

MRS. BOUNTY (*horrified*): Bella! Drinking!

SYDNEY (*hastily*): Certainly not. The point is . . . my sister was down here at the time . . . the fact is that she's very young and her head's easily turned . . . the er . . . corporal had been paying certain attentions to her, I believe.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Unwelcome attentions I take it?

SYDNEY: Very. I had occasion to speak to him about it the other day.

SQUADRON-LEADER: I see. The police will be bringing Corporal Trelawney round—perhaps you'd like to question him.

SYDNEY: Look, sir—when I saw you this morning I agreed to drop a civilian prosecution on the full understanding that the man would be dealt with under Service jurisdiction.

SQUADRON-LEADER: That is so. This isn't a trial, merely an informal enquiry for the Billeting Officer.

SYDNEY: Of course I fully anticipate that the man will lie to you regarding the facts.

SQUADRON-LEADER (*quietly*): I don't think we can take that for



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

granted. He's not even made a statement yet. I daresay I might get something out of one of the others.

HE *rises and goes to window.*

Corporal.

VOICE OFF: Sir?

SQUADRON-LEADER: Ask Porter to step inside a moment, please.

VOICE OFF: Very good, sir. (*Shouting.*)

SQUADRON-LEADER (*to Sydney*): You would prefer me to question them alone, I take it?

SYDNEY (*rising*): It's probably the only way of avoiding further brawls. Come, Mother, we shall be across the passage when you've finished. I shall be interested to hear what sort of a falsehood the corporal submits.

HE *goes out C., obviously not satisfied with the way things are going. Leaving door open.*

*Noise of tramping feet in passage.*

SQUADRON-LEADER *seats himself facing the door.*

PORTER (*off*): A.C. Porter, sir!

SQUADRON-LEADER: Come in, Porter.

PORTER, *very spruce and wearing cap, enters, a little gingerly. Door closes.*

Well? And what have you got to say about this incident?

PORTER: Well, sir, it was like this, sir. A.C. Evans and me went to bed early. We always do on account of being tired out with the drill, sir. 'Earing an altercation, we came downstairs quiet-like, never dreaming that Mr. Spooner'd be up and not wishing to disturb him. To my surprise, sir, I found Mr. Spooner 'aving a go at the corp—corporal, sir, and 'im merely defending 'imself in 'is King's uniform, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER (*bending over some notes*): Yes?

PORTER *has a quick, sidelong glance at his briefing—a folded sheet of notepaper.*

PORTER: Well, sir, seein' as all this was unseemly I approached Mr. Spooner, and said, "Do not strike our corporal, sir" . . .

SQUADRON-LEADER (*interposing*): One moment. I'm not quite clear about the start of it all. Will you begin again.

PORTER (*blithely*): Certainly, sir. (*In a monotone, as reciting.*) A.C. Evans and me went to bed early. We always do, sir, on account of being tired out with the drill . . . (*Porter continues.*)

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SQUADRON-LEADER : All right, Porter.

*This has no effect.*

Porter—Porter. *Porter.* (*He thumps the table with his fist.*) You recited your little piece extremely well.

PORTER (*beaming*): Oh, thank you very much, sir. (*He remembers to whom he is talking, and his face straightens again.*)

SQUADRON-LEADER : Ask the escort to send in Corporal Trelawney, will you.

PORTER : Yes, sir.

*HE turns to leave, remembers his salute, turns again to salute and marches out. SQUADRON-LEADER relaxes for a second.*

*Leaves door open.*

*MARK marches in, not wearing his cap. He comes to a halt before the table and stands stiffly to attention. The door closes.*

SQUADRON-LEADER : This is rather a ridiculous business, isn't it ?

MARK (*dully*): Yes, sir. (*C. behind sofa.*)

SQUADRON-LEADER : You aren't the kind of N.C.O. I should imagine would get mixed up in this sort of thing.

MARK : I'm sorry, sir.

*SQUADRON-LEADER front of sofa.*

SQUADRON-LEADER : Now about this girl : what sort of relationship exists between you and this landlady's daughter.

MARK : I'd sooner keep her out of it altogether, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER (*over to right of table*): Come now, don't let's have any mock heroics, please. You happen to have neatly blacked the eye of a rather difficult type of civilian. You admit that I suppose!

MARK : Yes, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER : In self defence ?

MARK : No, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER : Well, he's out for blood. He's not going to take it to a civil court, doesn't want the publicity I suppose. Thinks you'll catch it hotter from us. All right, you can stand at ease. But this puts me in a difficult position—you're an N.C.O., and I can't take away your stripes without a whole lot of bother and a general enquiry outside the unit ; that'll lead to a Summary of Evidence and a Court Martial. You don't want that do you ?

MARK (*quietly*): Yes, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER : You *what* ?

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK (*stubbornly*): I want a Court Martial, sir!

SQUADRON-LEADER (*out of patience*): Don't be a fool, man. (*Suddenly suspicious.*) Why do you want a Court Martial?

MARK: I just want one, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Look here, Trelawney—seeing you at all in these circumstances is strictly unorthodox on my part. You realise that, don't you?

MARK: Yes, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Well, I had you in here because I happen to know that you're fundamentally a decent, intelligent man and I felt that, if I could learn more about this business, there might be a way round it all before it goes any further.

MARK: I appreciate your kindness, sir. But I want to take advantage of this opportunity.

SQUADRON-LEADER: An opportunity to study the inside of a Detention Barracks?

MARK: I think somebody ought to acquaint a board of senior officers with the true state of affairs in billets like these, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER (*dumbfounded*): Good God! Is that what you want?

MARK: Yes, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Wouldn't a report through the usual channels be a better method than a C.M.?

MARK: The usual channels generally get choked up with paper, sir.

*The SQUADRON-LEADER smothers a chuckle in a cough.*

SQUADRON-LEADER: This is a bad billet, isn't it?

MARK: Yes, sir.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Why didn't you report it before?

MARK: There was nothing to report, sir—just hostility. A lot of billets are like this—service men aren't wanted and there's friction all the time.

SQUADRON-LEADER: On active service and overseas you'd find yourselves a damned sight worse, you know.

MARK: Yes, sir—we should expect to. But this is our country, sir, and these people are supposed to be our people. It's the general attitude I would like to make public.

SQUADRON-LEADER: There seems every likelihood of that at the moment. I see no reason why this fellow shouldn't change his mind and go ahead with a civil prosecution. (*Shortly, as though he has come*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

to a decision.) All right. You can go now—I'll probably get you released into open arrest by tea-time.

MARK : Thank you, sir.

*He makes a smart about turn and goes out. There is silence for a moment. Door D.L. is opened quietly and BELLA, somewhat dishevelled, slips into the room.*

SQUADRON-LEADER : Oh . . . er——

BELLA (*doggedly*) : That was the corporal, wasn't it ?

SQUADRON-LEADER (*turning with a smile*) : Yes. Come in won't you ?

BELLA *advances*. *She is making an effort but is obviously very upset.*

BELLA : Are they taking him to prison ?

SQUADRON-LEADER : No, just back to police headquarters. He'll be out tonight. You're Miss Bounty, of course.

BELLA : Yes. (*With a rush.*) He hasn't done anything wrong—you ought to know about it—it was all through me really. He just lost his temper—anybody would—Sydney was awful ; they're both awful.

*SHE stops, suddenly. SQUADRON-LEADER comes C.*

SQUADRON-LEADER : Suppose you tell me about it ?

BELLA : I can't—they're in there. (*Pointing to door C.*) I got out of the window and came down over the scullery roof. But they'll be back now he's gone.

SQUADRON-LEADER : Never mind them. I want to hear your side. Won't you sit down ?

*BELLA sits gingerly on the edge of chair L. of table.*

You came here to tell me—didn't you ? (*Sitting C.*)

*Pause.*

BELLA : Yes.

SQUADRON-LEADER : Well ?

BELLA : Mark isn't really the rough sort—it was only that he was so upset over something they said to me. That's why he hit Sydney.

SQUADRON-LEADER : It's nothing very terrible. Just a good old-fashioned black eye. There's nothing to worry about, providing he doesn't try and make a bigger fool of himself.

BELLA : Sydney's going to make an awful fuss.

SQUADRON-LEADER : You're very fond of Corporal Trelawney, aren't you ?

BELLA : Yes.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SQUADRON-LEADER: How fond? (*Smiling.*) All right, you needn't tell me.

*Pause.*

Now listen. You want to help clear up this silly business, don't you?

BELLA: Of course. I'll do anything.

SQUADRON-LEADER: Right. First of all you stay here with me when the others come back.

BELLA: Oh, I couldn't. They wouldn't let me.

SQUADRON-LEADER: You leave that to me. (*Rises and goes to door C.*) Corporal, tell Mr. Spooner I'd like another word with him, would you? When the corporal comes out of close arrest, he's bound to come and see you. You persuade him to leave this affair to me. Understand? Perhaps he'll listen to you.

BELLA: He's very obstinate.

SQUADRON-LEADER: That's your headache. Well?

BELLA: I'll try. (*Rises.*)

SQUADRON-LEADER: That's all I wanted to know.

*Enter MRS. BOUNTY and SYDNEY. They stop short on seeing BELLA.*

SQUADRON-LEADER: I'd like another word with you, Mr. Spooner, if you don't mind.

MRS. BOUNTY: Bella, go back to your room at once, we don't want my daughter mixed up in this.

SQUADRON-LEADER: I'm afraid she's rather closely concerned, Mr. Spooner, if you don't mind.

SYDNEY (*loftily*): I do mind. I don't know what sort of story she's told you, but I must ask you to disregard it, whatever it is. These men have had an undesirable influence on her.

MRS. BOUNTY: You heard what I said, Bella. Go back to your room at once.

BELLA (*between her teeth*): No.

MRS. BOUNTY: You wicked, wicked girl . . .

BELLA: I want to hear what's going on. Why shouldn't I?

SQUADRON-LEADER: I'm afraid we misunderstood one another, Mr. Spooner. It seems that the corporal's attentions were not entirely unwelcome. That puts things in a rather different light you know.

MRS. BOUNTY: She's not old enough to know her own mind.

SQUADRON-LEADER: The L.A.C. outside told me she was twenty-one, madam. My grandmother had two children when she was twenty-one.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SYDNEY (*rudely*): I don't see what your grandmother has got to do with my black eye!

SQUADRON-LEADER: Only that I don't think you gave me the full facts just now.

SYDNEY (*beginning to hector*): I'm not prepared to go into the sordid history of my sister's infatuation with one of your N.C.O.'s, sir. But I will say this. In the event of you taking an absurdly lenient view of this case, I shall revert to my original intention and take this matter to a civil court for the purpose of pressing a charge of assault and battery.

BELLA (*suddenly tense*): You dare! Just you dare! I'll make you look silly in front of everyone if you do—I'll say things that will make the whole town laugh at you.

MRS. BOUNTY (*horrified*): Bella, how dare you say things like that about your brother.

BELLA: Who is he anyway? Just a wicked, spiteful, stuck-up thing, trying to get back at Mark because he's afraid of fighting him. I'll tell them all that and I'll tell them how beastly you've been all the time, both of you—I heard you telling mother he'd get it worse if the R.A.F. dealt with him and that they'd only fine him £1 in the ordinary court. I'm glad he gave you a black eye. I wish he'd blacked both your eyes, and knocked all your teeth out, so there.

*The outburst has made her nearly hysterical and in a flood of tears she dashes off C. The effect on the family is electric. Even the Squadron-Leader is completely overwhelmed and stares at the slammed door open-mouthed.*

MRS. BOUNTY: Bella! Bella!

SYDNEY: This is intolerable. How dare she.

MRS. BOUNTY: *They've* made her like this. *They've* done it.

SYDNEY: I must ask you to completely disregard . . .

*Kitchen door thumps open and THELMA, dressed for outdoors makes to cross room.*

THELMA: 'Scuse me.

MRS. BOUNTY: Thelma! How dare you come in here like that. Take those fal-delals off at once, and lay tea.

THELMA: Don't talk so daft, Mrs. Bounty, I've no time to lay tea. I'm off to join th'Air Force. Lay it thyself.

MRS. BOUNTY: Ohhhhhhhhhhh!

*Exit THELMA, singing—I joined th' Air Force to see the World—to tune of "W/ joined the Navy".*

CURTAIN

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

### Act Three : Scene 2

*The same room, thirty-six hours later. There is a profusion of airmen's kit. The room looks very untidy. TAFFY, on his knees, is packing a valise.*

PORTER *comes in from the kitchen with a string of boots.*

PORTER (*discovered R.C.*): This is the lot. (*Dumping them.*) 'Eard anythin' fresh yet?

TAFFY: When I fetched our travel warrants from the Orderly Room, Duke had been sent for and Mark had just gone into the C.O.

PORTER (*reflectively*): Ah—that sahns like business orl right. (*He shrugs.*) Well, you'n me's shut of it anyway. (*He sits, gloomily, on a kitbag.*) Blimey, think of it. Two aht the 'ole ruddy flight posted to the Orkneys an' it's gotter be us.

TAFFY: Aye and I thought you said you'd squared the Orderly Room sergeant, you did.

PORTER: So I 'ad, the blinking crook. Give 'im fifteen razor blades an' a bottle o' "Glossyshine" fer 'is 'air. Then 'e 'as the sauce ter say our postings come through from Records wiv our names on!

TAFFY (*straightening*): Ah well, it might not be so bad. They say you can see the Northern Lights from the Orkneys.

PORTER (*seriously*): Don't talk daft, mate, they got blackouts there same as everywhere else. Won't be no trade tho'. Who'll want silk stockings up there? Betcher they run arahned without trahsers, let alone stockings.

TAFFY: I'd feel easier in my mind, I would, if I knew what had happened to the others; Pop said a civvy called on the C.O. yesterday.

PORTER: Huh! That'll be Sydney 'avin' another crack at 'im. (*Rising.*)

POP and DUKE, *the latter talking excitedly, come in C.*

DUKE: You could have knocked me down with a feather, old man. In I went thinking to myself, this is the high jump all right and the old boy whips out the signal and says . . .

PORTER: 'Ere 'arf a tick, 'arf a jick, wot's 'appened?

DUKE (*up to Porter R.*): I'm off to Aircrew Receiving Centre on the same train as you. Lorry's calling in fifteen minutes. (*There is a*

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

*tap on the door.*) That'll be Bella, she was keeping vigil at the window for Mark.

POP: Come in, Bella.

BELLA *enters C. She carries a small attaché case and a coat.*

BELLA: What's the news?

POP: We don't know much yet, Mark went in after me. The billet's been closed and we're breaking up. These three are posted.

BELLA: Do you mind if I hang about, just for a little while?

POP: Of course not. What are you doing?

BELLA: I'm going over to my auntie's. Then I'm going to get a job somewhere. I've had it out with them. I couldn't stay here now.

POP (*sits next to Bella*): Good for you. (*To Porter.*) You'd better look sharp with that kit, Porter. (*To all.*) I put in a 'phone call for twelve, has it come through?

TAFFY: No.

PORTER (*wrestling with his webbing*): For Gawd's sake somebody give me an 'and with this contraption; I'll end up be 'anging meself with it.

TAFFY: You've got the right-brace in the place of the straps-adjustment. You'll never make an airman.

PORTER: Blimey, you bin crystal-gazing?

TAFFY: A corporal at main stores charged me half-a-crown to learn how to put this together.

PORTER: Then he diddled yer.

TAFFY (*at window*): Mark's here now. My word, he must be going. Look, he's carrying his small kit.

PORTER: Blimey, so he is. I wonder if he's posted to the Orkneys. Be able to sell him some shaving soap, eh?

BELLA: Pop, you don't think they'd send Mark . . .

POP: No, no.

*Enter MARK.*

CHORUS: What's happened?  
What's the gen.?  
How many days?

MARK: I'm posted.

POP: Where?

MARK: Officers' Training Unit.



## WORM'S EYE VIEW

PORTER : Strewth!

DUKE (*congratulating him*): Good show, old boy, good show!  
(*Shakes his hand.*)

POP : That's first-rate. How'd it happen ?

MARK : Can't figure it out. C.O. seemed to know more about the billet than I did. I've got a feeling he chivvied up the posting with a 'phone call.

DUKE : Probably did the same for my aircrew posting.

BELLA : Sydney had a letter from the R.A.F. today—I saw him scowling at it.

POP : That'll be the closing of the billet. I'm moving to a new billet in Inkermann Road.

PORTER : Blimey, where you get the turkey ?

POP : Yes, that's right.

DUKE : And the daughter ?

POP : No, she's next door. Better kip down with me until you go, Mark. Bella's shifting off to her aunt's.

MARK : I shan't need to, I'm going on the same train as Duke as far as the junction. C.O. gave me a forty-eight hour pass before I start the course.

PORTER : Blimey I don't get this. You sock a civvy in the kisser. You get marched orf be the Gestapo. You get wheeled in to the C.O. with your 'at orf and you come aht wiv a commission and a forty-eight-hour leave pass. Why didn't I take a wallop at Sydney ? It's a ruddy investment!

*General laughter.*

BELLA : Is the row all over ?

MARK (*going to her*) : As far as I know, I can't imagine how or why, it just seemed to evaporate. Must be something behind it.

DUKE (*on table*) : What about the charge ?

MARK : Admonished. C.O. said a " Reprimand " might hold up the commish.

DUKE (*saluting with mock gravity*) : Boy, oh boy, you'll be signing forty-eight's every week-end for me if I get posted to your station.

PORTER : You bet. And if you comes sneaking rahnd our cookhouse saying " Any complaints, my man ? " you won't 'arf get an earful from me! (*Cross D.R. sits on arm of chair.*)

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : Do the family know you're going, Bella ?

BELLA : No. I just . . .

MRS. BOUNTY *calls off.*

MRS. BOUNTY : Bella ? Where are you, Bella ?

PORTER *moves U.S. to bottom of stair-rail. DUKE crosses D.R. to him.*

BELLA : She's missed me, she's coming down. (*Rises.*)

MRS. BOUNTY : Bella ? Are you upstairs, Bella ?

PORTER (*near door*) : Hold up! 'Ere comes Lady Bountiful.

*Enter* MRS. BOUNTY.

MRS. BOUNTY : So you're in here. I might have known it!

*Enter* SYDNEY *R. of* MRS. BOUNTY.

SYDNEY : I presume you all know about this.

MARK : We know, sonny boy, we're leaving.

SYDNEY : I needn't tell you how delighted Mrs. Bounty and I are to be rid of you.

PORTER : Blimey, we're 'eart-broken.

MRS. BOUNTY : Disgusting, that's what it's been, disgusting. (*Turning to Bella.*) And where do you think you're going may I ask ?

BELLA : I'm going to stay with my aunt. I can't stand any more scenes.

SYDNEY : One moment, Bella. You might as well hear this since you insist on associating yourself with these hooligans. I daresay you're all congratulating yourselves on escaping scot-free. But don't jump to conclusions. You haven't heard the last of this I assure you.

PORTER : Watch out, boys, he's goin' to appeal to 'Itler.

SYDNEY : I'm going to appeal to the Air Vice-Marshal. That's what I'm going to do. Civil action is odious to self-respecting people like us, but the decision of a high-ranking officer will follow you wherever you go. So now pack your things and get out of my house.

MR. BOUNTY : Whose house ?

*They turn and behold* MR. BOUNTY *at centre door. He is spruce in a new suit and bowler-hat with light walking-cane. There is a moment's stupefied silence.*

BELLA (*running to him*) : Daddy!

MRS. BOUNTY : So you've decided to come back have you ?

MR. BOUNTY : I said whose house ?

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

SYDNEY: This is none of your business. You forfeited your right to interfere when you deserted us.

MR. BOUNTY (*thrusting Bella aside*): Eeee, this is too much.

D.C. *He advances towards SYDNEY, grabs him by seat of trousers and collar and takes him at a run across the stage and out of the kitchen door. There is a crash of glass.*

MRS. BOUNTY (*while this is happening*): Don't you lay hands on him!

MR. BOUNTY: Eeee. That were grand.

POP: I enjoyed it too. (*He closes kitchen door.*)

MR. BOUNTY: It were lucky thing for me I met young Thelma on't railway platform, she gave me full facts of case, and I marched straight to C.O. Tha' won't be bothered with him no more, no matter where he goes. Ah've towled all.

MRS. BOUNTY: If you think you can come back here, dictating to me. . . . (*Thumping table.*)

MR. BOUNTY: Ah said to C.O. ah said—be easy on't lads. It hasn't been all beer and skitiles living there with them two ah says. Ah've tried it. T'were bloody awful.

MRS. BOUNTY: 'Ow dare you use bad language to me. 'Ow dare you. (*Banging table.*)

MR. BOUNTY: Stop tha blathering, woman, and get me right good tea. Ah've had nowt but sandwiches to eat since yesterday.

MRS. BOUNTY *goes out L.*

Go on. Get cracking! Or I'm not above giving thee what I gave young jack-a-napes a moment since.

MRS. BOUNTY: Ohhhhhhh!

MR. BOUNTY (*sitting at table*): If I'd known it were as easy as all that, I'd have started on me honeymoon. Sorry ah had to close billet, lads, but we'll be removing. Ah've landed champion job in Belfast.

BELLA: Oh Daddy, I think you're wonderful, but mother'll never come to Belfast.

MR. BOUNTY: She'll either coom or stay here wi'out brass farthing. She'll come. Young Sydney'll have to move into billets.

DUKE: Whoopee! That'll teach him. There's a peach of a place in Alma Road, full of fleas.

POP: Look, chaps. I don't want to break up the reunion, but, if that lorry's calling you'd better get your kit out, you haven't much time, any of you.

MR. BOUNTY: Reet, Ah'll lend a hand.

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

*They gather up kit and DUKE picks up a photograph he has spilled from his valise.*

DUKE: Parting gift, Porter, it's Miranda, my pin-up girl.

PORTER (*taking it*): Never went much on these sorter things, like eating chocolate with the paper on. (*Pocketing the photo.*) Still . . . in the Orkneys . . . (*Upstairs.*)

POP: I'll pack your kit-bag, Mark. (*To Taffy.*) Use your loaf.

*He indicates, behind MARK'S back, that they would be wise to leave MARK and BELLA alone.*

MARK: Thanks, Pop.

*The others crowd out. POP goes upstairs. MARK and BELLA regard one another, shyly.*

MARK: It doesn't look as if we'll see one another for a long time, does it?

BELLA: We can write every day.

MARK: Oh hell—writing—telling each other everything through the G.P.O.—what good's that?

BELLA: You don't seem very happy about the commission and all the trouble blowing over.

MARK: Oh, I'm grateful to you and Mr. Bounty for all you did, dear, but . . .

*HE turns and faces her squarely.*

. . . Bella, let's take a chance, come away with me now and we'll get married by special licence tomorrow.

BELLA (*stunned*): But, Mark . . .

MARK (*eagerly*): Don't you see, we might be separated for years. You'll go to Ireland with your father and I might go overseas; let's make certain.

BELLA: But, Mark dear, we just couldn't rush things like that . . .

MARK: Why not? What do other people matter? You've even got a bag packed. Or don't you love me enough?

BELLA: Of course I love you, I'll never love anyone else, but I thought there'd be years yet—I never dreamed—look, couldn't you go on your forty-eight tomorrow and talk it over with Daddy tonight?

MARK: No. We've been pushed around long enough. It's time we did something our way for a change.

BELLA: But, Mark, it's unreasonable . . . there's clothes and everything . . .

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

MARK : Unreasonable! To want to marry a girl you're in love with, without a fantastic fuss, practical jokes, wedding-cake and silly speeches . . .

BELLA : Oh, Mark, people might think . . .

MARK (*stormily*) : People might *think*—the age-old excuse for cowardice, for playing safe, for waiting to see how things turn out!

BELLA (*unhappily*) : Don't, please, Mark . . .

MARK : It's true, isn't it?

DUKE *bounds in, loaded with kit.*

DUKE : Tally Ho. Away, away, away, awayeeeeee !

BELLA *goes into kitchen.*

MARK : No, wait a minute.

*From now on the room seems to spin, airmen coming and going all the time.*

DUKE : Where's Pop? Must kiss Pop good-bye.

POP (*enters from stairs*) : Here I am.

DUKE : So long, old boy, been grand knowing you.

POP : So long, Duke. Don't take any dam' silly risks when they give you a kite.

DUKE : Boy oh boy, give me the chance!

*Grabbing his last haversack and rushing out C.*

DUKE : Hamburg, here I come.

*Exit C.*

PORTER and TAFFY *come down the stairs.*

TAFFY : Come on, Porter, we haven't much time I keep telling you.

PORTER : It's King George's time, isn't it? Fancy a panic like this to get to the Orkneys.

TAFFY *collects his kit and walks to door centre.*

TAFFY (*extending hand*) : Good-bye, Pop. I'll write to you, I promise.

POP : See you do, Taffy. Here (*adjusting pack*) that's better.

TAFFY : Oh, Pop. I'll send you a bit of coal for luck. Bye-bye.

*Exit.*

PORTER *swings his kit-bag over his head. It misses, and crashes to the floor. He tries again, and this time is successful.*

PORTER : Well, Pop, when I'm thinking of gettin' spliced I'll send for you. You don't make a bad match-maker. Talking of matches,

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

here you are—lighter. (*He extracts a lighter from his pocket.*) Stop you borrowing.

POP: Oh, I say, that's decent of you.

PORTER: That's all right, anything in my line. Just a postcard. 'Ole-sale to you.

POP: I'll remember. So long, you old scrounger.

PORTER: 'Airs on your chest.

*HE crosses to door C. On passing telephone he presses button "B". A small cascade of coins pours into his palm and he pockets them.*

'Ullo? Somebody bin careless.

*Exit C.*

POP round to front of table.

MARK (*rising*): We'll meet again—after, I suppose.

POP: I hope so. I'm going to miss you, Mark.

MARK: Me, too.

POP: And Bella . . . are you leaving with some sort of understanding?

MARK: Oh, we'll write and write and write. I wanted her to come now but she's too frightened. That means she'll always be frightened. Cheero, Pop.

POP: Cheero, Mark. (*They shake hands, firmly.*)

*As MARK goes out C. the 'phone rings.*

*Ring.*

*Outside an occasional shout and laugh can be heard.*

(*On 'phone*): Yes, it's me, darling. Hullo? Yes, we're moving. The others have gone. I say, I'm coming home on seven days' leave.

*BELLA comes in quietly, crosses stage and goes to watch the departure of the lorry. She does not see POP's covert glance at her and considers herself unnoticed.*

Oh, Mark? Yes, he got his commission all right. What? Oh, Bella, she's still here. Well I can't help it can I? I did everything you said. (*She looks.*) Well it just went wrong somewhere I suppose—they're both as pig-headed as they can hang together.

*A chorus of "Coming round the mountain" can be heard, but not loud enough to drown the conversation. BELLA glances at the 'phone and back at the lorry. Chorus swells.*

Mark wanted her to get married by special licence right away. Well, she wouldn't. Just couldn't take the plunge I suppose. Well, of course, he was right; wish we'd got married like that—saves a lot of money,

## WORM'S EYE VIEW

time and temper. No, it's not too late yet—any minute now tho'. Her bag's all packed—Lorry's still here.

*The lorry is revved up. Suddenly BELLA breaks away from the window, grabs her case which she has placed on the table and bolts for the door C. She blows him a kiss as she flies into the passage.*

*He drops the receiver. There is a tremendous cheer as BELLA climbs on the lorry.*

Sorry, darling, I was wrong. Yes, they've both gone. What, you've heard from the boy? When? Well why didn't you tell me? Oh, blast. There go the pips. Bye-bye, darling, bye-bye.

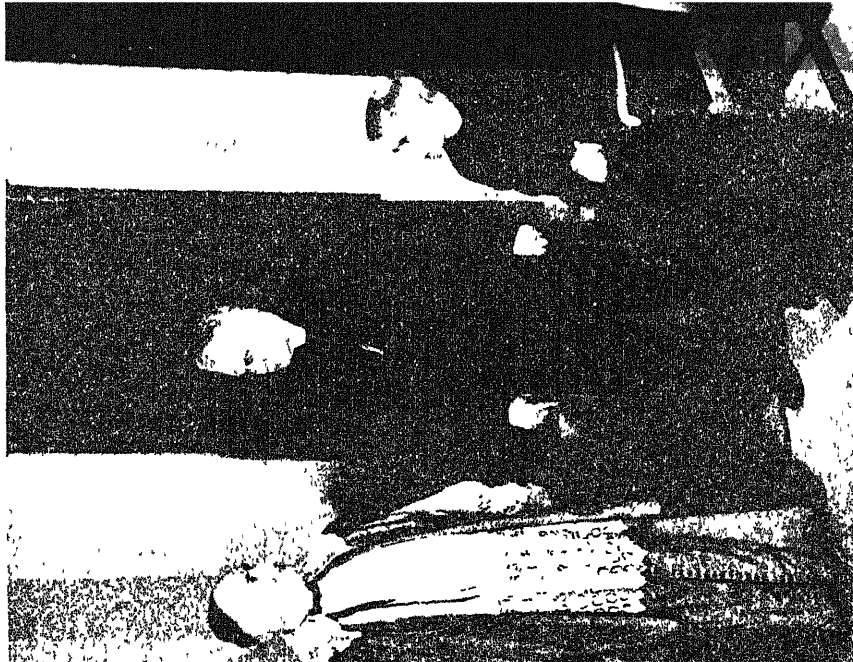
*HE leaves the 'phone and walks towards armchair, feeling for pipe. He sits, takes out lighter and strikes it. Nothing happens. He tries again, and again, each time more furiously. And the lighter refuses to light as . . .*

## THE CURTAIN FALLS





*Left* VASSENA: And remember—no more  
*Te Deums!*  
(L. to R.) VICTORRIETTI (VASSENA),  
JAMES WOODBURN (THE BISHOP),  
and W. G. FAY (FATHER MALACHY)



*Right* ANDREW Just a wee one—there's no-  
body lookin'!  
DAVID DAWSON and URSULA  
HOWELLS



# FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

A COMEDY BY

*Brian Doberty*

*Adapted from the novel by*

BRUCE MARSHALL

## C A S T

Characters in order of their appearance :

MAC . . . . .	Duff McCulloch
PETER . . . . .	Christopher Steele
ANDREW GILLESPIE . . . . .	David Dawson
FATHER FLAHERTY . . . . .	Edward Byrne
ANNIE . . . . .	Jean Shephard
CANON GEOGHEGAN . . . . .	Tony Quinn
FATHER MALACHY . . . . .	W. G. Fay
GEORGE HARRIS . . . . .	Frank Henderson
WINNIE GIDEON . . . . .	Lalage Lewis
PHYLLIS HOLT . . . . .	Joan Rees
BESSIE BLANE . . . . .	Alicia Parker
HEATHER BLUE . . . . .	Shelagh Maillard
GRETA STACEY . . . . .	Margot Johns
JAMES SHYMAN BELL . . . . .	Ken Warrington
GERTIE GILL . . . . .	Rosemary Riggs
REVEREND HUMPHREY HAMILTON . . . . .	Maurice Braddell
PEGGY MCNAB . . . . .	Ursula Howells
CONSTABLE . . . . .	Ronald Bowman
MRS. MCNAB . . . . .	Blanche Fothergill
ARCHIE MACDONALD . . . . .	John Dominic
NORA MACDONALD . . . . .	Gwendoline Watford
JOCK WORLOCK . . . . .	John Sibley
BERT CAMERON . . . . .	Frank Tregear
A WAITER . . . . .	Joseph Jordan
ROBERT GILLESPIE ( <i>Bishop of Midlothian</i> ) . . . . .	James Woodburn
TIMOTHY BATTLE . . . . .	Charles Farrell
CARDINAL VASSENA . . . . .	Victor Rietti
SIR JAMES VICKERS . . . . .	Laurence Dasent
LADY PAMELA VICKERS . . . . .	Blanche Fothergill
CONNIE GLENCANNON . . . . .	Stephenie Adler
NESSIE MACINTOSH . . . . .	June Hallward
SAM HICKS . . . . .	Tom Blanchard
MARY LOU HICKS . . . . .	June Gantony

First presented at the Embassy Theatre on Wednesday, March 28th 1945.

Produced by ANTHONY HAWTREY

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

All applications for performing rights in this play should be addressed to the author's agents, Messrs. Linnit & Dunfee Ltd., 28 Brook Street, W.1.

### SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

#### ACT I

- Scene 1.* A street in Edinburgh. A November morning.  
*Scene 2.* The Sacristy of the Church of St. Margaret of Scotland. Evening of the same day.  
*Scene 3.* Bar of the Garden of Eden. Immediately following.

#### ACT II

- Scene 1.* The living-room of the Presbytery of St. Margaret of Scotland. Two days later.  
*Scene 2.* The same. Afternoon three days later.

#### ACT III

- Scene 1.* The same. Christmas morning a few weeks later.  
*Scene 2.* The Bar of the Garden of Eden Casino on Bass Rock. Later the same morning.

*Time:* Peace-time.



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

### *Act One: Scene I*

*The present. A November morning.*

*A secluded street in Edinburgh. On the right is a dance hall, built of reddish brown stone. A short flight of steps lead to the main entrance. In an unsuccessful effort to counteract the drab and depressing appearance of his establishment, the proprietor has placed a dome of coloured glass above the entrance and painted the candy-stick pillars supporting the dome a bright green. Beneath the dome is a large sign with the name GARDEN OF EDEN in green letters, with a smaller sign below carrying the single word DANCING printed in black. On the left is a Roman Catholic church, the Church of Saint Margaret of Scotland. It is built of dark grey stone, in pseudo-Gothic style, and faces on a small enclosure which lies between the two buildings. A high stone wall runs across the back of the stage, and beyond it can be seen the spires and chimneys of the city, and, in the far distance, Edinburgh Castle. An archway, upstage on the left, leads to the main entrance of the Presbytery, the priests' residence, which adjoins the church. Upstage on the right, between the Garden of Eden and the wall, there is a lane leading to the city. Where the lane meets the enclosure there is an old iron gate on which hangs the notice board of Saint Jude's Episcopalian Church, which reads: "Bring Your Girl to Evensong, God Doesn't Mind if You Hold Her Hand." On the wall there is pasted a gay poster advertising the "Whose Baby Are You?" Company, which is going to perform at the dance hall that night.*

*AT RISE: MAC enters from the dance hall, carrying a broom. He lights his pipe and then starts to sweep the steps, humming an old Scotch song. PETER DOLAN, an old Irish servant who works at the Presbytery, comes along the street. Although he has lived in Edinburgh for over twenty years, he still speaks with the soft brogue of southern Ireland. He is carrying a basket.*

PETER: Hello, Mac.

MAC: Good mornin', Peter.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER (*sourly*): Faith, it's a miserable mornin'.

MAC: What's wrong with ye? Ye must have got out of the wrong side of bed.

PETER: Sure I haven't seen my bed for three days or more, I've been workin' so hard.

MAC (*who knows his man*): Och, get along wi' ye, Peter. I wager ye've been down to the corner for a drink.

PETER: A drink indeed! At this hour of the mornin'?

MAC: Aye.

PETER: Well—I dropped in for a small half-one. But it's really these miserable parcels I was after.

MAC: The parcels. That's a good one for ye.

*He laughs. The orchestra from the Garden of Eden is heard playing a popular air.*

PETER: What's that terrible screeching noise?

MAC: It's the orchestra rehearsing. (*He points to poster.*) We're havin' a late night, and yon lassies are comin' all the way from London to sing and dance for the folks.

PETER: Nice carryings on for a decent neighbourhood! How do ye expect people to get a wink of sleep with the dancin' and carousin' that goes on over here every night?

MAC: Aye, but half your parish will be here just the same.

PETER: Not after what the Canon told them last Sunday. A den of purple sin he called it. Corruptin' the youth of the parish, that's what ye're doin'. Are they upstairs now?

MAC: The girls, ye mean?

PETER: Yes.

MAC: Not yet. But they'll be comin' any minute. Mr. Bell went down a while ago to meet them at the train. I hear they're all beauties.

PETER: Common hussies! That's what they are!

MAC: Aye, it's a poor way for girls to be earnin' their livin', there's no denyin'. Wagglin' their wee bit beam-ends in public for thirty-five shillin's a week.

PETER: Disgraceful!

*He takes out an apple and shines it. ANDREW GILLESPIE, a stocky, full-faced Scot, strolls on. He is wearing a blue serge suit, white spats and a grey bowler hat cocked at a rakish angle. He whistles under the window of the dance hall.*

MAC: Good mornin', Mr. Gillespie.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANDREW (*startled*): Oh, good mornin', Mac. Good mornin', Peter.

MAC: Is it Peggy ye're lookin' for, Mr. Gillespie?

ANDREW: Well, aye. Have ye seen her?

MAC: She's late this mornin'.

ANDREW: Ten-thirty, she said.

MAC: I canna understand it. Peggy's right on the dot most mornin's.

PETER: It's a fine time o' day for ye to be hangin' around the Garden of Eden, Andrew.

ANDREW: I was just out for a wee stroll, and——

PETER: A stroll! That's a new name for flirtin' and carryin' on with a dancin' girl. Ye should be ashamed of yourself!

ANDREW: Go on wi' ye, Peter. Yon Peggy's as fine a wee lass as I've ever laid eyes on.

PETER: A fine, wee floosie, ye mean.

ANDREW: What's that?

PETER: It'll be more than your eyes ye'll be layin' on her, I'm thinkin'. I'm afraid ye're very weak in the flesh, Andrew.

ANDREW: But ye dinna understand, Peter. She's givin' me lessons——

PETER (*laughing*): She's givin' *you* lessons?

ANDREW: Aye. The rhumba.

PETER: The what?

ANDREW: It's the new dance.

PETER (*roaring with laughter*): Holy Mother! Dancin' lessons!

ANDREW: And what's wrong wi' dancin'?

PETER: It's indaicent! Ye'd better stick to the bottle, Andrew! One vice is plenty to land ye in hell.

ANDREW (*hurt*): That's a fine way to talk.

FATHER FLAHERTY *comes out of the Presbytery, carrying a small black satchel. He is young, red-headed, and Irish as a shamrock. He goes up to his bicycle which is leaning against the church.*

FLAHERTY: Well, good morning, boys, it's a fine day for the football.

MAC: It is indeed, Father.

ANDREW: I'll drop down to the corner for a while. (*To MAC.*) Ye can tell her . . . (*He looks at PETER.*) . . . Well, I'll be back later.

*He turns and goes out. FATHER FLAHERTY begins to hum.*

MAC: I'm afraid ye hurt his feeln's, Peter.



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER: No moie than he deserves! (*He starts to eat an apple.*)

MAC: He's no' a bad sort of chap. A bit sweet on the girls maybe, but ye canna blame a man for bein' sweet on our Peggy. Ye'll find no better in all Edinburgh.

FLAHERTY: Oh, Peter, Annie wants ye.

PETER: No doubt, blast her soul! And I suppose the Canon's been raisin' the roof about his collars. (*Starts to rise.*)

FLAHERTY: No. He's out walkin' with Father Malachy.

PETER: Still? (*Sits again.*)

FLAHERTY: Sure our holy visitor's been chained up in a monastery so long, he's got a great itch to see the city. (*He crosses and takes a bite of PETER's apple.*)

MAC: Will ye be goin' to the football, Father?

FLAHERTY: No, darn the luck! This blessed monk that came last night will be teachin' me the plain chant and such nonsense. And would ye believe it! They're callin' choir practice at the vey hour of the game!

MAC: That's too bad, Father.

FLAHERTY: It is indeed! Why, if—— (*He suddenly stops.*) Oh, bless my soul! I'm forgettin' poor Willie O'Neill! (*He adjusts his bicycle clips hurriedly.*)

PETER: Willie O'Neill?

FLAHERTY: He's dyin', poor soul. I'm givin' him the last rites.

PETER: Sure, but why hurry? He's been dyin' for two years or more. It's probably another false alarm.

FLAHERTY: There's no mistake in it this time. His poor wife says he's been coughin' and croakin' and spitin' up blood all the night long. A fine man too. Never missed Mass in his life.

PETER: Well, I wouldn't call him a saint at all. But I suppose the good Lord will be lettin' him into Heaven on account of his fine tenor voice.

ANNIE, *the general servant of the Presbytery, comes in. She is Scotch, fifty, and very matter-of-fact.*

ANNIE (*seeing PETER*): Come along wi' ye, Peter. Stop yer bletherin'.

PETER (*rising*): Oh, hold yer tongue, ye withered old crow! I'm comin'!

ANNIE: How do you expect me to prepare a meal wi'out any lard. I've been waitin' on ye an hour or more! Ye're nothin' but a nuisance.  
*They go off into the Presbytery.*

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

FLAHERTY: Well, I'd better be gettin' along.

MAC: It's a dreadful shame ye have to miss the game, Father. It'll be a great victory for the Thistles.

FLAHERTY: With Timmy Burke playing for the Shamrocks? Like the devil it will!

MAC: I'll bet ye a shillin', Father.

FLAHERTY: A shilling indeed! Is that all the faith ye have? I'll bet ye two shillings.

MAC (*grudgingly*): Two shillings? It's a lot of money—but, aye, it's a bet. (*They shake hands.*)

FLAHERTY: Well, I have no time for more of yer talk.

MAC: By the way, Father, have ye heard the news?

FLAHERTY: What news?

MAC: Timmy Burke's been hurt. He can't play.

FLAHERTY: Timmy Burke? Ye mean he can't play at all?

MAC: Aye, they say his leg is all crippled. His wee wife threw him downstairs.

FLAHERTY: Now wouldn't that beat the devil? If ye were a decent Christian at all, ye'd have spoken up before.

MAC: Aye. But ye might no' have bet, if I had.

CANON GEOGHEGAN *and* FATHER MALACHY *enter*. CANON GEOGHEGAN *is an Irish-born priest of about fifty. He is thin, humourless and very severe.* FATHER MALACHY *is a little old Benedictine monk of about seventy. He is kindly, simple, and rather shabby.* GEOGHEGAN *stops on seeing FLAHERTY and listens disapprovingly.*

FLAHERTY: Faith, what's a good Irishman need with legs? Timmy Burke could beat the lot of the Thistles without gettin' off his hands and knees.

GEOGHEGAN (*to* FATHER FLAHERTY): Football again, Father!

FLAHERTY: Oh, I'm sorry, Canon.

MAC *turns and goes into the dance hall.*

GEOGHEGAN: Father Malachy, I don't think you've met my curate, Father Flaherty.

FLAHERTY: Good mornin', Father.

MALACHY: I'm vey pleased to meet you, Father. We missed each other at breakfast.

GEOGHEGAN: He's going to be one of your most difficult problems.

MALACHY: Oh?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

FLAHERTY: I'm afraid the Canon's right, Father. I can't get the knack of the plain chant at all.

MALACHY: Don't worry, Father. You will.

FLAHERTY: It's not so easy with the Latin and all. I'd be happy if I could get through the *Ite Missa Est* without crackin' in the middle.

MALACHY: I know. I used to get very discouraged, too. But we'll soon have you trilling like the birds in the sky, and they'll be coming from all over Scotland to hear the glory of your voice.

GEOGHEGAN: It's plain to see you haven't heard Father Flaherty sing. And how's Mr. O'Neill, Father?

FLAHERTY (*nervously*): I'm just going, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN: Just going? Good heavens, Father! You should have been there long ago. The poor man's probably dead by now!

FLAHERTY: Yes, Canon.

*He escapes as best he can. GEOGHEGAN turns to MALACHY with a hopeless gesture.*

GEOGHEGAN: You see what I'm up against!

MALACHY: Oh, he's young and he'll learn.

GEOGHEGAN: It's a very difficult parish—very difficult indeed—They keep sending me these rough-and-ready Irish curates, who charge about the altar as if they were playing football. And, of course, my predecessor left things in an awful mess.

MALACHY: They usually do, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN: Filthy vestments! Scrambled ceremonies! And the choir sounded like a second-rate opera company. No discipline! No dignity! Nothing! That's why I sent for you.

MALACHY: I hope I won't disappoint you, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN: I'm sure you won't, Father. Your Abbot tells me you are a wonderful teacher. The greatest authority on liturgy in the country. We'll whip some dignity into this church, you and I, even if the Bishop doesn't like the idea.

MALACHY: But surely the Bishop . . . ?

GEOGHEGAN: I'm afraid you don't know Plus Bobbie.

MALACHY: Plus Bobbie?

GEOGHEGAN: That's our nickname for him. You know how Bishops sign their names—(*He makes a cross in the air.*)—a cross. Then Robert Gillespie.

MALACHY (*laughing*): Oh, I see.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN: And when you've met the right reverend gentleman, I think you'll agree it fits him perfectly. He doesn't give a snuff for ritual—wears his mitre like a tam-o'-shanter, all higgledy-anyhow. And as for music—he doesn't know the difference between the *Ave Maria* and *Pop Goes the Weasel!* Why, I've even seen him say Low Mass in his bedroom slippers!

MALACHY: Dear me! My Abbot always spoke of him with great respect. He's a convert, isn't he?

GEOGHEGAN: Yes, a great deal too much of a convert. You can no more make a good Catholic out of a Scotch Presbyterian than you can make a nun out of a dancing girl.

MALACHY: I've read about dancing girls who went to Communion every Sunday.

GEOGHEGAN: Just newspaper talk, Father. (*He points to the Garden of Eden.*) See that building there?

MALACHY: Yes.

GEOGHEGAN: It's what Plus Bobbie calls in his atrocious French a "palais de danse".

MALACHY: It looks innocent enough.

GEOGHEGAN: Innocent? It's caused more scandal in my parish than all the seven deadly sins puts together. And, not content with supporting low necks, bare arms, and shaded corners—which they call, I believe, "squeeze-toria"—its proprietor, Mr. Bell, flouts Revelation by calling his establishment the "Garden of Eden".

MALACHY: Come, come, Canon. It can't be as bad as all that. After all, there's nothing wrong with dancing.

GEOGHEGAN: Oh, isn't there? (*MAC enters and sits on the steps.*) My bedroom window happens to be just across the way, and when this place vomits forth its faithful in the early morning, I don't half see some carryings-on. Why, it's worse than anything I've read about in moral theology. (*MAC laughs and goes out.*) I want you to deal with it in your sermon tomorrow. Pitch it in strong. Details, you know. Sex, music, silk stockings and unbridled passions.

MALACHY: But, Canon, I've never preached a sermon on vice in my life. I haven't been out of my monastery in fifteen years, and there never seemed to be any need for it there.

GEOGHEGAN: But surely, my dear Father—

MALACHY (*with quiet insistence*): Besides, Canon, I wonder whether it's the dance halls that cause the passions, or the passions that cause the dance halls. There have always been cabarets like this and girls

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

with naughty twinkles in their eyes. They're the hazards that make the game worth playing. Unbelief, Canon—unbelief—that's the real root of the evil!

GEOGHEGAN: Well then, I suppose I shall have to crack the whip myself.

MALACHY: Yes, that would be better, I think. After all, it is your circus, isn't it?

GEOGHEGAN: Quite. But, I must say, Father, I can't understand why you should defend an evil establishment like this. You're as bad as my friend, the Reverend Mr. Humphrey Hamilton.

MALACHY: Humphrey Hamilton?

GEOGHEGAN: Yes, our Anglican neighbour here. He's very modern, Mr. Hamilton. Plays golf every afternoon and preaches regularly on birth control and the spiritual aspects of mixed bathing.

MALACHY: Yes, that's the man. I met him last night on the train from Glasgow.

GEOGHEGAN: Really? Mr. Hamilton—third class?

MALACHY: He told me that he usually travelled first class, but that now and then he liked to mingle with the crowd.

GEOGHEGAN: So he sat with you?

MALACHY: We didn't get along very well. Mr. Hamilton and I. We argued all the way to Edinburgh. He seemed to find it most unreasonable that I should prefer the teachings of Our Dear Lord to those of H. G. Wells.

GEOGHEGAN: I'm not surprised. (*Pointing to the notice board.*) Just look at his notice board. Right by my church, if you please.

MALACHY (*reading*): Dear me, "Bring your girl to Evensong. God doesn't mind if you hold her hand".

GEOGHEGAN: Very snappy, isn't it?

MALACHY: That's terrible! But, I always thought the Anglicans frowned on this kind of thing.

GEOGHEGAN: Not Mr. Humphrey Hamilton.

ANDREW *enters and starts toward the Garden of Eden. He stops abruptly, catching sight of* GEOGHEGAN.

ANDREW: Good day, Canon. How have you been keeping?

GEOGHEGAN (*coldly*): Very well, thank you, Andrew.

ANDREW (*as MAC appears at the door*): Has she come?

MAC: Not yet, Mr. Gillespie. I canna understand it.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN: Up to your old tricks, I see.

ANDREW: Well, Canon, they may be old, but they're still verra pleasant. (*With a glance at GEOGHEGAN.*) Well, I think I'll wait for her inside.

MAC *and* ANDREW *go out.*

GEOGHEGAN (*to* MALACHY): I'll wager you don't know who that is.

MALACHY: I always make it a rule, Canon, never to wager unless I'm certain of winning.

GEOGHEGAN: It's Andrew Gillespie, the Bishop's bad brother—or the B.B.B. as he is known in every saloon in Edinburgh.

ANNIE *enters from the Presbytery.*

ANNIE: Oh, there ye are, Canon—Mrs. McNab just 'phoned.

GEOGHEGAN: Oh? What did she want?

ANNIE: Well, I couldn't make out exactly, Canon. But she was verra excited and said she was comin' right up to see ye.

GEOGHEGAN: More trouble, I suppose. All right, Annie, I'll be right in. (*ANNIE goes out.*) It's about her daughter, who teaches dancing in this horrible place. Well, we'd better go in.

MALACHY: I think I'll stay here and read my Office, if you don't mind. It's a very pleasant spot.

GEOGHEGAN: Very well. (*He looks at his watch.*) We'll be having lunch in about an hour. Be careful you don't catch cold.

*He starts off, just as* JIMMY BELL, GEORGE BLEATER *and the six GIRLS from the "Whose Baby Are You" Company flock onto the stage. GERTIE GILL, the leading lady, is walking arm in arm with BELL. BELL is fat, gross and jovial. BLEATER, the manager of the Company, is a nervous little Cockney.*

BELL (*almost colliding with* GEOGHEGAN): Oh, good morning, Canon.

SECOND CHORUS GIRL: Say, what is this?

THIRD CHORUS GIRL: Don't get us mixed up with clergy-

men! A girl friend o' mine . . .

FOURTH CHORUS GIRL: The tall one looks like my

father.

THIRD CHORUS GIRL: I bet you never saw your father.

*The GIRLS are now gathered around the steps of the dance hall.*

BLEATER: Get along, girls. You haven't much time.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN: Importing fresh talent, Mr. Bell?

BELL: Yes, Canon, the best little troupe in the country! Girls, meet the Canon.

*The GIRLS call and wave to the CANON.*

FIRST CHORUS GIRL: Hello, Canon. Aren't they cute? So this is the Garden of Eden?

*MAC enters from the dance hall.*

SECOND CHORUS GIRL: Looks more like the morgue to me.

FOURTH CHORUS GIRL: Gawd, what a dump!

THIRD CHORUS GIRL: Help me with my suitcase, will ye, Bess?

BLEATER: Stop talking and get inside! Rehearsal in ten minutes! Come on, hurry up!

GEOGHEGAN: Well, Father, now you see what I mean. This is the kind of thing I have to put up with. Disgusting people!

FIRST CHORUS GIRL: I bet they haven't even got inside plumbing.

*The GIRLS scramble into the dance hall. MAC helps them with their bags. GERTIE GILL lingers behind.*

BELL: Mac will show you to your dressing-room, sweetheart.

GERTIE: Oh, thank you, Mr. Bell. You're the nicest man!

BELL: I'll see you in a few minutes, Gertie, darling.

GERTIE: *Au revoir!* (*She goes inside.*)

BELL (*impressed*): She talks French!

BLEATER (*indifferently*): Gertie can say some things in almost any language. (*He looks across at the Presbytery.*) Nice neighbours you got.

*GEOGHEGAN goes out.*

BELL: Yes. That Geoghegan's a damn nuisance, that's what he is. Blasts away at me every Sunday—reports me to the City Council—if you please. Always complaining about something!

BLEATER: Should be a law against churches.

BELL: I'll say there should! Two thousand pounds this place cost me—and I haven't made a penny since I started.

BLEATER: Don't worry, Jimmy, my girls will pack 'em in for you.  
*MALACHY walks off reading his Office.*

BELL: They're nice-looking girls, all right. Nice legs, nice curves—(*He nudges BLEATER*)—you know, George—you know!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BLEATER: I've had worse. Haven't a drink on you, have you, Jimmy?

BELL: Even a married man's got to have a little fun now and then, eh, George? Nothing wrong, you know—just a run in the car, a drink and a cuddle, and home to bye-byes. That Gertie Gill's the cutest bit of "goods" I've seen in a long time!

BLEATER (*thoroughly bored by now*): Gertie's not bad. Hellish temper.

BELL: Come on, George, I'll get you that drink inside. I must say, what you don't take out of the bust, you take out of the bottle.

*The REVEREND HUMPHREY HAMILTON appears. He is about forty-five, genial and very well dressed.*

HAMILTON: Good morning, Bell.

BELL: Good morning, Mr. Hamilton. Nice day.

HAMILTON: They tell me you're having a special performance to-night, Bell.

BELL: That's right, Mr. Hamilton. Every Saturday night for a month. It's an experiment. Oh, I want to introduce my good friend, George Bleater. George is the manager of the show.

HAMILTON: Really? How do you do?

BLEATER: I hope you have no objections, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Objections? I should say not! I hope it's a great success.

BELL: It'll be a wonderful show all right—wonderful! The best show Edinburgh has ever seen.

HAMILTON: Good! You can have the boys and girls on Saturdays, Bell, so long as they come to me on Sundays. (*He laughs.*) That's fair, isn't it?

BELL: More than fair!

HAMILTON: Well, good luck, gentlemen—good luck! (*He goes out.*)

BELL: There's a real sport for you, George. Nothing narrow-minded about him.

ANDREW *appears at the window.* BLEATER *goes into the dance hall.*

*Exit.*

ANDREW: The rehearsal's startin', Jimmy.

BELL (*going up steps*): Oh, thank you, Mr. Gillespie. I hope you'll be with us tonight.

PEGGY MCNAB *enters hurriedly. She is an attractive young girl of twenty.*



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANDREW: Aye. I wouldn't miss it for the world. (*He sees PEGGY.*)

Oh, there ye are, Bubbles.

BELL: What's been keeping you, Peggy?

PEGGY (*out of breath*): I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Bell—I couldn't help it. I really couldn't! (*To ANDREW.*) Would you like your lesson now?

BELL: We're using the floor for the rehearsal, Peggy.

BELL *exits.*

PEGGY: Oh dear! What a shame!

FATHER MALACHY *comes in. He sits on a bench reading his Office.*

ANDREW: Och, well, it's no matter. I wasn't feelin' verra spry anyhow. I'll come out and chat wi' ye for a bit.

*He leaves the window.*

PEGGY: Fine!

ANDREW *comes in.*

ANDREW: So ye didn't want to dance with yer Andrew, eh, Bubbles?

PEGGY: Oh, no, Mr. Gillespie, you're a beautiful dancer for a man of your—— Well, I love to dance with you, you know that.

ANDREW: Do ye now?

PEGGY: I've been having a fearful time with my mother. That's what's been keeping me. She's got a bee in her bonnet about me working here. Says she'll throw me out of the house. Canon Geoghegan's been filling her up with all sorts of wild tales.

ANDREW: Och—him!

PEGGY: I expect she's over talking to him now, I can just hear the two of them.

ANDREW: Well, don't worry, Bubbles. If he starts interferin', I'll speak to my brother. He's the Bishop, you know.

PEGGY: Oh, thank you, Mr. Gillespie. You're such a darling cookie, I keep forgetting you're related to these high mucky-mucks.

ANDREW: Are ye no' goin' t'call me Andrew?

PEGGY: Well——?

ANDREW: Ye're a verra sweet girl, Bubbles.

PEGGY: Thank you, Mr.—Andrew.

ANDREW: And ye've a verry sweet smile.

PEGGY (*edging away*): You tell that to all the girls, I know.

ANDREW: All what girls?

FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY: Oh, you can't fool me, Mr. Gillespie, you don't mean a word you say—I know. Men like you have girls in every street. But I like you, somehow, all the same.

ANDREW: Do ye mean that?

PEGGY: More than all the men in the world, Mr. Gillespie. Cut my throat, cross my heart, and see all the rest of it, if I don't.

ANDREW (*putting his arm around her*): My own wee Bubbles!

PEGGY: Not out in the street, Mr. Gillespie.

ANDREW: What's the harm?

PEGGY: Let me go! Have you gone daft?

ANDREW: Just a wee one! There's nobody lookin'.

PEGGY (*rising*): I said no, and I mean it. You're nothing but a flirt!

ANDREW: Have ye no heart?

PEGGY: Oh, please, Mr. Gillespie! (*PEGGY breaks away from ANDREW, but not before he has managed to kiss her. PEGGY slaps his face, and runs up the steps. She turns at the top of the steps and suddenly runs back to him.*) Are you hurt, Andrew?

ANDREW (*dabbing at his nose*): Aye—I think I'm dyin'.

PEGGY: Well, it serves you right!

ANDREW: It was just a wee peck.

PEGGY: I didn't mean to hurt you, Andrew.

ANDREW: -Aye, but ye did.

PEGGY (*kneeling*): Forgive me!

ANDREW: I'm not sure that I will.

PEGGY: Andrew, you can kiss me.

ANDREW: Och, well, I'm a forgivin' sort of man. (*He kisses her.*) I feel better now—— How about comin' wi' me to the football this afternoon?

PEGGY: The football? Oh, Andrew, do you mean it?

ANDREW: Aye.

PEGGY: Oh, I'd love to, Andrew—but I can't!

ANDREW: And why not?

PEGGY: I've got my lessons, and Mr. Bell wouldn't——

ANDREW: Oh, Bubbles, ye're always makin' excuses.

PEGGY: That's not true, Andrew. It was nice of you to ask me though. I never thought—you'd want to see me anywhere but here.

*FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE*

ANDREW : That's where you're wrong, Bubbles. If it's only Mr. Bell ye're thinkin' of, I can fix that mighty quick.

PEGGY : But, Andrew——

ANDREW : If my Bubbles wants to see the game, she's goin'. That's all there is to it. And we'll go over to the North British for a snack first. Wait for me a minute while I fix it up w' Jimmy.

PEGGY : Oh, Andrew! You're such a surprising sorta man. If you only——

ANDREW (*turning on the stairs*) : What ?

PEGGY : Nothing——

*He goes. The CONSTABLE enters.*

CONSTABLE (*to PEGGY*) : Good morning.

PEGGY : Good morning, Constable.

*The CONSTABLE exits. PEGGY takes out her powder and lipstick. She crosses down beside MALACHY, dabbing at her lips. She looks down suddenly and sees him watching her.*

MALACHY : I'm sorry—I'm afraid I've been rather in the way.

PEGGY : That's all right. I'm used to people spying on me around here.

MALACHY : I tried my best not to listen, but——

PEGGY : Go ahead! Tell Canon Geoghegan! I don't care!

MALACHY : Tell him what ?

PEGGY : I don't care if he preaches a dozen sermons!

MALACHY : He is rather fond of preaching, isn't he ?

PEGGY : What right has he to go upsetting my mother ? I haven't done anything. Why, you'd think—— Oh, I don't care what any of you say.

MALACHY : I know, my child. I know how you feel. He's the Bishop's brother and you're only Peggy McNab.

PEGGY : How did you know that ?

MALACHY : I know——

*PEGGY sits beside him on the bench.*

PEGGY : Everyone says he's a terrible flirt.

MALACHY : Yes, they call him the B.B.B., don't they ?

PEGGY : Yes, but I don't understand why, Father. He seems so lonely and he's so good to me.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY: Perhaps he's not as bad as they say; perhaps he's fond of you.

PEGGY: Do you think he could be, Father?

MALACHY: I think he is.

PEGGY: Thank you, Father. I haven't spoken to a priest this way since I was a child.

MALACHY: I'll tell you a secret. I've never spoken to a dance hall girl—(*They both laugh.*)—and it is a lovely day for the football, isn't it?

*She looks at him and smiles. Two of the CHORUS GIRLS come to the window for a cigarette during a lull in the rehearsal.*

FIRST CHORUS GIRL: Phew! I'm all hot and dewy.

SECOND CHORUS GIRL (*seeing FATHER MALACHY and PEGGY*): What is this—a nunnery?

FATHER MALACHY *and* PEGGY *rise.*

FIRST CHORUS GIRL: Right out in the street, if you please!

PEGGY (*turning on them*): Oh, shut up!

SECOND CHORUS GIRL: What's it to you, dearie?

*Before PEGGY can answer, BELL appears at the door.*

BELL (*to PEGGY*): Oh, Peggy! Mr. Gillespie will be out in a minute. He's just having a drink with Mr. Bleater.

PEGGY: You mean I can——

BELL: You can take the whole afternoon, if you want.

PEGGY: Oh, thank you, Mr. Bell. Are you sure you don't mind?

BELL: Not as long as you're with him, I don't.

GEOGHEGAN *and* MRS. MCNAB *appear at the back. MRS. MCNAB is in a determined mood.*

GEOGHEGAN (*as they enter*): Leave it to me, Mrs. McNab! I'll talk to him! (*He catches sight of BELL who has his arms around the TWO CHORUS GIRLS.*) Look! What did I tell you?

MRS. MCNAB: There she is now! Peggy! You're coming home with me right now!

PEGGY: Oh, Mother!—Good heavens!

GEOGHEGAN (*as BELL tries to escape*): Oh, no, Mr. Bell! We've something to say to you.

MRS. MCNAB: Indeed we have!

PEGGY: But, Mother, please—— Not here!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MRS. MCNAB : In the house or in the street, it's all one to me.

BELL : What's wrong, lady ?

MRS. MCNAB : You're sending my poor daughter straight to hell! Straight to hell, that's what you're doing!

BELL : Now how can you say a thing like that ?

GEOGHEGAN : There's no use acting innocent, Mr. Bell. I know what goes on over here. It's drinking and carousing all night.

MRS. MCNAB : Nice sort of place for my daughter! Hobnobbing with jockeys and medical students and all such riff-raff! It's evil! And what's worse, it's verra low class!

BELL : What? The Garden of Eden low class ?

PEGGY (*to* GEOGHEGAN) : You put her up to this.

BELL : Why, some of the best people in Edinburgh come here! -

MRS. MCNAB : There's no use shouting at me. I'm taking my daughter out of here, and that's an end to it.

GEOGHEGAN : That's right, Mrs. McNab.

BELL : You're not taking Peggy ?

GEOGHEGAN : Aren't we though ?

BELL : She's the best girl I've got.

GEOGHEGAN : She's a regular young Jezebel!

PEGGY : What ?

MALACHY : Oh, come now, Canon! She's really not. She——

GEOGHEGAN : Please leave this to me, Father!

MALACHY : But I've just been talking to her, and——

GEOGHEGAN (*amazed*) : You've been talking to her! (*But before he can go on, BELL interrupts.*)

BELL : You can't do this to me, Geoghegan! You'll be giving my place a bad name!

GEOGHEGAN (*exploding*) : What ?

MRS. MCNAB : Riff-raff! That's all my daughter will ever meet in this place!

*At this point ANDREW, feeling refreshed from his recent drink, enters from the dance hall. He is quite unaware of the tension around him.*

ANDREW : Well, Bubbles, darling, did you think I was never coming ?

MRS. MCNAB *wheels on him in a torrent of parental rage.*

MRS. MCNAB : Just what I suspected! Trash!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY (*very upset*): This is Mr. Gillespie, Mother!

MRS. MCNAB: Don't introduce me! I don't want to meet the man.

PEGGY: But, Mother—he's the Bishop's brother.

MRS. MCNAB (*startled*): Who?

BELL: The brother of your own Bishop!

MRS. MCNAB: Bishop Gillespie's brother? I don't believe it.

ANDREW: Aye, ma'am. It's true.

MRS. MCNAB (*suddenly apologetic*): Oh, Mr. Gillespie—excuse me—I didn't know. (*She turns on GEOGHEGAN in a rage.*) Why didn't you tell me?

GEOGHEGAN: He's the worst of the lot, I assure you.

MRS. MCNAB: The Bishop's brother? Really, Canon! How can you say such a thing? (*She turns to ANDREW.*) And how is the dear Bishop?

ANDREW: Plus Bobbie? He's fine, thank ye, Mrs. McNab. Peggy and I, we were goin' to the football.

MRS. MCNAB: Why, that's nice now, isn't it? You'll take good care of my Peggy now, won't you?

ANDREW: Aye, Mrs. McNab, I will—— Would ye no like us to dander along wi' ye to the corner?

MRS. MCNAB: Oh, well, I might—— Why, thank you, Mr. Gillespie.

*The three of them start out, BELL bursts out laughing and goes into the dance hall. The GIRLS leave the window.*

GEOGHEGAN (*in a rage*): Stupid woman! Any fool could see——

MALACHY: But, Canon, she's really a nice, young girl.

GEOGHEGAN: Nice?

MALACHY (*looking off after them*): Yes—and very young.

GEOGHEGAN: My dear Father, I haven't been a priest for thirty years without learning that young girls who earn their living by dancing are——

MALACHY: What, Canon?

FATHER FLAHERTY *enters.*

GEOGHEGAN: —well, young girls who earn their living by dancing. (*Seeing FATHER FLAHERTY.*) Well, Father—were you in time for Mr. O'Neill?

FLAHERTY: In time? Sure, wasn't he sittin' up in bed smokin' his pipe.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN: Really! How very fortunate. You'd better go and say an Act of Contrition—(*The CONSTABLE enters.*)—and after that, you can help me with confessions.

CANON GEOGHEGAN *and* FATHER FLAHERTY *go into the Presbytery.*  
*The CANON passes HAMILTON off stage.*

HAMILTON (*off*): Good day, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN: Good day, Mr. Hamilton.

FATHER MALACHY *has crossed to the bench for his Office. He is just starting to pick it up, when the REV. HUMPHREY HAMILTON enters, whistling a popular tune. He stops, seeing FATHER MALACHY, and advances, smiling.*

HAMILTON: Ah, Father Malachy, we meet again.

MALACHY: Oh, good morning, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: I've had many a chuckle over our little argument on the train last night. Very refreshing, your mediaeval viewpoint. And how is my dear friend the Canon?

MALACHY (*smiling*): At the moment, a trifle upset, I'm afraid.

HAMILTON: Oh!

MALACHY: But it's nothing serious.

HAMILTON: I hope you'll drop in soon for a cup of tea, Father.

MALACHY: Thank you.

HAMILTON: I'm just across the road, you know.

MALACHY: Yes—just across the road, in more senses than one, aren't you, Mr. Hamilton?

HAMILTON: Ah, yes—but they're very amusing these friendly little disagreements. Quite a change all this for you—after the monastery.

MALACHY: Yes, everything is very different. Strange faces, strange sounds, so much confusion—(*He smiles.*) It's all very bewildering—

HAMILTON (*baiting him*): And how do you like our dance hall?

MALACHY: It seems very gay and worldly. But I have a suspicion it's really rather harmless.

HAMILTON: You surprise me, Father! You'd better not say that to the Canon.

MALACHY: I have already. And I must admit he wasn't very pleased. But after all, Mr. Hamilton, Holy Mass is really a dance—isn't it? A beautiful dance upon the altar to Gregorian music!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

HAMILTON: Yes, I suppose it is. (*Then in a patronising tone.*) But, my dear Malachy, surely your Gregorian chant and all that is very out of date.

MALACHY (*nettled*): And why, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: It's so important that we reach the young people. We must use new methods to bring them to the churches. Ancient pageantry is all very well, but it doesn't stand much chance against this sort of thing. (*He points to the notice board.*)

MALACHY (*with surprising fire*): Your notice board, if I may say so, Mr. Hamilton, is in very bad taste.

HAMILTON: Come, come, now. In these enlightened days?

MALACHY: These enlightened days, as you choose to call them, seem to me to be very unenlightened. Far too much talk, and not enough prayer! Far too many motor cars and not enough rosaries!

HAMILTON: But times have changed.

MALACHY: Yes, but the truth hasn't. All your new prophets and philosophies—all the glare and blare of modern times—where are they leading? People are lost in a mist of unbelief and uncertainty—

HAMILTON: But people nowadays won't listen to the old style of sermon. My church would be empty. This is the twentieth century, Father.

MALACHY: Yes, but the human soul is the same. The same sick need healing, the same poor need food and shelter, the same sinners need a redeemer, the same death needs resurrection. People aren't tired of the old Christianity, Mr. Hamilton, they have never found enough Christianity in the world to be tired of. (*Surprised at his own eloquence. Apologetically.*) But, here I am preaching a sermon.

HAMILTON (*with a superior air*): And very eloquently too, I must say. But I'm afraid, Father, you and your Church are rather old-fashioned.

MALACHY: Yes, I suppose we are. But then we've been rather old-fashioned for nearly two thousand years.

HAMILTON: I know, but you can't stick your head in the sand forever. Look at Spain and Portugal!

MALACHY: Spain and Portugal . . . ?

HAMILTON: Yes, to the normal, healthy British mind, the tawdry churches, the unshaven priests, the bleeding Madonnas and other so-called miracles are a complete explanation of the decline of those once mighty nations. Nobody believes in that kind of thing now.

MALACHY (*incredulously*): Nobody believes in miracles?



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

HAMILTON: A few people, perhaps, but miracles are really so unnecessary and so impossible. Natural laws, my dear Father, are never broken. Modern science has clearly shown that miracles were nothing but ignorance and superstition. This is an age of new wonders. New ideas! Motor cars—wireless—television! Electricity has revolutionised everything. We must throw off the old shackles. Miracles are out of date, that's all.

MALACHY: Oh, no, Mr. Hamilton. Miracles aren't out of date, and never will be in God's universe. The supernatural is just as real as the natural. And electricity, by which you seem to be so impressed, Mr. Hamilton, was created by God, not by Mr. Marconi! That mountains and tram lines and telegraph poles remain where they are, is just as miraculous as if they went skipping about. Day and night, since the beginning of time, the Holy Ghost has swept over the world, like a mighty wind, invisible but all-powerful!

PETER *enters*.

HAMILTON (*with great condescension*): I wish I had your simple faith.

MALACHY: And our Lord's miracle—

PETER (*to FATHER MALACHY*): Lunch is ready, Father.

MALACHY: Oh?—Yes, I'll be right in, Peter—thank you. (*Voice trembling with unhappiness.*) And our Lord's miracles—Mr. Hamilton? What about them?

HAMILTON: Perhaps we should continue this some other time, Father.

MALACHY: Don't you believe He raised Lazarus from the dead? Don't you believe He healed the sick and the blind? Don't you believe He died on the cross for our sins and ascended into Heaven?

HAMILTON (*after a slight pause*): You must remember, Father, the Bible is based on the recollections of illiterate fishermen and peasants. It was greatly coloured by their ignorance and imagination.

MALACHY (*deliberately*): I'm afraid, sir, you are not a Christian.

HAMILTON: Not a Christian!

MALACHY: You're a heretic, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Don't be absurd!

MALACHY: A heretic in clerical clothing. Earning your living by teaching a religion you really don't believe!

HAMILTON: A heretic? Just because I don't believe in miracles?

MALACHY (*insistently*): Yes, Mr. Hamilton, you are!

HAMILTON (*losing his temper*): Mediaeval tommyrot!

MALACHY: God could perform a miracle this very minute!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

HAMILTON : Nonsense!

MALACHY (*with increasing fervor*) : In one blinding instant He could bring Faith back to the world, heal the sick, raise the dead. Send you or your church—or—or this dance hall here—flying across the universe!

HAMILTON : Move the Garden of Eden ? Don't be silly!

MALACHY : Yes, if He wanted to.

HAMILTON : Then why doesn't He ?

MALACHY (*after a pause*) : Perhaps He will, Mr. Hamilton. Perhaps He will.

HAMILTON : Come, come now, Father. Don't be ridiculous! Move the Garden of Eden. Our innocent little dance hall. That's a good one!

HAMILTON *bursts into loud and derisive laughter*. FATHER MALACHY *stands watching him for a moment, his indignation mounting. There is a long pause. Suddenly FATHER MALACHY moves toward HAMILTON, his indignation has disappeared and he is possessed with a strange, almost ecstatic confidence. His voice is quiet and assured.*

MALACHY : Mr. Hamilton, today is the anniversary of the moving of the House of Our Lady from Nazareth to Loretto. A miracle, no doubt, in which you do not believe.

HAMILTON (*puzzled*) : Well, what of it ?

MALACHY : If you'll meet me here at nine o'clock tonight, I'll make you a wager.

HAMILTON : A wager ? What on earth for ?

MALACHY : We'll settle this question once and for all.

HAMILTON : You're taking our little argument much too seriously.

MALACHY : If you will meet me here at nine o'clock, I will—by the help of God—move this dance hall to any place you care to name.

HAMILTON (*amazed*) : But really, Father!

MALACHY : At nine o'clock, sharp, Mr. Hamilton. Don't be late!

FATHER MALACHY *turns and disappears rapidly into the Presbytery.*

HAMILTON *watches him in amazement.*

## CURTAIN

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

### Act One: Scene 2

*Evening the same day.*

*The Sacristy of the Church of Saint Margaret of Scotland. It is a simple, bare and sparsely furnished room. It immediately adjoins the church. Against the back wall at the right stands a long robing table, with drawers and small cupboards below. Above the robing table a large crucifix hangs on the wall. There are three doors. Two down stage right, one leading to the Presbytery, the other to the street. The third, stage left, leads to the altar of the church. Near the centre of the room stands a plain table and two wooden benches.*

AT RISE: *Benediction is being sung in the church. The CHOIR is singing the "Tantum Ergo" and the organ is playing. PETER is standing in the centre of the stage swinging a censer to and fro. ANNIE enters.*

ANNIE: They're havin' a real whirl at the Garden of Eden tonight.

PETER: Psh! Have ye no piety at all?

ANNIE: What are ye bletherin' about now? Ye old haver!

*ANNIE opens the door and listens to the faint sounds of the music from the dance hall. Meanwhile PETER is hurriedly spooning incense into the censer from an incense boat standing on the table. FATHER*

*FLAHERTY comes in.*

FLAHERTY (*impatiently*): Are ye never comin' with the incense?

PETER (*blowing frantically into the censer*): I can't get the blasted stuff to burn at all.

FLAHERTY (*crossing to him*): No matter, give it to me now. (*He takes the censer and whirls it about several times.*) Ye haven't enough charcoal, that's the trouble.

*FATHER FLAHERTY goes out hurriedly to the altar. PETER places the incense boat in a cupboard beneath the robing table. The CHOIR finished the singing of the "Tantum Ergo."*

MALACHY (*chanting*): *Panem de coelo praestitisti eis.*

CHOIR (*chanting the response*): *Omne delectamentum in se habentem.*

MALACHY: *Deus, qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili passionis tuae memoriam.*

PETER stands by the door listening for a moment. While FATHER

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY *is chanting as above, the following conversation takes place in hushed tones.*

PETER: There's real singin' for ye! You should listen to him. It's grand!

ANNIE (*gloomily*): Aye. But I'm feart he's no 'weel, poor man.

PETER: Sure, he's fit as a fiddle.

ANNIE: I tell ye he's an ill man. And no wonder—all the time fastin' and prayin'. He ate no lunch at all and stayed in the church—prayin' the whole afternoon.

*The bell chimes off.*

PETER (*kneeling*): Hold yer tongue, woman! Down on yer knees like a decent Christian!

ANNIE *kneels. The chimes sound again twice. Each time PETER and ANNIE strike their breasts. They rise. The organ starts to play and the CHOIR sings the "Laudate". FATHER FLAHERTY comes into the Sacristy followed in procession by CANON GEOGHEGAN and FATHER MALACHY. FATHER FLAHERTY is carrying the censer. Immediately they enter the Sacristy they turn and bow their heads to the crucifix. FATHER FLAHERTY places the censer in the cupboard. FATHER MALACHY sits wearily on one of the benches. PETER to FATHER MALACHY.*

It was a beautiful service, Father. Ye sing like an angel! (*He starts to remove his surplice.*)

MALACHY (*smiling*): A very old and creaky angel, Peter.

GEOGHEGAN (*pulling his surplice over his head*): Late with the incense again, Father?

FLAHERTY (*with a bitter glance at PETER*): Yes . . . it was terribly stubborn tonight.

FATHER FLAHERTY *starts to pull his surplice over his head. ANNIE, who has been waiting for her chance, comes over to CANON GEOGHEGAN.*

ANNIE: Will ye be wantin' yer supper noo?

GEOGHEGAN (*struggling out of his surplice*): Yes, Annie, we'll be ready in a few minutes.

ANNIE: Well, dinna take too long wi' yer changin' or yer broth will be cauld.

FATHER FLAHERTY *collects the surplices and folds them away under the robing table.*

PETER (*to ANNIE*): Is it broth again yer givin' us?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANNIE (*turning on him*): Aye, and what better would ye want on a cauld night like this? -

ANNIE *moves right*. PETER *follows her*.

PETER: It's oatmeal and broth, mornin', noon and night. Have ye no imagination at all, woman?

ANNIE (*as they go off*): And I suppose it's Irish stew wi' dumplin's yer wantin'?

FLAHERTY (*to FATHER MALACHY*): Could I help ye off with yer vestments, Father?

MALACHY (*rising wearily*): Thank you.

GEOGHEGAN (*to FATHER MALACHY*): You see what I mean about the choir?

MALACHY: A bit off key sometimes. But I've heard much worse.

GEOGHEGAN: Yes, yes. But no dignity. Always warbling and trilling. The plain chant will be much better. Of course, what we ought to do is get rid of the women altogether.

*During the following scene FATHER FLAHERTY assists FATHER MALACHY to disrobe.*

FLAHERTY: Don't ye feel well? Ye're all shaky and nervous.

MALACHY: Am I?

FLAHERTY: And ye look rather pale.

GEOGHEGAN: Tired out, I expect.

MALACHY: Yes . . . too much excitement.

GEOGHEGAN: It's been a long day.

FLAHERTY: Ye'll feel better after a little supper.

MALACHY: Canon. Canon, there's something I think I should tell you.

GEOGHEGAN: Yes?

FLAHERTY (*rather worried*): Nothing's happened, has it, Father?

MALACHY (*with an odd smile*): Not yet. But I'm hoping that something will.

FATHER FLAHERTY and CANON GEOGHEGAN *exchange worried glances*.

GEOGHEGAN: What is it?

MALACHY: It's rather difficult to explain. . . . You see . . . (*He stops*.)

GEOGHEGAN: You're sure you're all right?

MALACHY: Quite, thank you. It's just—that I don't really know . . . (*A slight pause*.) You won't like it, Canon.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN : It's nothing serious ?

MALACHY : Yes . . . very serious, and I must tell you quickly. There isn't much time. (*He rises.*)

GEOGHEGAN (*losing patience*) : Time ? Really, Father! What on earth are you talking about ?

MALACHY : After you left me this morning, I met our friend from across the road.

GEOGHEGAN : Mr. Hamilton ?

MALACHY : Yes.

FLAHERTY : The old Judas! Sure and ye never did!

GEOGHEGAN (*freezing FATHER FLAHERTY with an icy glance*) : Father ?

MALACHY : We got into quite an argument. He ended by saying that miracles were and always had been impossible.

FLAHERTY : The heretic! And if I was his mother, I'd be takin' down his unholy pants, that I'd be!

GEOGHEGAN : Please, Father Flaherty! (*To FATHER MALACHY.*) Go on, Father.

MALACHY : I'm afraid I rather lost my temper.

GEOGHEGAN : I hope you weren't rude to him, Father. He can be rather an awkward neighbour, when he likes.

MALACHY : No, Canon, I wasn't rude. But I was rash—very rash.

GEOGHEGAN : Come, come now—you must be exaggerating.

MALACHY : I agreed to perform a miracle.

GEOGHEGAN (*aghast*) : A miracle!

FLAHERTY : Holy Mother!

MALACHY : Yes! To move the Garden of Eden to any part of the world Mr. Hamilton should name.

GEOGHEGAN : Good heavens! You must have been out of your mind!

FLAHERTY (*flabbergasted*) : Oh, Father, you must be joking.

MALACHY : I was never more serious in my life.

GEOGHEGAN : I can't believe it!

FLAHERTY : You, of all people!

GEOGHEGAN : It's incredible!

MALACHY : Yes, isn't it!

GEOGHEGAN : But why—why on earth did you do it?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY : To prove to Mr. Hamilton and all his modern friends the truth of Our Lord's miracles, by performing one here in Edinburgh—right under his nose.

FLAHERTY : Sure, Father, but miracles are entirely out of fashion these days. If one happened in the Bishop's own bedroom, his lordship would be after hushin' the indaicency up.

GEOGHEGAN : The whole idea is preposterous!

FLAHERTY : Old Hamilton will be havin' a great laugh on us.

GEOGHEGAN : Yes, the whole church will be ridiculed. Think what you're doing, Father.

MALACHY : I'm afraid it's too late.

GEOGHEGAN : Too late ?

MALACHY : It's to take place at nine o'clock.

GEOGHEGAN *and* FLAHERTY : Tonight ?

MALACHY : Yes.

GEOGHEGAN : Good God in Heaven! What a mess! (*He is a picture of despair.*)

FLAHERTY (*looking at his watch*) : It's quarter to nine now, Father.

MALACHY : Dear me, as late as that. We haven't much time, have we ?

GEOGHEGAN : We ? Please don't include me in this. I wash my hands of the whole affair.

FLAHERTY (*at the open door through which strains of music can be heard*) : Faith, it's startin' to fill with people already. Will ye be movin' them, too ?

MALACHY : Yes, the whole caboodle!

FLAHERTY : Holy fly!

GEOGHEGAN (*desperately*) : In the name of God, think what you're doing, Father! It's sheer madness!

MALACHY : I'm afraid, Canon, you haven't much faith.

GEOGHEGAN : But this has nothing to do with faith.

MALACHY : Oh, yes, it has. You're afraid I won't be able to bring it off. And yet every morning you and I perform a much more wonderful miracle, the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Saviour. Knowing how that marvel never fails, it can't be too much to hope that Almighty God will enable me to move the dance hall.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

*There is a slight pause. The CANON and FATHER FLAHERTY realise the logic of FATHER MALACHY'S argument and look at one another in awkward silence.*

GEOGHEGAN: Quite so, Father, but this is different. Our Lord instituted the miracle of the Mass Himself at the Last Supper. But we haven't even a hint from a minor saint that the Garden of Eden will take off into the air tonight. It would be different if we were in China or some other place where they haven't the Faith. But here in Scotland we've had the Faith for years.

MALACHY: No, Canon! Lost it for years! The whole world has lost faith—forgotten our dear Saviour—abandoned itself to greed, and sin and killing. We can bring them back, Canon! But ordinary means are not enough. We need the supernatural! The truth revealed in a single, glorious instant! A miracle! (*A pause.*) Don't you understand?

GEOGHEGAN (*stubbornly*): No, I don't understand. In my opinion the whole affair is most unwise. You'll have to take the responsibility on your own shoulders.

MALACHY (*to FATHER FLAHERTY*): And you, Father?

FLAHERTY: Me? I'm afraid I haven't much influence with the Almighty—but I'll do what I can by ye.

GEOGHEGAN: No, Father Flaherty, I must forbid you.

FLAHERTY (*protestingly*): But, Canon . . .?

GEOGHEGAN (*putting an end to it*): The Bishop wouldn't approve.

PETER *enters.*

PETER (*to FATHER MALACHY*): Mr. Hamilton is here to see ye, Father. Shall I tell the old sinner ye're busy?

MALACHY: No, show him in, Peter.

PETER *goes out.*

GEOGHEGAN: Come to gloat, I suppose.

MALACHY: He probably wants to tell me the spot he's chosen.

GEOGHEGAN (*making a last desperate effort*): Good heavens! The whole thing is fantastic! Think what will happen if it fails.

MALACHY (*with great confidence*): But it won't. Please, Canon, have a little more faith in my inspiration as I would in yours, if our positions were suddenly reversed.

GEOGHEGAN: We have only your word!

MALACHY: No—not my word—God's word.

GEOGHEGAN (*amazed*): What!



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY : It wasn't I who made the wager with Mr. Hamilton.

FLAHERTY : You mean you were inspired ?

MALACHY (*with great reverence*) : Yes, Father—a voice like the voice of Our Lord on the Cross——

MR. HAMILTON *enters*. *He puts his hat and coat in the hallway.*  
*He is very hearty and cocksure.*

HAMILTON : Good evening, gentleman. Good evening. All ready for the miracle ? (*To GEOGHEGAN.*) Quite a surprise, eh, Canon ?

GEOGHEGAN : Father Malachy has just told me.

HAMILTON (*to FATHER MALACHY*) : Cheer up, Father. You're looking rather nervous.

MALACHY : Well, you see, Mr. Hamilton, this is my first miracle.

HAMILTON : Have you advised the Pope ?

GEOGHEGAN : There's no need to be offensive.

HAMILTON : I'm sorry. I had no intention of offending you. I just thought that the Pope might like to know that one of his faithful was about to send a dance hall whizzing through the air. It doesn't happen every day, you know—even in Catholic countries. I shall miss our little dance hall . . . such a bright, cheery place.

GEOGHEGAN : Disgusting place, you mean!

HAMILTON *goes to the door*. *Sounds of music can be heard.*

HAMILTON (*sarcastically*) : It's still standing there all right. Listen to the music. And inside people are laughing and gay. If they only knew that in a moment Father Malachy is going to say a few magic words and send them flying into space.

MALACHY : And what place have you chosen, Mr. Hamilton ?

HAMILTON : Ah, yes. I was forgetting about that.

MALACHY : We haven't much time.

HAMILTON : Quite. But seriously, there's something I'd like to say to you first. (*With self-righteous fairness.*) I think we were both rather carried away this morning. Even in theological arguments one is likely to make rash statements. Quite unintentionally, I may have provoked you into undertaking this extraordinary miracle. In any case, I want to be absolutely fair with you now. It wouldn't be sporting to hold you to a wager made in the heat of argument. As far as I am concerned, I am quite willing that the miracle be called off——

FLAHERTY : Scratched, ye mean ?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

HAMILTON: Scratched.

GEOGHEGAN: Thank heaven!

MALACHY: It's very kind of you, Mr. Hamilton. But I assure you I have no intention of going back on my word.

GEOGHEGAN: What?

MALACHY: Yes, Canon. The miracle will take place as promised—at nine o'clock sharp!

HAMILTON: Very well. I thought it only right to give you a chance.

FLAHERTY (*looking at his watch*): We'd better hurry, Father. We've got only ten minutes.

MALACHY: Yes, Father. Well, Mr. Hamilton, where shall it be?

HAMILTON: There are so many places—it's rather difficult. Canon, perhaps you could——

GEOGHEGAN: No, that's your job.

HAMILTON: All right, then . . . let me see. . . . I think we'd better keep it in the Empire, don't you? Hmmm. . . . I've got it! How about Bass Rock?

MALACHY: Bass Rock? .

GEOGHEGAN: What?

HAMILTON: It's twenty miles up the coast—just off North Berwick. You know it, Canon?

GEOGHEGAN: Yes, indeed. (*To FATHER MALACHY.*) But I wish you'd move it to Timbuctoo, Father, while you're at it.

MALACHY: No, Mr. Hamilton must choose. That was the bargain. Bass Rock it shall be.

HAMILTON: Good!

FLAHERTY: Sure, Father, it's a marvellous aim ye'll have to have! It's nothin' but a tiny pimple of rock stickin' up in the middle of the ocean. Ye can hardly see it for the waves and the sea gulls.

MALACHY: Even so, Father. And now we'd better be getting along, Canon.

FLAHERTY (*to GEOGHEGAN*): What about me, Canon? Sure, I'd hate to miss it.

GEOGHEGAN: You can watch from the window. It will be better if only the three of us go over. We don't want to attract unnecessary attention. (*To FATHER MALACHY.*) Oh, what about me, Father?

MALACHY: Your prayers are all I need.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN: But there must be something I can do to help.

MALACHY: No, Canon. You see the Garden of Eden is going to fly by the Grace of God. I won't need anyone to stand by and blow in case the miracle doesn't come off.

GEOGHEGAN (*fussily*): Very well, it's your affair. But I must say I don't like the way you're doing it.

FLAHERTY (*to* FATHER MALACHY): God bless ye, Father.

HAMILTON: You'd better come along! *Tempus fugit!*

MALACHY (*at the door*): Yes, yes! We'd better hurry. It would never do to be late for my own miracle!

### CURTAIN

## Act One: Scene 3

### *The Garden of Eden.*

*Immediately after Scene 2. It is the interior of the bar of the Garden of Eden, a cheap, garish, down-at-the-heels room, with a small bar at the right, an entrance foyer at the left, and a dull glass partition at the back, through which can be seen the vague shadows of the orchestra playing and a few couples dancing. Through the window at the left comes the glow of a street lamp outside. The clock above the bar registers a few minutes before nine.*

AT THE RISE: ANDREW is seated gloomily at the bar, behind which MAC is reading the evening paper. A WAITER lounges upstage in the arch. Two other men are seated at a table up left, finishing their glasses of stout. ARCHIE MACDONALD, a stockbroker and his wife, NORA, are seated at a table left.

FIRST MAN: Want another one? (*From the table.*) Two more, Mac.

MAC: Aye.

ANDREW: Business is picking up.

MAC: From them? Not much. They just take a couple of drinks and sit for hours discussin' football and fornication. (*The WAITER serves the drinks to the two men.*)

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANDREW (*looking at the clock*): It's almost nine. I'm surprised there's no' a bigger crowd.

MAC: Aye. Ye can no' expect people to come to a frowsy dump like this. Jimmy Bell hasn't spent a penny on it in three years or more. (*He wipes a ring off the bar.*) Ye cannot keep the place clean. Look at that for dirt, will ye!

BELL *enters from the dance floor, in a great state of anxiety.*

BELL: Aren't those girls back yet?

NORA: This is an awful place. Let's go home.

MAC: I haven't seen them, Mr. Bell.

ARCHIE: Cheer up, old girl. Another drink and you'll be wanting to stay all night.

BELL: Damn! I told Bleater there wasn't any time for altering costumes.

NORA: Like hell I will. If I must stay we might as well dance. (*The MACDONALDS go into the dance hall.*)

BLEATER *and the GIRLS enter followed by GERTIE.*

BELL (*seeing BLEATER*): Oh, there you are, George. I was beginning to think you were never coming.

BLEATER: Just try and get six bloody women anywhere on time! (*To the GIRLS.*) Come on now! Get back there and get your things off! You've no time to waste.

FIRST CHORUS GIRL: Oh, George, let's have one drink first.

BLEATER: You'll have plenty later. Hurry up!

BLEATER *exits with the GIRLS.*

GERTIE: *Bon soir*, Mr. Bell.

BELL: Hello, sweetheart. I've been waiting for you.

GERTIE: Sorry I'm late.

BELL: I was hoping we could have a little drink before the show.

GERTIE (*her arm in his*): Well, why not?

BELL: You've got to dress.

GERTIE: There's not much to that, Mr. Bell, I've got nothing to hide. (*They cross to bar.*)

BELL (*to MAC*): Two brandies, Mac.

*A WAITER enters and crosses to BELL.*

WAITER: Mr. Bleater wants you, Mr. Bell.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BELL : I'll be with him in a minute. (*To GERTIE.*) Perhaps we'd better have those drinks in your dressing-room, sweetheart.

GERTIE : Anything you say, Mr. Bell. (*To MAC.*) Make it a double brandy. (*GERTIE exits followed by BELL.*)

ANDREW : 'Tis a long dance my Bubbles is havin'.

MAC : Aye! She must be enjoyin' it.

ANDREW : Now why do ye say that? She's verra sweet on me, Bubbles.

MAC : Aye, but she's a woman.

ANDREW : There's women and women, Mac. Yon Bubbles is as bonny a wee bit hen as ever cried cock-a-doodle-doo.

MAC : But hens don't cry cock-a-doodle-doo. Cocks, Mr. Andrew, cocks! Ye have the blanket the wrong way up.

ANDREW : Aye, ye've got me there, Mac. Ye've got me there. But do ye mind what a trim little darlin' she is, legs with muscles like a racin' champion! All yon dancin', I suppose.

MAC : Aye. All yon dancin', that's the trouble. Mind ye, I'm no great man for the kirk, but there's somethin' in what the ministers say about dancin' turnin' little white virgins into scarlet prima donnas.

ANDREW : Scarlet prima donnas be damned! Does that fit my Bubbles? I ask ye, does that fit my wee Bubbles?

MAC : Mebbe, no' yet. But what chance has a lass wi' young medical students and their fancy tricks? That's how I lost my second wife, Mr. Andrew. It hurt me dreadful.

ANDREW : Aye. But not my Bubbles.

MAC : She's dancin' wi' that Ronnie Montgomery now. He's up from the University.

ANDREW : Is she now?

*ANDREW crosses up to the arch, looking into the dance hall, as the two men at the table rise, to go into the inner room. One of them stops to throw a match out the window, and is attracted by what he sees outside.*

FIRST MAN : Well, can ye beat that! Look here, Mac, what kind of place are ye runnin' anyhow?

*MAC crosses towards them.*

MAC : What's up?

FIRST MAN : Clergymen kneelin' right in the street! Prayin' on yer verra doorstep!

SECOND MAN (*rising*): It must be the Salvation Army!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MAC : Salvation Army nothin'! Will ye look at this, Mr. Andrew. Old Geoghegan and that wee priestie that was here today—And there's Mr. Hamilton wi' 'em!

ANDREW : That's one for the book all right.

MAC : What're they up to, do you suppose?

ANDREW : A fine place to be prayin'.

MAC (*he closes the shutter*): Oh, well, there's no tellin' about the clergy, these days! (*He goes back to the bar. The two men cross up and exit, just as PEGGY comes in and greets ANDREW.*)

PEGGY : I came 'as fast as ever I could!

ANDREW : Did ye though?

PEGGY : Of course. Can't we sit down?

ANDREW : Aye. I suppose we can.

PEGGY : What's the trouble—Andrew?

ANDREW (*surlily*): Who was that young squib?

PEGGY : What young squib?

ANDREW : That young la-di-da loon you were dancin' with?

PEGGY : Oh, him? Oh, he's just one of those laddies from the University. All feet and no head. You know? (*She looks at him and smiles.*) Why, what's the matter, Andrew? You've not gone and got yourself jealous, have you?

ANDREW : Well, I——

PEGGY : Well, perhaps you'll tell me when our insides are nice and cosy with a drink.

ANDREW : Two whiskies, Mac.

MAC : Aye.

ANDREW (*a pause*): Peggy?—Peggy?

PEGGY : Yes?

ANDREW : I——

PEGGY (*laughing*): Come on, darling! What's the little black beast on your back? There's nothing to be afraid of. I'm all ears and noses——

ANDREW : Well, I am jealous!

PEGGY (*laughing*): Oh, you darling stookie! No one but a great big stookie would think I'd be carryin' on behind your back! Specially after the lovely afternoon we had.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANDREW : Aye, but I don't like ye to be havin' all yon opportunities. I've been thinkin' ye should give up this place.

PEGGY : Why, Andrew—what's come over you ?

ANDREW : I do feel a bit queer . . . but then . . . it's the first time . . . and it's no' so easy. . . .

PEGGY : What ?

ANDREW : Well, would ye care to be Mrs. Andrew Gillespie, Bubbles ?  
(PEGGY *turns to him startled—unbelieving.*) Well, have ye nothin' whatever to say ?— Well ?

PEGGY : Are you really proposing to me, Andrew ?

ANDREW : Aye. (*She laughs.*) Is it anything to be laughin' at ?

PEGGY : I'm not laughing, Andrew. I've got the strangest feeling.

ANDREW : So have I. I never felt like this before . . . like . . . like . . .  
(*They both laugh.*)

PEGGY : You're a daft cookie, Andrew. A daft cookie! (*She taps her forehead.*) Quite balmy!

ANDREW : How daft ?

PEGGY : Oh, just daft. (MAC *starts to serve their drinks. All three laugh.*)

MAC : Here's your drinks.

PEGGY : We don't need them now.

MAC : Oh, you don't!

ANDREW : No, Mac, take 'em away. (MAC *goes back to the bar.*)

PEGGY (*embracing him*): Oh, Andrew, let's go outside.

ANDREW : Aye. Come along!

PEGGY : I'll get my cape.

ANDREW : I'll have a cab waitin'.

PEGGY : I won't be a minute. (ANDREW *exits.*) Mac, can it really be true ?

MAC : Well, I'd never have believed it, Miss Peggy, but, aye, I suppose it is.

PEGGY : Oh, Mac, I feel as though I wanted to laugh and cry . . . all at once.

MAC : You must be in love.

BELL *enters.*

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY : Oh, yes, Mac, I am. I must get my cape. Andrew will be waiting.

BELL : Where are you going, Peggy ?

PEGGY : I'm leaving you, Mr. Bell.

BELL : But, you can't go just like that.

PEGGY : You don't understand. I'm leaving you for good, Mr. Bell.

*(She laughs and exits.)*

BELL *(to MAC)* : What's she talking about ?

MAC : She's goin' to marry Mr. Gillespie.

BELL : Mr. Gillespie ?

MAC : Aye.

BELL : Well, I'll be damned!

BLEATER *enters.*

BLEATER : Oh, there you are, Jimmy, I've been lookin' for you.

BELL : Come on, have a drink.

ARCHIE *and* NORA *enter.*

MAC : There ye are, Mr. Bell.  
*(Serving drinks.)*

NORA : That's the worst bloody orchestra I ever heard. We're going home.

BELL : That's the kind of service we give.

ARCHIE : Yes, dear, I'll get my coat.

BLEATER : There's nothing like a good drink of whisky on a warm night—or a cold one, either.

BELL : You talk my language, George. We're goin' to get along, you and I.

*Two of the* CHORUS GIRLS *enter.*

FIRST CHORUS GIRL *(laughing)* : She can't wear that costume, Jimmy, look at it.

SECOND CHORUS GIRL : It's terrible.

BELL : Looks all right to me.

SECOND CHORUS GIRL : It does ? Well, look there!

*She turns around. The two men look at her. The FIRST CHORUS GIRL laughs. PEGGY enters. ANDREW enters. He looks stunned and his clothes are dripping wet.*



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY: Andrew!

MAC: God save us! Mr. Gillespie! What's happened to ye?

ANDREW *doesn't reply but turns and looks anxiously at the door.*

PEGGY: Why, Andrew, you're dripping wet.

ANDREW: Aye.

BELL (*looking across*): Been having a swim, Andrew?

ANDREW: Aye. . . . (*In a whisper.*) In the sea.

*The GIRLS laugh.*

PEGGY: In the sea? What are you talking about?

ANDREW (*to PEGGY*): Look for yourself, then.

BELL: Better have a drink.

PEGGY *goes out to the vestibule*, ANDREW *walks unsteadily to the bar.*

MAC *pours a drink for ANDREW.*

BLEATER (*nervously*): What's that?

BELL: What?

BLEATER: I heard a sound—like waves or something.

BELL (*laughing*): Waves? Fiddlesticks!

BELL *goes to the window*. BLEATER *crosses left slowly and anxiously.*

*A WAITER comes from the dance floor.*

WAITER: Three White Labels. (*He notices MAC staring.*) What's the matter, Mac?

PEGGY *runs in, crying hysterically and throws her arms around*

ANDREW. MAC *has gone to the window and raised the blind.*

MAC (*very excited*): What is it, Mr. Bell?

BELL: God Almighty! Sea gulls!

## CURTAIN

FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

*Act Two : Scene I*

SCENE : *Monday morning two days later.*

*The upstairs living-room of the Presbytery.*

*It is bare, severe, and ecclesiastical. Several religious prints are hanging on the faded brown walls, including a portrait of St. Ignatius Loyola, rolling his eyes to heaven. Down stage Left is a table littered with papers and telegrams. On the opposite side of the stage is a window looking out onto the street. At the back is a fireplace with a desultory coal fire glowing in it. For furniture there are a few hard and stiff chairs, with one unresilient leather chair to the right of the fireplace. There is only one modern, home-like touch—a small radio on a stand above the window.*

AT THE RISE : FATHER FLAHERTY *is seated at the table, typing.*

FLAHERTY (*hitting a wrong letter*) : Blast the machine!

*The door opens and PETER rushes in.*

PETER : Where's Father Malachy ?

FLAHERTY : I think he's in the church. He's had no peace all day, poor man. What have ye got there ?

PETER : Telegrams! Look at them, will ye ? From all over the world they're comin'! (*He dumps the batch on the table.*) It's a marvellous thing our darlin' Malachy has done, Father. A miracle right on our own doorstep. We'll be famous from one end of Christendom to the other.

FLAHERTY : Ye can't beat the Irish!

PETER : What are ye doin' ?

FLAHERTY : The statement for the reporters. (*He typewrites energetically.*)

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER (*crossing to the window*): Ye're in luck to be up here with peace and quiet. Ye should see them downstairs. It's worse than a fair.

FLAHERTY: Oh, Mother, why didn't ye teach me how to spell?  
(*He erases a mistake.*)

PETER (*he looks out the window*): Will ye look at the crowd! There must be five hundred or more.

FLAHERTY (*as he typewrites*): Yes, and there'll be more comin' later. I hear they're runnin' a special excursion from Glasgow.

PETER: Aren't people the queer ones though? Faith, there's nothin' to see but a large hole in the ground. All standin' and gapin', like birds 'round a mud-puddle. We'd better put up a railin' and charge a shillin' a peep.

FLAHERTY: How many "c's" are there in ecclesiastical?

PETER: Ecclesiastical? (*Coming down to the table.*) Well, now—let me see?— Oh, five or six, likely. There's no tellin'.

*The door opens and ANNIE enters.*

ANNIE: More newspapers if ye please!

PETER: Let me see.

FLAHERTY: Give me one.

ANNIE: Ye never saw such headlines.

PETER: What're they sayin'?

ANNIE: We'd best keep all the trash and mess up here. (*To FLAHERTY.*) Have ye no' finished the report? What have ye been doin', Father?

FLAHERTY: It's not easy at all, reportin' a miracle. It looks silly when ye get it down in print.

ANNIE: Well, ye'd better hurry up. I'll no' put up with those dirty reporters makin' a mess of my nice, clean parlour.

PETER (*looking at a newspaper*): It's all over the front page! Ye can hardly find the sportin' results.

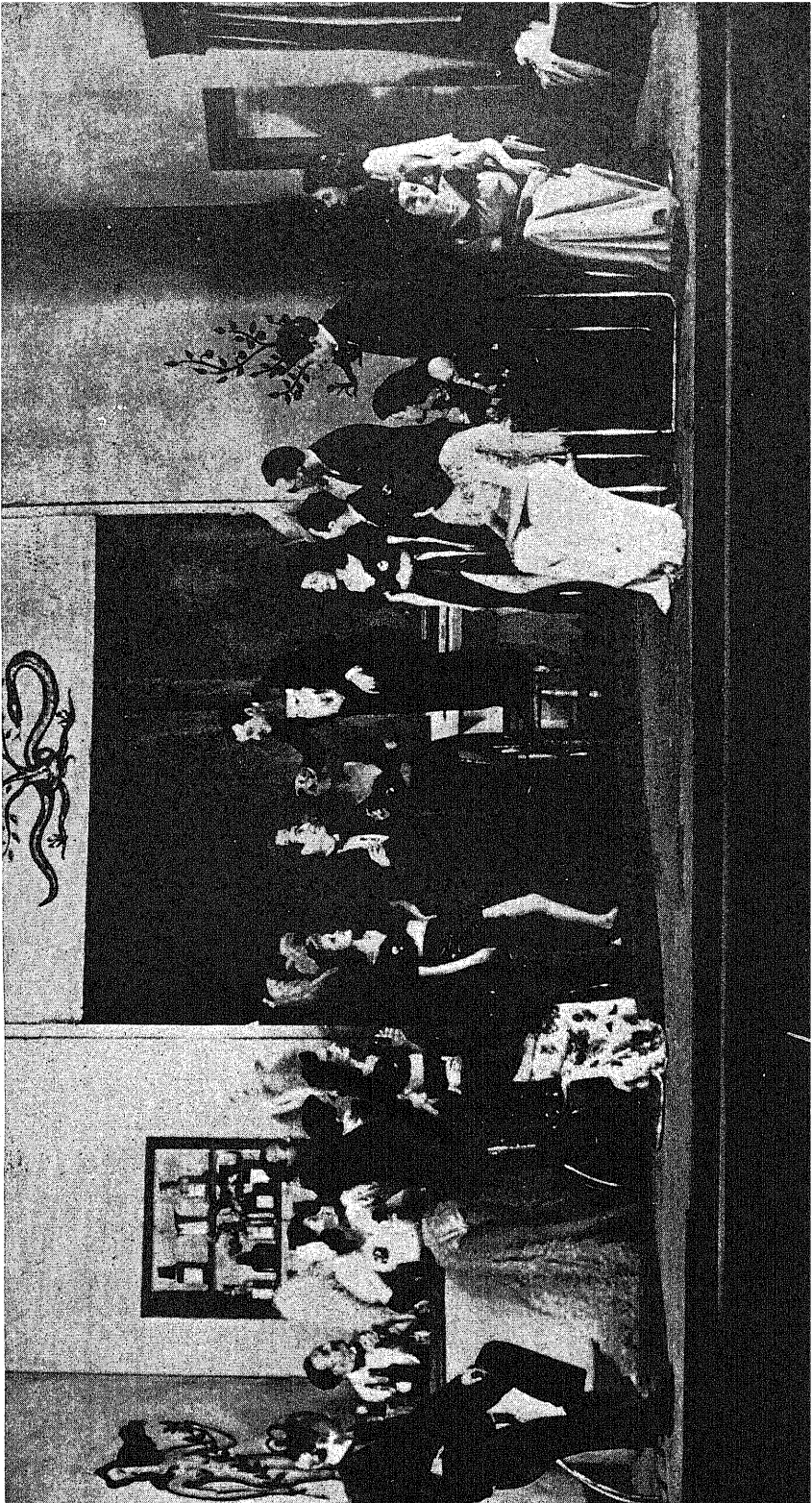
FLAHERTY: And will ye look at the photographs? (*He holds up a newspaper. Pointing to a photograph.*) Is that supposed to be me, do ye think?

ANNIE: Aye, Father. I'm afraid it is. (*ANNIE exits.*)

FLAHERTY: It's a queer-lookin' likeness! Ye can hardly see me at all for the dance hall.

PETER (*reading*): "Miracle Claimed by Mystery Monk——"

The Gala opening of the re-decorated "Garden of Eden" night club, on Bass Rock, in the Firth of Forth.





## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

FLAHERTY : It's most belittlin'. (*He resumes his typewriting.*)

PETER : Listen to this, will ye ? (*Reading.*) " Reports from Edinburgh say an obscure Benedictine monk, named Father Malachy, moved a dance hall from Edinburgh to Bass Rock near North Berwick in the Firth of Forth—a distance of twenty miles. These reports have not been officially confirmed. Scientists are very dubious about the so-called miracle and Sir Roger Ramsay says the whole thing is a publicity stunt and a hoax and contrary to the laws of Newton." (*Exploding.*) And who the hell is Newton ?

FLAHERTY : I don't know. But I wouldn't believe a word he said.

PETER : A hoax, indeed! Sure, didn't I see it with my own two eyes ? Didn't I see the whole affair go floatin' away as easy as a feather, and go twinklin' out over the Firth like a beautiful star ? I'll never forget it to my dyin' day. (*A sudden wave of doubt sweeps over him.*) Ye don't think maybe we were all drunk, do ye, Father ?

FLAHERTY : No, Peter, it was a real miracle all right. Strange how it makes everythin' seem different somehow—sort of holy—as if God were close to ye all the time and watchin'. (*He turns back to his typewriter.*)

PETER (*rather worried*) : Yes—it's a queer feelin'! Maybe I'd better be goin' into the chapel and sayin' a few prayers.

ANNIE *enters.*

ANNIE : Now, there's a woman down the stair wantin' to be converted.

FLAHERTY : Well, she'll have to wait.

ANNIE : But she wants to see Father Malachy this verra minute.

PETER : Why are converts always in such an unholy hurry ? Sure, Heaven won't blow away like a thistle!

FLAHERTY : Ye'd think the devil was right on their tails! Tell her to come back this afternoon. We're holdin' a special meetin' for converts.

ANNIE : She's verra old ; I doubt she'll last. (*She goes out.*)

FLAHERTY (*crashing a last letter*) : Well, it's finished, praise the Lord! (*He takes out the report and looks at it.*) A sad-lookin' sight it is, too. Oh, well, there's nothin' perfect this side of Heaven ; it'll have to do.

*The door opens and* GEOGHEGAN *enters.*

GEOGHEGAN : Where's Father Malachy ? I can't find him anywhere.

PETER : He's in the chapel, prayin'.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN : Praying? At a time like this? Good heavens!

FLAHERTY : The poor man's all worn out.

GEOGHEGAN (*to Peter*) : Well, run along and find him. We haven't time to be worn out today. The Bishop has just telephoned that he'll be here at any minute.

PETER : The Bishop! 'Tis a miracle indeed, if it's waked up the Bishop himself.

GEOGHEGAN : Peter!

PETER : Yes, sir, I'm just goin'.

*He leaves.* GEOGHEGAN *turns to* FLAHERTY.

FLAHERTY : I thought Plus Bobbie . . . I mean the Bishop . . . I thought he was in Cowdenbeath, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN : He was until he heard about our miracle. Then he hurried right back.

FLAHERTY : He'll be a proud man, all right.

GEOGHEGAN : Well, Father, have you finished the report?

FLAHERTY : In a manner of speakin', yes, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN : Well, let me see it.

GEOGHEGAN *takes the report and starts to read it.* ANNIE *enters.*

ANNIE : Canon?

GEOGHEGAN : What is it?

ANNIE : I don't know where it's goin' to end, that I don't, Canon. Now it's the Constable.

GEOGHEGAN : The Constable? What does he want?

ANNIE : He wouldn't say. He's actin' verra mysterious.

GEOGHEGAN : Well, send him in.

ANNIE : Yes, Canon. (*ANNIE goes out.*)

FLAHERTY : It's not very imposing, I'm afraid.

GEOGHEGAN (*he strikes out a phrase*) : Good gracious, what a mess!

FLAHERTY : I'm sorry, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN : Your spelling gets worse every day. "I" before "e" except after "c". Well, we've no time now, we'll have to give it to them anyway.

FLAHERTY : Yes, Canon.

*The CONSTABLE enters.*

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

CONSTABLE: Good morning.

GEOGHEGAN: Well, Constable?

FATHER FLAHERTY *exits*.

CONSTABLE (*looking around suspiciously*): I've come to see ye about the Garden of Eden.

GEOGHEGAN: Yes?

CONSTABLE: Well, you'd never believe it, but it seems to have fled awa'. And a laddie down the street said ye might know somethin' about it.

GEOGHEGAN (*smiling complacently*): Yes, indeed.

CONSTABLE: Were ye there when it happened?

GEOGHEGAN: I was. With Father Malachy.

CONSTABLE: Did ye notice any suspicious-lookin' folk loiterin' about?

GEOGHEGAN: Suspicious-looking?

CONSTABLE: Aye, Bolsheviks, or the like of that, that might have had a bomb on them?

GEOGHEGAN: No, just the two of us—and the Reverend Mr. Hamilton, the incumbent of the pagoda across the road.

CONSTABLE (*baffled*): Weel—it couldna be the clergy now.

GEOGHEGAN (*annoyed*): It most certainly was the clergy! I'm afraid you don't understand, my good man. It was a miracle!

CONSTABLE: A what?

GEOGHEGAN: Father Malachy performed a miracle.

CONSTABLE: A miracle? (*He laboriously enters it in his note-book.*) Fancy that now! That's a type of law-breakin' I never run into before.

FATHER MALACHY *has entered, and is standing, listening. GEOGHEGAN turns and sees him.*

GEOGHEGAN: You're just in time, Father.

CONSTABLE (*to FATHER MALACHY*): Are you Father Malachy?

MALACHY: Yes.

CONSTABLE: Weel, and what do ye know about the liftin' of yon dance hall?

GEOGHEGAN: Can't you understand——?

MALACHY: I know all about it, Constable.



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

CONSTABLE : Oh, ye do indeed ?

MALACHY : At nine o'clock last Saturday night, I, Father Malachy, monk and priest of the Order of Saint Benedict, by the power of God, caused the Garden of Eden to be transported through the air to Bass Rock. It was an act of God, Constable.

CONSTABLE : Weel, I dinna ken about these heavenly athletics, but I'm here to tell ye we'll no' put up wi' any of yon Italian monkey business. Did ye have a permit ?

MALACHY : A permit ?

GEOGHEGAN : No, of course not!

CONSTABLE : I take it ye're willin' to confess the crime ?

MALACHY : Crime ?

CONSTABLE : Aye, man, ye've been breakin' the peace.

GEOGHEGAN (*furious*): Don't talk nonsense! There's no law against miracles—even in Scotland.

CONSTABLE : I'm no' so sure about that.

GEOGHEGAN : Well, I am. And now you'd better leave us alone. We have some important matters to attend to.

CONSTABLE : Well, I'll let ye be for now. But the Sergeant will probably be issuin' a warrant when I make my report. (*He pockets his note-book with a flourish. Turns to MALACHY, towering over him.*) And dinna ye dare pull off no more of yer fancy tricks, or we'll be runnin' ye in. And dinna ye leave the premises, until ye hear from the Sergeant. And dinna forget what I'm sayin' to ye is in the name of His Majesty the King! Good mornin', gentlemen!

*He turns and goes. GEOGHEGAN is furious. FATHER MALACHY has recovered from his initial fright, and is smiling.*

GEOGHEGAN : The insolence!

MALACHY : Somehow I think His Majesty would have put it a little differently.

GEOGHEGAN : Talking to us as if we were criminals! The stupid fool!

MALACHY : The truth is always a hard pill for people to swallow. Remember, you had doubts yourself before it happened.

GEOGHEGAN : Yes, I know. But this is quite different! The miracle has happened. There is no doubt of its authenticity whatsoever. And yet they are turning it into a vulgar sensation and talking about you

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

and Our Dear Lord, as though you were a couple of second rate magicians.

MALACHY: I know, Canon . . . but we must be patient.

FATHER FLAHERTY *enters*.

FLAHERTY: The Bishop's here, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN (*rising*): Oh, good! He'll be very excited. Converts always are.

FLAHERTY: He's comin' right up. (GEOGHEGAN *goes out*.) You haven't met Plus Bobbie, have you, Father?

MALACHY: Not yet.

FLAHERTY: He's a queer sort of Bishop. We're always expectin' him to come waltzin' up the aisle in plaid vestments.

GEOGHEGAN (*greeting the BISHOP offstage*): Good morning, your lordship. We've been expecting you.

GEOGHEGAN *enters with BISHOP GILLESPIE. ANNIE follows them on. The BISHOP is a large, awkward, unkempt, good-natured man of about sixty, with shaggy hair and a long, beaked nose, and the bleary expression of an unhappy cabman. He is wearing a ragged black coat, a woollen muffler, and goloshes, which he proceeds to take off with the help of FLAHERTY and ANNIE.*

BISHOP (*struggling with his overcoat*): I'm fair tired out, puffin' up those stairs of yours.

GEOGHEGAN: Well, your lordship, we've been having quite a little excitement since you left.

BISHOP: Aye, so I hear! When the cat's away, the mice will play. (*He turns to FLAHERTY.*) Thank ye, Father. It's verra heavy.

FLAHERTY *takes the coat from him. Meanwhile the BISHOP is engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to unravel his muffler.*

GEOGHEGAN: It was very good of you to come.

BISHOP (*the muffler is in a tangle*): Confound the thing! (*He appeals to ANNIE.*) Here, lass, give me a hand!—I'm all tangled up. There's no end to the thing. (*ANNIE goes to his rescue.*) There! Now we've got it! Thank ye, lass.

GEOGHEGAN (*rather upset by all this*): It's a wonderful thing for the diocese——

BISHOP: What?

GEOGHEGAN: The miracle——

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP: Aye, mebbe. (*As he sits down.*) You'd better help me off with my goloshes, too, or I'll be catchin' my death of cold when I go out.

ANNIE *kneels and starts to pull them off for him.*

GEOGHEGAN: May I introduce Father Malachy, your lordship?

BISHOP (*looking up*): Oh, there ye are, Malachy.

MALACHY (*kneeling and kissing his ring*): Your lordship!

BISHOP (*to FATHER MALACHY*): What's this ye've been up to?

GEOGHEGAN: Well, my lord, Father Malachy and I—we——

BISHOP (*to ANNIE*): Loosen the laces a wee bit, lass. They're a new pair of boots. (*He turns to GEOGHEGAN.*) The first in seven years, mind ye, and ye'd think they had a thousand devils in them.

FATHER FLAHERTY *laughs and the others all look at him.*

GEOGHEGAN (*to FATHER FLAHERTY. Icily*): You'd better leave us, Father.

FLAHERTY (*thoroughly crushed*): Yes, Canon. (*He turns and goes off Right.*)

BISHOP (*to ANNIE*): Thank ye, lass. (*ANNIE gathers his things together and goes off. The BISHOP turns to GEOGHEGAN and MALACHY.*) Well, now, about yon miracle! It's a pretty kettle of fish, I must say!

MALACHY: Yes, my lord, a very pretty kettle of fish. In fact, a glorious kettle of fish!

BISHOP: Why did ye never let on?

GEOGHEGAN: We understood you were out of town.

BISHOP: I was. But ye could've let me know. If a buddy wants to go stickin' his fingers into miracles, the Bishop of the diocese has the right to be in the know.

MALACHY: I'm sorry, my lord, but it was all rather unexpected.

BISHOP: Well, it's done now. But it's a terrible nuisance just the same. I couldn't eat my egg this mornin' I was that upset.

GEOGHEGAN (*very surprised*): Why, I thought you'd be delighted. A miracle right here in your own diocese.

BISHOP: Aye. But it's a queer kind of miracle, I must say—makin' a paly de donce go gallivantin' about in the air. It's too new-fangled!

MALACHY: But, my lord——

BISHOP: Everything was goin' along so verra nice and quiet, too.

GEOGHEGAN: Quietly to hell!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY: You don't mean you disapprove, my lord?

BISHOP: Disapprove? Well, not exactly——

GEOGHEGAN: But I don't understand your attitude, my lord. The Garden of Eden has always been the cause of a great deal of sensuality in this parish. I, for one, am heartily glad to see it gone.

BISHOP: Sensuality? Boys and girls carryin' on, ye mean?

GEOGHEGAN: Exactly! Carrying on and carrying on and carrying on!

BISHOP: Dearie me! That's a terrible state of affairs!

MALACHY: Oh, the dance hall had nothing to do with it. I only wanted to prove to these people who are heaping ridicule on our Faith, that Our Lord's teachings are not only beautiful but true—— (*He turns to the BISHOP, very simply.*) That's all I was trying to do, my lord.

BISHOP: Aye, that's all verra well. But why did ye have to be so showy about it?

MALACHY (*fervently*): To wake them from their lethargy, my lord.

BISHOP: Ye don't need a miracle for that. They're verra upsettin', miracles! They're not Scottish!

MALACHY: But it had to be a miracle!

GEOGHEGAN: Something to prove beyond a doubt——

*PETER enters and crosses beside GEOGHEGAN.*

PETER (*pulling his arm*): Canon!

*GEOGHEGAN pulls away, irritated at the interruption.*

GEOGHEGAN: Well, what is it?

PETER: The Bishop's brother's downstairs.

BISHOP: Do ye mean Aundry?

PETER: Yes, your lordship.

BISHOP: Fancy that—Aundry! What would he be wantin', do ye suppose?

GEOGHEGAN: I haven't the slightest idea.

PETER: Beggin' yer lordship's pardon, he's with young Peggy McNab. And very pretty she's lookin' too!

GEOGHEGAN: How often have I told you not to make personal remarks about our visitors!

PETER: Sure, there was no harm intended at all. (*To MALACHY.*) She seems very anxious to talk to you, Father.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY: Oh! We really should see her, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN: I think, Father, that under the circumstances . . .

BISHOP (*rising*): No, we'd better have them both. I'd like fine to have a peep at the lassie Aundry's traipsing around with.

GEOGHEGAN: Very well, Peter, show them in.

PETER *exits*.

BISHOP: It's as close to the church as we'll ever get him. (*Laughs*.)

MALACHY: Perhaps he was in the dance hall at the time, my lord.

BISHOP: Aye, that's verra likely. He was always a great lad for the dancin', Aundry.

*The door opens and ANDREW and PEGGY enter.*

PEGGY: Oh, Father, I'm sorry. We're disturbing you.

MALACHY: No, my child, I'm very glad to see you.

PEGGY: Thank you!

BISHOP: Aundry!

} *Together*

ANDREW: Well, Bobbie, fancy meeting ye here. I'd heard from a fella that ye were over in Cowdenbeath holding a consummation, whatever that may be.

BISHOP (*testily*): Confirmation, Aundry, confirmation! And it means impartin' the Holy Spirit to folk to give them strength. A good dose of the same medicine would do ye no harm, Aundry—And who's the lassie?

ANDREW: She's my wee hen. I call her Bubbles, but her real name's Peggy McNab. (*He turns to PEGGY, who is still watching FATHER MALACHY.*) Shake hands wi' my big, religious brother, Bubbles. He's a popey Bishop, and burns candles all the year 'round, but he's not a bad sort, when ye get to know him.

*The BISHOP half rises from his chair, and bending his head and smiling his most secular smile, he shakes hands. PEGGY curtsies.*

BISHOP: Well, ye're a fine-lookin' lass—for all yer paint and powder. Are ye plannin' to get married, Aundry?

ANDREW: Aye—we were.

BISHOP: Married? Fancy that now! (*To PEGGY.*) Ye'll have a real problem on yer hands. He's verra fond of the bottle, Aundry. A good wife's just the thing for him.

PEGGY: Oh, but there's nothing definite yet, your lordship.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANDREW : She's been all of a dither, the whole week-end.

BISHOP : Och, well—sit ye down. Sit ye down, Aundry.

ANDREW : She's all upset about him and his miracle.

BISHOP : Were ye in the paly de donce when it fled awa', Aundry ?

ANDREW : Aye—we were that!

*There is a pause.*

BISHOP : Well, lad—go on!

ANDREW : There's little to tell. Ye've read it all in the papers more than likely.

BISHOP : Go on—go on! What's the matter wi' ye ?

PEGGY : He won't talk about it at all, your lordship. He only came because I made him.

MALACHY : Then you tell us, my child.

PEGGY (*to MALACHY*) : Well, Andrew and I were sitting in the bar at the time, Father. And he—he had just asked me to marry him.

ANDREW : Aye. Ye were all smiles and wantin' to be Mrs. Gillespie then, but after . . .

PEGGY : Please, Andrew—not now. We felt so happy, Father. And we wanted to get away and be by ourselves. So Andrew went out to call a cab, and a moment later when I turned around, he was standing there . . . dripping wet. He had fallen into the sea.

BISHOP : Well, now. Is that the truth of it, Aundry ?

ANDREW : Aye!

BISHOP : But did ye no feel the fleeing while the fleeing was on ?

PEGGY : No—nothing. That was the strange part about it.

BISHOP : No seasickness about the business at all ?

PEGGY : No. I'll never forget it, Father.

ANDREW : And then we read in the papers that this priestie here had done all yon to prove the power of God or somethin'.

GEOGHEGAN : Precisely.

BISHOP : Aye, the power o' God's a wonderful thing. I'm glad ye were there to see it with yer own eyes. It will make a new man of ye, and bring ye to the faith at last.

ANDREW (*miserably*) : Aye. But that's just the trouble, Bobbie. I dinna want to be brought to the Faith.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP: Have ye gone daft, man?

ANDREW: It'd be a great botheration believin' in the power of God and all yon fiddlesticks!

BISHOP: But I tell ye it was a miracle!

ANDREW: Aye. So ye say. But are ye sure?

GEOGHEGAN: Of course we're sure!

ANDREW: It's against the laws of nature, and laws are a verra comfortin' thing taken all in all. And what is a miracle—that's what I want to know.

BISHOP: A miracle is—a—well—it's a sort of—

ANDREW: Ye see! Ye canna tell me. (*To MALACHY.*) It's all humbuggery and nonsense yon. The kind of things ye see in the fillums. I'll no' believe in it at all.

PEGGY (*rises*): Don't listen to him, Father. He does believe.

ANDREW: Keep quiet, Bubbles.

PEGGY: He's afraid to admit it, that's what it is.

ANDREW: Ye're makin' a bloody fool of yourself.

PEGGY: All night after the miracle you talked of nothing else! And yesterday, too. You believed then, all right.

ANDREW: Well, what of it?

PEGGY: When you began thinking that Mass might interfere with your game of golf, and Vespers with your evening highball, you—

ANDREW: A fine way to talk!

PEGGY: It's true and you know it!

ANDREW: Takin' ye away from me—that's all it's doin'—this miracle—

GEOGHEGAN: Can't you believe your own eyes?

ANDREW: And what if I do believe? (*Stubbornly defiant.*) Suppose it was a miracle! What good is it doin'? What right has this priestie to go messin' up people's lives? Ye hate to see folks havin' a good time and enjoyin' themselves—that's all it is!

MALACHY: My dear boy, I didn't . . .

ANDREW (*riding him down*): Why should I go believin' in the power of God, if all it does is take yer lassie from ye and make ye unhappy?

BISHOP: But, Aundry . . .

ANDREW: I dinna care what ye say! Ye're wrong! And even if ye prove ye're right, ye're wrong!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY : Please listen, Andrew! Please!

ANDREW : Once and for all, are ye comin' or no ?

PEGGY : No, Andrew, I'm not!

ANDREW : Very well then! As ye please!

ANDREW *goes out*. PEGGY *crosses to* FATHER MALACHY.

PEGGY : Oh, Father! It was a miracle, wasn't it ?

MALACHY : Yes, my child—it was.

PEGGY : I knew it! (*She suddenly bursts into tears*.) Oh! Father—I knew it!

MALACHY : There, child, it's all right. I understand.

PEGGY : Could I come to see you again, Father ?

MALACHY : Yes, my child—any time.

PEGGY : Oh, thank you, Father—I'd love to. Good-bye, Father.

MALACHY : God bless you.

PEGGY *goes out*.

BISHOP : Well, that just shows you.

GEOGHEGAN : I wouldn't be too much influenced by your brother's attitude, my lord. With all respect, he's a notoriously unspiritual person.

BISHOP : Aye, I'm beginnin' to think yer miracle's the real McKay all right.

MALACHY : I think it is most important, my lord, that you publicly recognize the miracle at once.

BISHOP : But we mustna be too hasty.

MALACHY : We could build a shrine, my lord. A beautiful shrine on Bass Rock. So people could come and see the miracle with their own eyes—and believe.

BISHOP (*eagerly*) : Aye. It's a verra good idea—a shrine. I never thought of that.

GEOGHEGAN : Why not have a solemn procession ?

BISHOP : Aye. And some *Te Deums*. I'll sing them myself, with pontifical rites and all. And we'd better have some of those newsreel fellies around. We'll show them a thing or two!

GEOGHEGAN : Yes, indeed! We must get busy right away. I'll telephone the parish priest of North Berwick, and tell him to hop into a rowboat and go out and sprinkle the rock with a few drops of holy water. (GEOGHEGAN *exits*.)



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP : Aye, Canon.

PETER *enters*.

PETER : Jimmy Bell and a queer-lookin' friend want to see you, Father.

MALACHY : Show them in, Peter.

BISHOP : Well, I must be gettin' back to the Palace. Three women are waitin' for me to bless their babies. And from the look of the mothers I wouldn't be surprised if I had to drive some devils out of the brats while I'm at it.

BELL *and* BLEATER *enter*.

BELL : Good morning, gentlemen. Good morning, your lordship, I never had the pleasure of meeting you, but I know your brother.

BISHOP : Aye, he keeps very bad company. (BISHOP *goes out*.)

BELL : Oh, good morning, Father.

MALACHY : Good morning, Mr. Bell.

BELL : I want you to meet my good friend, Mr. George Bleater, Father.

MALACHY : I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Bleater.

BLEATER : How are you? (*To* BELL.) Is this the fellow we're after?

BELL : Of course it is, George!

MALACHY : I'm Father Malachy, if that's what you mean.

BLEATER : Oh! Now look here, Malachy. There's no use——

MALACHY (*stopping him. Quietly*): Excuse me, gentlemen, I am a monk and a priest—my title is "Father". A mere matter of form, I know, but if we didn't observe matters of form, there'd be even more trouble in the world, wouldn't there?

BELL (*glaring at* BLEATER): Yes, of course, Father Malachy. You'll have to excuse us. We've both been a bit upset by the miracle.

BLEATER : Miracle nothin'! Hocus-pocus! That's all it was. Pinchin' a dance hall just to prove religion ain't all eyewash!

BELL : George! Keep quiet! You'll be convertin' yourself first thing you know.

MALACHY : Won't you be seated, gentlemen?

BELL : Thank you, Father.

BLEATER : Now look here, Father——

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BELL: George! (*They sit.*) You see, Father Malachy, I'm the owner of the Garden of Eden. And my friend, Mr. Bleater, is the manager of the "Whose Baby Are You" Company, which was giving a show in my dance hall at the time. So you see, Father Malachy, we are both very interested in your wonderful little miracle.

MALACHY (*pleasantly*): I'm very pleased to meet you both.

BELL (*heartily*): Now that we're good friends, perhaps it will be easier for us to discuss the rather delicate matter we came to see you about . . . an unusually delicate matter in fact, because . . . well, because it can only be expressed in terms of a commodity which neither priest nor dance hall proprietor can live without.

BLEATER (*who has had enough of BELL's beating about the bush*): Yes, Saturday night's high jinks cost me more than a hundred pounds. (*He pulls a piece of crumpled paper from his waistcoat pocket.*) One hundred and thirteen pounds, nineteen shillings . . . that's what you owe me!

MALACHY (*surprised*): Owe you?

BELL: George, keep your wool on.

BLEATER (*reading from his slip of paper*): Yes. Damage to costumes . . . eleven and six. One bottle smelling salts . . . two bob. Nervous shock and damage to health and beauty—forty-seven pounds, thirteen shillings. Transportation. . . .

MALACHY (*timidly*): Well, Mr. Bleater . . . you see, I've spent nearly all my life in a monastery. . . . I had no idea that I would have to pay for the miracle.

BLEATER (*exploding*): No idea! Well, I'll be damned!

MALACHY: Yes, Mr. Bleater . . . but you'd like to be paid first.

BLEATER: I'll want cash. Hard, glittering spondulicks!

MALACHY: Yes, Mr. Bleater!

BELL: Sit down! Father Malachy, you'll have to excuse my old friend George. His nerves are a little ratty after that little hop-skip-and-a-jump you put us through. After all, there's no reason why three men like ourselves shouldn't come to a satisfactory understanding about the . . . about the business end of this miracle. You must remember we're business men, Mr. Bleater and I.

MALACHY: So I had gathered.

BELL: And this miracle will cost me a lot of money also.

MALACHY: How much, Mr. Bell?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BELL: Well . . . everything included . . . let us say—in round figures . . . ten thousand pounds.

BLEATER (*exploding*): What?

MALACHY: Ten thousand pounds! (*Stunned*.) Bless my soul!

BELL: Yes. And I'm letting you off easily at that.

MALACHY: Easily? (*Slowly to himself*.) Ten thousand pounds. Why, Mr. Bell . . . I don't know what to say . . . it's fabulous!

BELL: You must remember, Father, that my dance hall isn't worth a penny to me sitting on top of Bass Rock. It's a white elephant.

MALACHY: Yes, I know, Mr. Bell. And I want to pay you. Really, I do. We are most anxious that the Garden of Eden should be ours. We're going to make it into a shrine.

BELL: A shrine, eh?

MALACHY: Yes. People will come from all over the world and see the miracle with their own eyes.

BELL (*intrigued by the idea*): I hadn't thought of it before. But that's a clever idea, Father.

MALACHY: Yes, but to be quite frank with you, Mr. Bell, at the moment I don't know how or where I'm going to find the money to pay you. But one thing I do know, and that is that Almighty God will find some way to reimburse you and Mr. Bleater for your losses, even though you don't believe in His miracle.

BELL: You know, Father, you've given me an idea. I'm not so sure that I want your money.

BLEATER: Well, I'll be damned!

MALACHY: That's very generous of you, Mr. Bell, but . . .

BLEATER: What's come over you, Jimmy?

BELL: Why shouldn't I keep the Garden of Eden for myself—

MALACHY (*horrified*): On Bass Rock?

BELL: Yes, right where it is. I might make a fortune. (*With increasing enthusiasm*.) Everybody's talking about Bass Rock. If they'll go to your shrine, why wouldn't they come out to dance? I could have a gala opening on Christmas Eve. Then we'll all be happy.

MALACHY: But, I'd be most unhappy, Mr. Bell.

BELL: Why, with new decorations and a good-looking chorus the place will go like wildfire. Yes, Father Malachy, you've done me a

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

wonderful favour with your little miracle. I want to thank you very much. Come along, George, we'd better get busy.

BLEATER : That's a great idea, Jimmy.

BELL : Isn't it ?

MALACHY (*very distressed*) : Just a moment, Mr. Bell, please . . . Oh, you mustn't. Don't you understand ? Don't you realise what you're doing ?

BELL : Well, I'll be jiggered! I let him off and this is all the thanks I get.

MALACHY : Mr. Bell, you must listen to me. (*With great fervour.*) Your dance hall was moved to Bass Rock by your Saviour and my Saviour, by your God and my God, so that people would cease pursuing vain things and turn again to Him. Turn with faith and with love. God has honoured your dance hall, Mr. Bell, just as He honoured the stable at Bethlehem. It is a Holy place. If you continued to use it as a dance hall—especially where it now stands—you would be committing a horrible blasphemy! I implore you, Mr. Bell, don't do this terrible thing.

BELL (*after a pause*) : Father Malachy, there's no man on earth with a deeper respect for religion than Jimmy Bell. But religion, after all, is every man's private affair. And—well, business is business. Your miracle has made the Garden of Eden famous all over the world. I can't afford to throw it away.

MALACHY : I'll find the money somehow. I promise you I will.

BELL : Very well, Father. I'll give you three days. And remember—ten thousand pounds by Thursday evening, or you'll have to forget about your shrine. Good day, Father. Come along, George.

MALACHY : Good day, Mr. Bell.

BELL *and* BLEATER *exit*. PETER *enters*.

PETER : Father . . . Jimmy Bell and his friend . . . are they converts ?

MALACHY : No, Peter. Creditors.

### CURTAIN

# FATHER MALACHY'S MİRACLE

## Act Two : Scene 2

SCENE : *The same.*

TIME : *Late afternoon, three days later. PETER is listening to the radio. PEGGY is pacing about nervously at the other end of the room.*

ANNOUNCER : . . . and although it is now five days since the miracle is said to have happened, the Vatican continues to remain silent and there has been no official pronouncement from this source whatsoever. However it is reported that a well-known Cardinal left Rome on a secret mission the day before yesterday, and it is rumoured that he is on his way to Edinburgh. Downing Street is also watching the whole affair closely, but taking no definite stand at the moment. The Prime Minister stated last night that the Government would take appropriate action if necessary, but in the meantime he appeals to the innate sanity of the British people and urges them to remain calm in this crisis—to show the same spirit they did during the Railway Strike—and not be hoodwinked by this alleged miracle.

PETER (*speaking on "stand at the moment"*) : Do ye hear that, Miss Peggy ?

PEGGY (*vaguely*) : What, Peter ?

PETER : They say that a Cardinal is comin' to Edinburgh about the miracle.

PEGGY : Is there ?

PETER : Isn't it marvellous ?

PEGGY : Oh! Please turn it off, Peter!

PETER : What's wrong with ye, Miss Peggy ? Ye're all dithery——

PEGGY : I'm sorry, Peter!

ANNIE *enters.*

ANNIE (*to PETER*) : Well! I might've known ye'd be loafin'! There's a man been hangin' 'round my parlour all afternoon. He says he won't leave till he sees Father Malachy.

PETER : Ye mean Jimmy Bell ?

ANNIE : No, he's an American laddie, and he's burnin' holes in my carpet wi' his dirty cigars. Ye'd better do somethin' about it right away!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER: And what do ye think I am—a bouncer?

ANNIE: A good-for-nothin' loafer! That's what ye are, Peter Dolan!

PETER: Tell him to come back later.

ANNIE: I might've known ye'd be no help! (ANNIE goes out.)

PEGGY: Oh, Peter, when is Father Malachy coming?

PETER: There's no tellin'. We haven't seen him since lunch time.

PEGGY (anxiously): But where is he?

PETER: I don't know. The poor man's in a terrible state. Jimmy Bell's threaten' to turn his shrine into a dance hall if we don't pay him ten thousand pounds this afternoon!

PEGGY: Ten thousand pounds? Oh! I didn't know.

PETER: And the Canon and Plus Bobbie are bein' no help to him at all. All they think about is singin' *Te Deums*, and leave the gloom and worry to him.

PEGGY: But if I could only see him for a moment! I must see him, Peter.

PETER: Has that scallywag Andrew been upsettin' ye, Miss Peggy? (PEGGY turns away.) I thought as much (MALACHY enters up centre, very tired and worried.) Sure, I'd like fine to dot him one on the boko!

PEGGY: Peter, will you please—Father!

PETER: Oh, there you are, Father!

MALACHY (wearily): Yes, Peter.

PETER: Did ye have any luck?

MALACHY: No, Peter—none. I haven't a penny. I don't know where to turn. Even my Abbot can't help me.

PETER: Well, don't worry, Father. There's a Cardinal comin'.

MALACHY: A Cardinal? Really?

PETER: There is indeed, from Rome—no less.

MALACHY: Oh, Peter, how wonderful! That's what I've been prayin' for. Now no matter what the world may say, Holy Mother Church will protect our miracle and keep it alive.

PETER: They'll be makin' ye into a saint more than likely——Saint Malachy of the Palais de Danse!

MALACHY: Oh, but, Peter—what will the Cardinal say when he hears about Mr. Bell? He said he'd send his solicitor today if I don't pay him. Oh! Why didn't I think of these things before? I had no idea miracles were so complicated.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY : Perhaps I'd better come back some other time, Father.

MALACHY : Oh, forgive me, my child! Please stay. (*He looks at PETER, who nods. PETER exits. PEGGY runs across to FATHER MALACHY. She is crying.*) I've been hoping you'd come.

PEGGY : Oh, Father, Father! I'm sorry. (*She buries her head on his shoulder. He comforts her.*)

MALACHY : There, there, my child. Don't cry.

PEGGY : I can't make him understand, Father. I've tried everything. He won't listen.

MALACHY : Come. Sit down. Tell me all about it.

*They sit Left.*

PEGGY : He's been drinking terribly, Father.

MALACHY : Yes, I expected he would.

PEGGY : Last night we had a frightful quarrel! We can't go on like this. We can't! Oh, Father, what am I going to do?

MALACHY : You love him, don't you?

PEGGY : Yes, Father . . . I do. That's the trouble. Oh! I wish I didn't.

MALACHY : Then you should go to him.

PEGGY : Why? Why should I . . .?

MALACHY : He needs you. You are the only one who can help him now.

PEGGY : He couldn't do this to me, if he really cared. The miracle seems to mean nothing to him. Nothing!

MALACHY : I know how you are suffering, my child. My miracle has come between you, and I can't tell you how sorry I am. But you must have faith.

PEGGY : But what good does faith do? I've lost Andrew and my work and every bit of happiness I've ever known! What has it done for you—for anyone? It hasn't brought you your money, has it?

MALACHY : Not yet. But Almighty God allowed the miracle to be performed. Therefore He will find some way of helping me. Everything that is good and worth seeking in this world is born out of pain. It's Our Dear Lord's way of testing our Faith. Andrew needs you now more than ever. You should go to him.

PEGGY : No! I never want to see him again! Never! I don't believe in anything any more!

MALACHY : But, my child, you must. You——

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

TIMOTHY BATTLE *enters. He is an energetic, shrewd, likeable, American business man.*

BATTLE : Father Malachy ?

MALACHY (*turning, surprised*) : Yes ? Oh !

BATTLE : Sorry to break in on you like this, Father. But they've been stalling me downstairs, all afternoon.

MALACHY : Oh, are you the solicitor ?

BATTLE : No, Father. That's one thing I've never been called. Timothy Battle's the name. Tim Battle of New York. (*He hands him a card.*) You've probably heard of me.

MALACHY : No, I'm afraid I haven't—Mr. Battle.

BATTLE : Well, every day has its little surprise. (*Shaking hands.*) Mighty glad to meet you, Father.

MALACHY : This is Miss McNab—Miss Peggy McNab——

BATTLE *shakes hands with* PEGGY.

BATTLE : Pleased to meet you, Miss McNab. (*To MALACHY.*) Is she connected with the miracle too ?

MALACHY : Well . . . yes—in a way. She was in the dance hall at the time.

BATTLE : Well, that's great !

PEGGY : I think I'd better go, Father.

MALACHY : No, please stay, my child.

BATTLE : Sure ! Stay, Miss McNab. Perhaps we can work you in on this too.

MALACHY : On what ?

BATTLE : I've got a lot of things in mind. You see, Father Malachy—I'm a promoter.

MALACHY : Oh.

BATTLE : Fighters, transatlantic flyers, movie stars—I handle them all ! Ever hear of Mae West ?

MALACHY : No.

BATTLE : Say, what do you boys do with yourselves in those monasteries ?

MALACHY : I'm sorry. We are rather out of touch.

BATTLE : Well, anyway, I'm the man who gave Mae her start. And look at her now ! She's the biggest thing in Hollywood. (*To PEGGY.*) Am I right ?



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY: Yes, I suppose . . .

BATTLE: Publicity—that's what does it. And you've got more publicity in a couple of days than I've had in a lifetime. Why, Father Malachy, you're the biggest thing in Europe!

MALACHY: Am I—really?

BATTLE: You're tops! The only bright spot over here. The rest of them are as dead as McKinley. Nothing but Dukes and tenors! In fact, I was just sitting down there in Naples, waiting to shove off for home—and then! You pulled this miracle! Well, Father, how about it?

MALACHY: About what?

BATTLE: The rights to your miracle.

MALACHY: Rights?

BATTLE: I want to buy them. That's why I'm here.

MALACHY: Oh! You mean you can raise some money?

BATTLE: That's it! You don't mind making a little cash on the side, do you?

MALACHY: But I don't want just a little, Mr. Battle, I want a great deal.

BATTLE: Now you're talking my language. This is the biggest thing of the century. And I'm the man who can make it worth your while.

MALACHY: I can hardly believe it. (*To PEGGY.*) You see?

PEGGY: Yes, Father, it's wonderful!

MALACHY: Yes, isn't it?

PEGGY: You're right. I should never have doubted you. I must go to Andrew.

BATTLE: Say! What is this! Is there somebody else in on this deal?

MALACHY: No, Mr. Battle. You wouldn't understand.

PEGGY: Good-bye, Father.

MALACHY: Good-bye, my child. And God bless you.

PEGGY: Thank you, Father. (*To BATTLE.*) Good-bye, Mr. Battle. And thank you, too.

BATTLE: Don't mention it. (*PEGGY goes.*) Say! She'd be great for pictures!

MALACHY: Won't you sit down, Mr. Battle?

BATTLE: Thanks. (*Producing a cigar.*) Cigar, Father?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY: No, thank you.

BATTLE: Mind if I do?

MALACHY: No—not at all.

BATTLE (*lights his cigar*): Well, Father, as man to man—what's the trick?

MALACHY: Trick?

BATTLE: You don't need to be afraid, Father. I'll keep my mouth shut. On the level—as a professional?

MALACHY: I'm afraid you and I are not at all likely to understand each other, Mr. Battle. My miracle was not a trick. It was supernatural.

BATTLE: Oh! Well, I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, Father. I didn't mean to. To be frank with you, I don't know much about the religious angle of this proposition. That's your line. But I have great respect for your Church. You give the public what it wants—that's the secret. Miracles—incense—coloured windows—beautiful costumes—great stuff! You certainly know the show business!

MALACHY: Well, we've been at it a long time.

BATTLE: I guess you have at that. Well, now it's like this, Father. There are hundreds of ways we can sell this miracle to the public—you and I. Newspapers, radio, pictures—it's a natural for pictures—I've got a lot of big people interested already.

MALACHY: No, Mr. Battle. I'm afraid a film is out of the question.

BATTLE: You're passing up a mighty good thing, Father.

MALACHY: Perhaps. But my Abbot would never allow it. You'll have to think of something else. And please think quickly, Mr. Battle, because I'm very anxious to earn a nice, fat sum of money.

BATTLE: Then, how about an exclusive serial story for the newspapers.

MALACHY: Yes—the newspapers—that's better.

BATTLE: "How God Came to Edinburgh"—with photographs!

MALACHY: What?

BATTLE: Don't worry, Father. You won't have to lift a finger. I'll write it myself. "Father Malachy tells the inside story." I can see it now. I'll start you off as an old monk—just the way you are—always praying and watering flower beds. Of course we'll have to give it a love interest.

MALACHY: But it has one already. I performed the miracle for the love of God.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BATTLE: Father, the average mental age of the public is seventeen—not seventy. They want sex—not religion. Suppose I introduce that young girl——

MALACHY: You mean Peggy?

BATTLE: Yes, Peggy! I'll start with you looking out the window of your monastery and you see her and her boy friend in a clinch by an old stone fence. We'll call him Steve——

MALACHY: His name is Andrew.

BATTLE: All right, Andrew. We'll have him working in a local gas station. Of course he's really the son of a millionaire.

MALACHY: But he isn't, Mr. Battle. He's the Bishop's brother.

BATTLE: Well, what of it?

MALACHY (*laughing*): Oh, no! No! Mr. Battle. I'm afraid you know even less about monks than I do about newspapers . . . you'll have to let me write it myself. Just the simple story. The way miracles are described in the Bible.

BATTLE: Ah, Father, but this is for the newspapers. I know monks are a new line for me but——

MALACHY: No, Mr. Battle. Either my way or not at all.

BATTLE: You're making it tough, Father. But the story's so good it should sell itself. Is it a deal, Father?

MALACHY: Yes, Mr. Battle . . . provided you pay me ten thousand one hundred and thirteen pounds, and nineteen shillings.

BATTLE (*very surprised*): Ten thousand, one hundred and thirteen pounds!

MALACHY: And nineteen shillings, Mr. Battle.

BATTLE: Why, that's over fifty thousand good American dollars. That's a lot of money!

MALACHY: Yes, I know. But that's my price.

BATTLE: Father, you're wasting your time in a monastery.

MALACHY: I'm sorry, but I can't take a penny less.

BATTLE: Well, it's big money, Father—damn big money! But the newspapers are hot for this stuff and old John Q. Public will eat it up! It's a deal, Father. (*They shake hands.*)

MALACHY: Oh, thank you, Mr. Battle. I need it very badly.

BATTLE: I'll bring the contracts over tonight.

MALACHY: Good-bye, Mr. Battle. I can't tell you how grateful I am. May God bless you!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BATTLE : I'll run right over to the hotel and call New York. We'll have to step on it, Father. You never know when something else will come along.

MALACHY : Yes, Mr. Battle, please do step on it! I'll start my first article right away.

BATTLE *goes*. MALACHY *goes to the typewriter and starts to write his first article*. The CANON and the BISHOP enter. *They are both very excited*. ANNIE *follows them in*.

BISHOP : Well, Malachy. Have you heard the news ?

GEOGHEGAN : There's a Cardinal coming to see us. The whole city's buzzing with excitement.

BISHOP : They tell me he's arrived already!

ANNIE : Ye're forgettin' yer hat, yer lordship.

BISHOP : Och, aye.

MALACHY : Yes, isn't it splendid, and I have wonderful news also, my lord!

GEOGHEGAN : What on earth's happened, Father ?

MALACHY (*coming back to earth*) : Did you see that man who just left ?

BISHOP : Aye. He almost bowled us over on the stair.

MALACHY : Did you notice his wings ?

GEOGHEGAN : Wings ?

MALACHY : He's an angel.

GEOGHEGAN : An angel ? What are you talking about, Father ?

MALACHY : Yes, he's giving me enough money to pay everything we owe.

BISHOP : Ten thousand pounds ?

MALACHY : Yes.

GEOGHEGAN : But I don't understand. Why would a complete stranger . . . ?

MALACHY : It's for a series of articles for the newspapers. I've started already.

GEOGHEGAN : You mean you're going to write for the newspapers ?

MALACHY : Yes, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN : Really, Father! What'll you be up to next ?

BISHOP : Malachy, ye're a wonder all right! I told ye no' to worry.

MALACHY : Please excuse me, my lord. I must run and telephone Mr. Bell and Mr. Bleater.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP: Aye. Run along. They'll get the shock of their lives—the rogues!

FATHER MALACHY *goes out.*

GEOGHEGAN: If his American angel is so careless with his money, it's a pity he didn't get a little more. We need a new furnace—a new carpet for the altar—why, there're hundreds of things!

BISHOP: Aye. And now ye mention it, I'm needin' a new ice box at the Palace.

ANNIE *enters with a tea tray and crosses to the* BISHOP.

ANNIE: I've brought yer tea, yer lordship.

BISHOP: Thank ye, lass. (CANON GEOGHEGAN *sits at the desk reading some letters.*) Will ye no' have a cup, Geoghegan? (ANNIE *starts to leave.*)

GEOGHEGAN: No, thank you, my lord.

ANNIE (*stopping. To the* BISHOP): Och, I was near forgettin'. There's a priestie all done up in red, waitin' for ye down the stair.

BISHOP: Well now! Red, you say. Do ye hear that, Geoghegan?

GEOGHEGAN: What's that?

BISHOP: Annie says the Cardinal is waitin'. . . .

GEOGHEGAN: The Cardinal! Good heavens! (*To* ANNIE.) Are you sure?

ANNIE: Well, he's verra foreign and slinky-lookin'.

GEOGHEGAN (*excitedly*): Hurry, your lordship. We mustn't keep him waiting.

BISHOP (*half rising and slumping into his chair again*): I think I'll wait here. I'll never make the stairs a second time.

GEOGHEGAN (*shocked*): But, your lordship! He's a cardinal. You must. It's most irregular!

BISHOP: Well, no matter.

GEOGHEGAN: But really!

BISHOP: You're much better, Canon, at the bowin' and scrapin'.

GEOGHEGAN (*indignantly*): Oh, very well!

CANON GEOGHEGAN *exits hurriedly.*

ANNIE (*to the* BISHOP): Would ye rather finish yer tea after?

BISHOP: No. I wouldn't miss my cup of tea for the Pope himself. I thought our miracle would be makin' Rome sit up and take notice.

ANNIE: Aye!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP: And wait till the Cardinal hears that Malachy's buying the paly de donce and turnin' it into a shrine.

ANNIE: There's nothin' like it the whole world over!

BISHOP: Aye, lass, it takes the Scotch to show these Italians a thing or two!

ANNIE: Aye!

*They both laugh.* CARDINAL VASSENA *sweeps into the room, with*  
CANON GEOGHEGAN. *He is a very handsome, suave Italian of about*  
*sixty. He is dressed in flaming scarlet robes.*

GEOGHEGAN (*with great éclat*): His Eminence Cardinal Vassena.

GEOGHEGAN *helps the Cardinal off with his cape.*

BISHOP: Yer Eminence! (*The BISHOP kneels.*)

VANESSA (*to the BISHOP*): *Buona sera, Monsignore.*

BISHOP: Eh? What's that you said?

VASSENA: Ah! Very well. We shall speak in English.

BISHOP: Aye. That's better.

ANNIE *exits.*

VASSENA: I am very pleased to meet you, your lordship. I have been sent by His Holiness to inquire into your miracle. I hope I am not disturbing you?

BISHOP: Not at all. Sit down for a bit, yer Eminence.

VASSENA: Thank you.

BISHOP: Would ye like a cup o' tea, yer Eminence?

VASSENA (*with polite horror*): Tea? No, thank you. Tea and theology never blend. Still less do whisky and theology, if I may judge by this state of Faith in your country.

BISHOP: Aye. I mind now. Ye're a wine-bibbin' people.

VASSENA: Unfortunately, I have but a few moments. I must leave for London on the next train.

GEOGHEGAN: But, your Eminence, we would be delighted to have you as our guest.

VASSENA: Thank you, but it is impossible. Some other time, perhaps. And now, Canon, if you will be so kind, I would like to speak a few words with his lordship.

GEOGHEGAN: Certainly, your Eminence.

CANON GEOGHEGAN *exits.*

VASSENA: Well, it seems you have been having great excitement here lately.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP : Aye, we have that.

VASSENA : Cabarets that fly through the air like the birds, eh ?

BISHOP (*proudly*) : I didn't see it myself, but they say it was as good as the fleeing House of Loretto, any day of the week.

VASSENA : This Father Malachy ? What sort of priest is he ?

BISHOP : Malachy ? Och, he's a fine wee priestie, Malachy. A bit over-anxious for the Kingdom of God among us, but I've nothing but good words for him.

VASSENA : And why did he do it ?

BISHOP : He wanted to see if he couldn't make folks believe for a change.

VASSENA (*nodding gravely*) : I see. But do you think that a Benedictine monk has any right to take upon himself such a task ?

BISHOP : I'm no' so sure that I don't think he has. Would ye like me to send for him? (*Rises.*) He can tell you all about it himself much better.

VASSENA : No, no! No, I would much prefer to discuss the matter with you alone. (*The BISHOP sits again.*) Father Malachy might not like what I have to say.

BISHOP (*alarmed*) : You're not going to shut down on our wee miracle, are ye ?

VASSENA (*tactfully*) : Monsignore, these matters are better left to Rome.

BISHOP (*stubbornly*) : But yon paly de donce was a verra worldly place. All sorts of hanky-panky goin' on. There can be no harm in savin' souls from the lusts of the flesh.

VASSENA : But, my dear Bishop, if priests were to make a habit of moving cabarets every time they exceeded the theological definition of chastity, I'm afraid that the air would be filled with flying cabarets. No, Monsignore, I will be frank with you. (*Gravely.*) This miracle of yours is not liked in Rome. There have been too many so-called miracles this last year. In Spain there were three appearances of the Blessed Virgin, and in Valdepinones a cock was said to have laid a golden egg on the high altar of a parish church.

BISHOP (*emphatically*) : Aye, but a cock layin' a golden egg on a high altar and the Blessed Virgin making too many personal appearances is no' the same as flitting a paly de donce from Ault Reeky to Bass Rock.

VASSENA (*with calm insistence*) : We do not deny that these things may be the work of Divine Providence, but we are the guardians of

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

the truth, Monsignore, and we cannot afford to act hastily. The Immaculate Conception had to wait over eighteen hundred years. You have seen for yourself how this Scotch miracle has stirred up the newspapers against us and exposed us to ridicule and contempt. Everywhere nothing but criticism and blasphemy!

BISHOP: Aye—aye, it has no' turned out so verra good.

VASSENA: Is it true, my lord, that you yourself have been celebrating *Te Deums* on Bass Rock?

BISHOP: Aye.

VASSENA: That was most unwise.

BISHOP: I didn't do it without considerable reflection, yer Eminence.

VASSENA: No doubt, but the Holy See will not like it.

*Rising.* BISHOP rises. CARDINAL VASSENA puts on his cape.

BISHOP (*sadly*): Ye'll be telling His Holiness that we're a lot of old sweetie wives, and he'll be for closin' down on us. Och, well!

FATHER MALACHY suddenly enters centre. He is radiantly happy.

MALACHY: Everything is settled, my Lord—isn't it wonderful? (*Seeing the Cardinal.*) Oh! I'm sorry, your Eminence. I didn't know . . . (*He crosses to the Cardinal and reverently kisses his ring.*)

VASSENA: I am very pleased to meet you, Father. I have been thinking about you a great deal lately.

BISHOP (*blurring it out*): I've got bad news for ye, Malachy.

MALACHY: Bad news, my lord?

BISHOP: Aye. His Eminence and all the other Italians—they dinna like yer miracle.

MALACHY (*stunned*): Don't like it! (*Turning to VASSENA.*) But, your Eminence—

VASSENA: Do not take it too much to heart, my dear Malachy.

MALACHY: But I don't understand.

VASSENA: It is not as if your miracle were condemned. Far from it. His lordship will explain. . . .

BISHOP: The miracle's done tremendous harm already, they say.

MALACHY: Harm?

VASSENA: In the fullness of time, Father Malachy, Almighty God may confirm your miracle. In the fullness of time. But until then we must be careful. Now I must go.

MALACHY: But, your Eminence, what about our shrine?



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

VASSENA : Shrine ?

MALACHY : I have just arranged with Mr. Battle to write some articles about the miracle for the newspapers, so we can buy . . .

VASSENA (*indignantly*) : Articles for the newspapers! My dear Father, it is impossible!

MALACHY : It was the only way. . . .

VASSENA : No matter! Until Rome has confirmed your miracle, it is out of the question. I must forbid you!

MALACHY : But, your Eminence, they'll turn our shrine into a dance hall!

VASSENA : That is very unfortunate. Very unfortunate indeed. But there is nothing we can do at present.

MALACHY (*pleading*) : But we mustn't let them take our shrine from us, your Eminence! We mustn't let the miracle come to nothing! How can we expect others to believe if our own Church fails us ?

*Pause. MALACHY goes up to mantel.*

VASSENA : Disbelief, my dear Malachy, is like a case of intellectual German measles from which it takes three centuries instead of three weeks to recover. I see no reason to try to hurry the process.

BISHOP : Ye're breakin' poor Malachy's heart, yer Eminence.

VASSENA : In these matters, Monsignore, we must not be led astray by personal feelings. The Church must always come first.

BISHOP (*suddenly flaring*) : Aye. But ye can tell His Holiness for me—with all due respect, mind ye—that we're a hard-headed lot in Scotland, and when we have miracles we have miracles! And not just a lot of daft cocks layin' eggs in the parish church!

VASSENA (*caustically*) : I think it would be better, Monsignore, if you conveyed that message personally on your next visit to Rome.

BISHOP : Dinna fash yerself, yer Eminence. No harm meant. I'll see we behave ourselves.

*The BISHOP kneels and kisses the Cardinal's ring and so does FATHER MALACHY. PETER enters Right.*

PETER (*in his grandest manner*) : The motor car's waitin' below, yer Eminence.

VASSENA : Thank you. (*To MALACHY.*) Good-bye, Father.

MALACHY : Good-bye, your Eminence.

VASSENA : I am very sorry—believe me, I am. I know how you must feel.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY : Thank you, your Eminence.

VASSENA (*to the BISHOP*) : Good-bye, Monsignore. It has been a great pleasure. And remember—no more *Te Deums* !

BISHOP : Aye. (CARDINAL VASSENA *sweeps out Right, followed by PETER. FATHER MALACHY sinks sadly into a chair. The BISHOP looks at MALACHY, but can't find anything to say.*) Dearie me, dearie me! Well, Malachy, I don't know what to say to ye. It's a terrible blow and I'm verra, verra sorry for ye.

MALACHY : Thank you, my lord. . . . I can see how it might seem to others. But I can't help hoping. You see—it's my miracle. (*With sudden spirit.*) And it was a miracle, my lord! We know it's true! Surely the truth will prevail.

BISHOP (*shaking his head*) : I'm no' so sure. It's a queer world.

MALACHY : But it's God's world, my lord.

BISHOP : Aye, Malachy—but at times ye'd never know.

MALACHY : The world needs faith now, my lord. We can't wait another three hundred years. There must be a way and I'm going to find it. Will you help me ?

BISHOP : Malachy, if I wasna so verra fond of ye, I'd say ye were the most confounded nuisance in all Scotland. (*He holds out his hand.*)

### CURTAIN

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

### *Act Three : Scene I*

*Christmas Eve, a few weeks later. It is about one o'clock in the morning. The same. The room is quiet and dimly lit. Midnight Mass is being celebrated in the church. The choir, singing Christmas carols, can be faintly heard. There is a small Christmas tree Left, with a few presents tied to it.*

AT RISE: ANNIE is arranging a cold supper on the table. She pauses for a moment to listen to the choir. They are singing "Holy Night" and ANNIE starts to sing it softly to herself. She lights the two tall candles on the table and stands back to survey her arrangements. PETER enters, Right.

PETER: Hello, Annie.

ANNIE (*looking up*): Oh, it's you.

PETER: And who were ye expectin' ?—the King of England ?

ANNIE: The Midnight Mass must be over. They're singin' the carols.

PETER (*going up to the table*): Yes—and a marvellous sight it was! —The finest decorations we've ever had! And it wasn't easy either . . . with the donkey for the crib breakin' off one of its ears. (*Surveying the table critically.*) It's a real supper ye're givin' them, Annie. (*He takes a piece of cake.*)

ANNIE (*flying at him*): Here! Keep yer hands out of there—Peter Dolan! There's little enough as it is. (PETER retreats and is about to sit on a chair.) Look out! Ye're sittin' on the holly!

PETER: A fine place to leave it!

ANNIE (*rescuing the holly*): Ye'd better get along down the stair, where ye belong. I'll no' put up with ye meddlin' around here! (*Smelling his breath.*) Ye've been drinkin' again!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER: Ye don't expect a man to be cold sober on Christmas Eve?

ANNIE: Och, ye've always some excuse. What'll the Bishop think?

PETER: He'll be green with envy, more than likely. (ANNIE ignores him completely and continues with her work. She decorates the table with sprigs of holly. PETER crosses to the Christmas tree.) I wonder what they're givin' us this year?

ANNIE: Never ye mind. The Canon said we were no' to open the gifts 'till tomorrow.

PETER (examining the presents): Let me see now . . . "from Father Malachy" . . . feels nice and soft. A muffler perhaps.

ANNIE (sharply): Leave them alone! Do ye hear?

PETER: Well, I'll be damned! A present from yerself! Now, that's real nice of ye, Annie. What is it?

ANNIE: Come away from that tree, Peter Dolan. Do ye want it to look like a scarecrow?

PETER: I've been suspicious all along ye were fallin' for me.

ANNIE (fairly snorting): Were ye now?

PETER: Isn't it terrible the fascination I have for women? (Close to her.) Would ye like a kiss?

ANNIE (pushing him away): Awa' wi' ye! I've no time for yer nonsense.

PETER (sulking): As ye please. There's many dyin' for the chance.

FATHER FLAHERTY enters.

FLAHERTY: Merry Christmas, Annie! Merry Christmas, Peter!

ANNIE: Same to ye, Father.

PETER: A very Merry Christmas to ye, Father. And thank ye for yer present. I saw it on the tree. (PETER picks up a newspaper, and hunts through it.)

FLAHERTY: Sure, it's nothin' at all.

ANNIE: Are the others comin'?

FLAHERTY: Yes, right away. And I think Plus Bobbie will be stayin' a while to drink a farewell to Father Malachy.

PETER goes to the radio.

ANNIE: Aye, I'm sorry to see him leavin'. It'll be a dreary place without him, I'm thinkin'.

FLAHERTY: Yes. He's a dear, sweet man—— Faith, he makes High Mass twice as excitin' as a football final!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER (*looking up from the radio*): I can't get the blasted thing at all.

FLAHERTY: What?

PETER: The broadcast from the Garden of Eden.

FLAHERTY: Sure, I was forgettin'.

PETER: Openin' on Christmas Eve!

ANNIE: If ye're so upset about it, why are ye turnin' it on?

PETER: Faith, there's no harm in listenin'.

*The radio has come on meanwhile and an orchestra finishes a popular dance tune. An ANNOUNCER comes on. FATHER FLAHERTY and PETER listen.*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, you are listening to the broadcast of the gala opening of the Garden of Eden Casino—the famous miracle Casino—brought to you direct from Bass Rock. (*During the announcement, the BISHOP, FATHER MALACHY and CANON GEOGHEGAN enter.*) I wish you were here to see this wonderful sight for yourselves—the ballroom crowded with merry dancers! More and more guests are arriving by boat from the mainland! It's a tremendous success. With more champagne and pretty girls than Edinburgh has seen in many a day. And now we return to Harry Fletcher and his Miracle Band playing . . .

*FATHER MALACHY is visibly affected and walks slowly to a chair and CANON GEOGHEGAN has been standing stiff and almost motionless. Only his blazing eyes and the drumming of fingers on the back of a chair betray his emotion. The BISHOP crosses centre. FATHER FLAHERTY and PETER do not notice the entrance of the others.*

GEOGHEGAN (*savagely*): Turn that thing off!

FLAHERTY: Oh! I'm sorry, Canon. (*He switches off the radio, looking very uncomfortable.*)

PETER: Isn't it terrible, Canon?

GEOGHEGAN: Scandalous! They're nothing but a pack of barbarians!

BISHOP (*crossing to GEOGHEGAN*): Come now, Canon. Ye're takin' it much too serious. Forget the paly de donce for a while.

GEOGHEGAN (*bitterly*): I envy you your control of your feelings, my lord.

BISHOP (*jovially*): Be merry, man. Look at the fine spread, will ye? Shortbread—I'm sorry I'm not stayin'. (*He nibbles a cookie.*)

PETER: Sure, we would be honoured if your lordship would. (*Starts to bow, FLAHERTY holds him up.*)

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BISHOP : Thank ye just the same, but I've a hard day tomorrow. She makes fine shortbread, yer Annie. (ANNIE enters with a bottle of port and several glasses on a tray. She puts it on the desk.) Ah! There's what I've been waitin' for. (Looking at the bottle. Takes bottle from tray.) Ye canna beat good old port. Open the bottle, Peter. (Taking a glass.) We'll drink a toast. (To PETER.)

PETER : Sure! Your lordship!

ANNIE : No toastin' for you. (Quickly.) Ye're full already!

BISHOP : Sure, he wouldn't be Irish if he wasn't.

ANNIE : They're a bad race altogether.

BISHOP : It's Christmas, lass. This is no time for gloom. Sure we have a right to be celebratin'. Who do ye think I saw at Mass just now ?

GEOGHEGAN : Who, my lord ?

BISHOP : Ye'd never guess! Aundry !—wi' his Peggy.

GEOGHEGAN : Andrew at Mass!

MALACHY : Not really, my lord!

BISHOP : Aye! And he wasn't sleepin' either.

GEOGHEGAN : Wonders will never cease!

MALACHY : Oh! I'm so glad, my lord, and Peggy will be so happy!

FLAHERTY (to MALACHY) : Sure, Father, but they were both dolled up in their fancy duds! After Mass, he was takin' her out to Bass Rock.

GEOGHEGAN : What ?

MALACHY : Not to the Garden of Eden ?

FLAHERTY : Yes, Father. To the openin'. He told me himself.

BISHOP : Well, now! Fancy that!

GEOGHEGAN : I suspected as much!

MALACHY : Oh! How could he do such a thing ?

BISHOP : And I thought we landed the laddie, at last. Dearie me!

MALACHY (in the depths of despair) : And I sent her to him. The one person to whom the miracle really meant something. That she should be there now taking part in this terrible sacrilege! Oh, God forgive me!—Perhaps it would have been better if the miracle had never happened.

BISHOP (placing his arm around FATHER MALACHY) : Come, now—ye mustn't take it so hard.

GEOGHEGAN : It's not your fault, Father.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

FLAHERTY: Ye did yer best! Faith, I wish I could of done half as good!

MALACHY: If I'd only known——

BISHOP: They'll all burn in hell for it, Malachy. Wait and see!

ANNIE (*filling the BISHOP'S glass*): There ye are, yer lordship. (*She fills the other glasses.*)

BISHOP: Aye, good!—We'll drink a Christmas toast! (*He turns to MALACHY.*) Come, Father!

ANNIE: Father Flaherty. (*ANNIE offers a glass to FLAHERTY.*)

FLAHERTY: No, thank you, Annie.

BISHOP: What's the matter, Father?

FLAHERTY: I'm sayin' Mass in the mooining.

BISHOP: Oh, sure enough. (*MALACHY looks at GEOGHEGAN. The latter touches his shoulder, almost tenderly.*) Now then—— (*He holds up his glass.*) To Our Blessed Lord, born this holy night—in the little stable at Bethlehem. (*They bow their heads reverently.*)

MALACHY (*quietly*): All praise and thanksgiving!

ALL: Amen! (*they sip the wine.*)

BISHOP: And now to you, Malachy. To you and yer miracle.

MALACHY (*sitting*): Oh, no, my lord. Not that!

BISHOP: It didn't turn out so verra good. But never mind. There's no sense cryin' over spilt miracles. There'll always be sin and evil in the world and there's little you can do to change it. Aye. It's a verra bad world.

MALACHY: Yes, perhaps you're right, my lord. But I'd rather you didn't. . . .

BISHOP: Well, we'll drink to yer comin' back to us then, if ye'd rather. . . .

MALACHY: Yes—that would be better!

BISHOP (*raising his glass*): To Father Malachy!

ALL: To Father Malachy! (*All but FATHER MALACHY drain their glasses.*) Aye, Malachy. Ye're a good man. And I'm verra sorry ye're goin'.

FLAHERTY: Would your lordship like me to drive you home?

BISHOP: Thank ye verra much, Father.

FATHER FLAHERTY *exits*. BISHOP *shakes* FATHER MALACHY *warmly*  
*by the hand.*

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PETER : Faith, couldn't we have one more toast? The bottle's half full.

GEOGHEGAN : You've had plenty.

BISHOP : Well, good-bye, Malachy.

MALACHY (*starting to kneel*) : Good-bye, my lord!

BISHOP : Here! None of that! (*He shakes his hand, then turns to GEOGHEGAN.*) Good night, Canon! And thank ye verra much!

GEOGHEGAN : Good night, your lordship.

BISHOP (*at the door*) : And dinna forget, Malachy. The next time ye take it into yer head to pull off a fancy miracle, I'll expect ye to let me know first.

BISHOP *goes, followed by PETER. MALACHY sinks into chair and puts his head in his hands. ANNIE enters with broth and scones.*

ANNIE : Look what I've brought ye.

GEOGHEGAN : Well, it's quite a feast you're giving us, Annie.

ANNIE : It's a scrappy sort of meal, I fear. It's too bad the Bishop couldna stay, he's verra fond of hot scones. Och, well . . . there'll be all the more for the two of ye. And dinna forget the mutton. It's verra tender and tasty. (*To FATHER MALACHY.*) Good night, Father, I'll be seein' ye in the mornin' before ye leave.

MALACHY : Yes. . . . Good night, Annie.

ANNIE : Good night, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN : Good night. (*ANNIE exits. FATHER MALACHY crosses slowly to the table and sits down. CANON GEOGHEGAN mumbles grace in Latin. Sensing that FATHER MALACHY'S melancholy is even greater than his own, he makes a gallant effort to be cheerful.*) This broth will warm you up. The altar is always draughty this time of year. (*There is a pause. CANON GEOGHEGAN concentrates on his broth. FATHER MALACHY takes a few spoonfuls and then stops.*) The choir was splendid tonight! You've certainly done wonders with them. If we could only do something about Miss Clancy and that horrible tremolo of hers.

MALACHY : She tries hard—poor woman.

GEOGHEGAN : Too hard! That's the trouble. She says it's her religious feeling coming out. Religious feeling! Bad tonsils more likely. A scone, Father?

MALACHY : No, thank you, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN : You've hardly touched a thing. You've a long trip ahead of you tomorrow. (*A pause. CANON GEOGHEGAN and FATHER MALACHY try, without much success, to eat some supper. There is a long*



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*pause.* CANON GEOGHEGAN *realises that the question cannot be evaded any longer. These long silences of FATHER MALACHY'S are getting on his nerves. He puts down his cup of tea and clears his throat, as he prepares to face the issue.*) Oh, Father, what are we going to do?

MALACHY (*slowly*): Do? What is there to do?

GEOGHEGAN: We mustn't give up now. We can't sit back and allow this ghastly sacrilege to continue.

MALACHY: No, Canon, I'm afraid Our Dear Lord would think I was an awful nuisance if I kept on trying to interfere.

GEOGHEGAN (*rising*): But we must fight them, Father. The Church has always had to fight her way.

MALACHY (*with quiet resignation*): It's not a monk's work to convert the world, Canon. Our life is living alone with God—forgetting the world and forgotten by it. Praying and fasting. Trying to preserve some of the beautiful things which mean so much to our dear Lord—and apparently so little to nearly everyone else. It's a very happy life, Canon. I shall never leave the monastery again.

GEOGHEGAN: Very well. If that's the way you feel about it, you'd better come along to bed. It's late.

PETER *shows in* MR. HAMILTON.

HAMILTON: Well, gentlemen?

GEOGHEGAN (*turning*): Why, Mr. Hamilton!

MALACHY: Oh, how do you do, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: I must apologise for dropping in on you in the middle of the night like this.

GEOGHEGAN (*frostily*): It is rather late.

MALACHY: Don't worry about that, Mr. Hamilton. I'm very glad to see you.

GEOGHEGAN: I suppose you came to tell us how amused you are at this whole affair?

HAMILTON: No, Canon. I'm sorry to disappoint you. But I came to say good-bye to Father Malachy. I heard he was leaving in the morning.

GEOGHEGAN: Oh.

HAMILTON (*to MALACHY*): I called earlier, Father. And they told me you were at Midnight Mass.

MALACHY: Yes.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

GEOGHEGAN: Well, in that case, I will ask you to excuse me, Mr. Hamilton. I'm very tired. I think I'll go to bed. (*To MALACHY.*) Good night, Father.

MALACHY: Good night, Canon.

GEOGHEGAN: Good night, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Good night.

GEOGHEGAN *exits.*

MALACHY: Won't you sit down?

HAMILTON (*sitting down*): Thank you, Father. It's very late and I can only stay a minute. You see, Father, I felt I had to come. I feel partly responsible for this whole business, and I wanted to tell you . . . well, to tell you how much I admire you for the way you've taken things and how sorry I am that your miracle turned out so badly.

MALACHY: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: What beats me, is the way Rome refused to back you up. It wasn't very sporting of them I must say.

MALACHY: Oh, no, Mr. Hamilton. You don't understand. Holy Mother Church must be careful. It was my own fault. I was presumptuous enough to think that I could accomplish by one miracle what the Church has failed to do in two thousand years.

HAMILTON: But if Almighty God permitted you to perform this miracle, why did He do it?

MALACHY: Perhaps He wanted to show me that His ordinary means are best after all. He wanted to teach me a lesson—and He has! Oh! It's a terrible thing that I've done, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Oh, come now, Father, it's not as bad as all that. But you must admit, it proves the truth of what I said the other day, in our little argument before the miracle.

MALACHY: Oh, no, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Yes, Father. Miracles are out of date. And even when they do happen, they cause nothing but trouble. They are so unnecessary, and what's more . . .

MALACHY (*nervously*): Oh, please, Mr. Hamilton. Let's not start that again. Remember what happened the last time.

HAMILTON: I'm sorry, Father. You're quite right. It would never do, would it? Well, I'd better be getting along. (*He rises.*) You should be in bed, having a good sleep.

MALACHY: I won't sleep tonight, I'm afraid. I'll be hearing those people out on Bass Rock.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

HAMILTON: If you take my advice, you'll forget all about them.

MALACHY: I wish I could, Mr. Hamilton. I wish I could.

HAMILTON (*shaking hands*): Well, a pleasant journey, Father. I do hope we meet again.

MALACHY: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Please don't bother coming down. Peter will let me out. Good-bye, Father—and Merry Christmas! (*He exits.*)

MALACHY (*after him. Sadly*): Merry Christmas.

FATHER MALACHY *walks about the room, thinking. He looks at the radio. He turns away, then suddenly crosses and turns it on. The broadcast from the Casino suddenly fills the room. FATHER MALACHY becomes more and more disturbed. The ANNOUNCER is speaking.*

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard Miss Gertie Gill—leading lady of the "Whose Baby Are You" Company, singing her famous Miracle Song. I have been asked to announce that, following the next dance, Miss Gill has kindly consented to raffle the pair of silk stockings she wore during the flight of the Garden of Eden, in aid of the Glasgow Bible Society.

FATHER MALACHY, *very upset, switches off the radio. He has come to a sudden decision. He crosses to the door.*

MALACHY (*calling*): Peter . . . Oh, Peter!

PETER (*off*): Yes, Father. (*There is a pause. PETER enters.*) Did you call me, Father?

MALACHY: Yes, Peter. I want you to do me a favour.

PETER: Yes, Father?

MALACHY: I want you to take me to Bass Rock!

PETER (*amazed*): Bass Rock! Father.

MALACHY: Yes.

PETER: Holy Saint Patrick! What for, Father?

MALACHY: I want to talk to Mr. Bell. I want to appeal to him once more.

PETER: Faith, Father, but it's nearly two o'clock in the mornin'.

MALACHY: Well, perhaps Father Flaherty wouldn't mind. . . .

PETER: No—please let me take ye—if ye really want to go.

MALACHY (*putting his arm around PETER*): Oh, thank you, Peter. But we must hurry.

PETER: But, Father, suppose they won't let us in?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

MALACHY : I think they will, Peter. (*Producing an engraved card.*) Mr. Bell sent me an invitation. (*Reading.*) "Father Malachy and lady." (*As they come to the door, FATHER MALACHY makes a polite bow, as his "lady" sweeps out.*)

### CURTAIN

## Act Three : Scene 2

*About an hour later, the same night.*

*The bar at the Garden of Eden. It has been elaborately re-decorated in ultra-modern style. The bar is now very imposing and shining with glasses, mirrors and metal stools. The former electric fixtures have been replaced by costly new ones. The chairs and tables are made of metal and the chairs are upholstered in bright red leather. The room is now very gay and smart.*

AT RISE : *The gala opening is in full sway. There is a general atmosphere of gaiety and inebriation. The GIRLS of the "Whose Baby Are You" Company have just started their final number on the dance floor beyond, and the syncopated rhythms of the orchestra and GERTIE GILL can be heard. MAC, attired in full dress, is busy preparing drinks for the patrons. Several waiters dash in and out through the entrance to the dance floor, serving drinks. SIR JAMES VICKERS, a handsome Englishman of about forty-five, is sitting at the bar, finishing his third successive whisky and soda. With him is his wife, LADY PAMELA VICKERS, an attractive and very sophisticated woman of forty. ARCHIE MACDONALD and his wife NORA are drinking at a table at the bar down stage. A young couple is sitting beside BLEATER. He has just told them a joke and they are laughing uproariously.*

SIR JAMES (*to MAC*) : Another whisky.

MAC : Aye, Sir James.

ARCHIE (*going to bar*) : Bloody good idea of Bimmy Bell's—rigging up a show like this.

LADY PAMELA (*to SIR JAMES*) : You've had three already.

SIR JAMES : Damn it, Pamela!      NORA : Bimmy ? I thought his  
Stop counting!      name was Jimmy Bell ?

ARCHIE : So it is, old girl—so it is. But as his face happens to look rather like his backside— (*He laughs.*) Rather good, eh ?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

NORA: Don't be vulgar, Archie!

YOUNG GIRL AT THE BAR: Tell us another one, won't you please, Mr. Bleater?

*A WAITER enters and crosses to the bar.*

WAITER (to MAC): Two whiskies with water and one champagne cocktail.

MAC: Aye.

SIR JAMES (to MAC): A chap told me you were here when it toddled off.

NORA: A miracle's just the sort of thing that would happen to a person like him.

MAC: Aye. Right in this verra spot.

SIR JAMES: By Jove!

BLEATER: Mac.

MAC: Comin', Mr. Bleater. Another brandy?

*The WAITER exits to dance floor with drinks. BLEATER nods. SAM HICKS, a breezy American, and his young wife, MARY LOU, an attractive and vivacious Southerner, enter from the dance floor, and go to the bar.*

HICKS: Ever hear of Kansas City Kaskets? Well, that's me. Every man, woman and child a prospect! "I'll get you in the end." That's my slogan. *(He laughs heartily.)*

SIR JAMES (coldly): Really.

HICKS: Drink up, folks! They're on me. *(To SIR JAMES.)* Sam Hicks is the name; Sam Hicks from Kansas City. We're on our honeymoon.

NORA: Let's go in and watch the performance. It'll soon be over.

ARCHIE: Hold your horses, old girl. I haven't finished yet.

SIR JAMES (to LADY PAMELA): Come, my dear.

NORA: Well, hurry up.

HICKS (to MARY LOU): Not very friendly, these English. Guess it's the weather.

*BELL enters as HICKS is laughing uproariously. BLEATER and TWO GIRLS laugh uproariously.*

BELL: Pssh! The show is on. And you don't want to miss it—it's simply marvellous! They're just starting the last number. You'll never see anything like it again.

*There is a general exodus to the dance floor.*

MARY LOU: Come on, honey. I'm just dyin' to see it.

BELL (to MAC): You'd better get ready for the crowd.

FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

HICKS: Anything you say,      MAC: Aye, Mr. Bell, I'm ready.  
sweetheart.

BELL: Everything to your satisfaction, Sir James?

SIR JAMES: Everything's top hole, thanks.

NORA and ARCHIE *exit to the dance floor, followed by MARY LOU and  
HICKS, who carry their drinks with them.*

BELL (to BLEATER): Oh, George! Those new costumes are wonderful  
—simply marvellous!

BLEATER: They ought to be. They cost enough.

BLEATER *exits. PEGGY and ANDREW enter Left.*

BELL: Good evening. You're late, Mr. Gillespie.

ANDREW: Aye. Is the show over?

BELL: Almost—but there's another later. I was wondering what had  
happened to the two of you.

ANDREW (*uncomfortably*): Aye . . . well——

PEGGY: We went to Midnight Mass first, Mr. Bell.

BELL: Midnight Mass? (*To ANDREW. Laughing.*) You're not letting  
her reform you already, are you, Mr. Gillespie?

ANDREW (*embarrassed*): Well, she said she wouldn't come if I didn't  
go.

BELL: It's the thin edge of the wedge. (*A WAITER enters.*) First  
thing you know I'll be losing my best customer. (*BELL exits to the  
dance floor.*)

MAC: Good evenin', Mr. Gillespie.

ANDREW: Good evenin', Mac.

MAC: Good evenin', Miss Peggy.

ANDREW (*looking around*): It's verra grand-lookin' now, eh, Mac?

MAC: Aye, Mr. Gillespie. It is that.

ANDREW: Ye'd hardly recognise it.

WAITER: Charge it to No. 13.

WAITER *exits.*

PEGGY (*to ANDREW*): It was very beautiful, wasn't it?

ANDREW: What?

PEGGY: The Mass, Andrew.

ANDREW: Aye. A bit long—but—— (*PEGGY turns away disap-  
pointedly. ANDREW puts his arm around her.*) What's wrong wi' ye,  
Bubbles?

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

PEGGY : Nothing.

ANDREW : Remember now, ye'ie no' to say a word about my goin' to Plus Bobbie.

PEGGY : Are you ashamed, Andrew ?

ANDREW (*awkwardly*) : No—but it'd be verra difficult to explain. Come along. Let's go in.

PEGGY : Oh, I'd rather stay here, Andrew.

ANDREW : All right—then let's have a drink. Maybe that will cheer you up.

PEGGY : But I am cheerful.

ANDREW : Well, I'd never guess it, Bubbles.

PEGGY : I feel so quiet. All through the Mass I felt it. You and me sitting close together and the lovely music playing and the tall candles . . . Do you know what I mean, Andrew ?

ANDREW (*uncertainly*) : Well—— ?

PEGGY : I'd so hoped you would.

ANDREW : And suppose I didn't feel all the things you did! Suppose I'd rather have been sittin' in a movie ? What of it ?

PEGGY : Would you ?

ANDREW : Yes!

PEGGY : Oh, Andrew, there's no sense us going on like this! If you cared for me at all, you'd at least try to see what——

ANDREW : I do care for ye, Bubbles!—Ye know that!—But I can't get anywhere near ye, any more. For three weeks this has been goin' on.

PEGGY : I've done what you wanted, haven't I ? I've gone wherever you wanted to go——

ANDREW : Aye—but have ye been happy ?

PEGGY : Sometimes! But everything that means so much to me, you seem to hate, Andrew.

ANDREW : Because it's come between us!

PEGGY : But it needn't! Oh, we'll never understand each other, Andrew—never! I shouldn't have come with you tonight. I knew I shouldn't!

ANDREW : Can't you forget about Father Malachy and his miracle, for once ?

PEGGY : No, Andrew, I can't!

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

ANDREW: He's been tryin' to make ye give me up! That's what it is!

PEGGY: That's not true!

ANDREW: Aye. It is!

PEGGY: No. He——

ANDREW: For God's sake, stop talkin' about him!

PEGGY: You're all wrong! Andrew, you don't understand. He told me to come back to you.

ANDREW (*rising. Very indignant*): Well, I'll be damned! So ye have been seein' him! And talkin' it all over wi' him, I suppose! And tellin' him all I've been sayin'! Is that it?

PEGGY: Oh, it's not like that, Andrew. If you'd only listen.

ANDREW: I've listened enough. Go ahead! Go to yer Father Malachy! Tell him all ye want to! But dinna come runnin' back to me! I dinna want to see ye again.

PEGGY: Andrew!

ANDREW *storms across to the bar. PEGGY sits crying. ANDREW orders a drink, as the CHORUS enters.*

ANDREW: A double whisky, Mac.

*The GIRLS have finished their last number and they come into the bar. BLEATER follows. There is loud applause from the dance floor. SAM HICKS shouts, "Come along, girls," and they flock about the bar. The orchestra continues playing and a number of the guests start dancing in the room beyond. The bar quickly fills with people, and some men join the GIRLS at the bar. There is a general buzz of conversation, ordering drinks, etc. The following speeches arise simultaneously out of the buzz.*

MARY LOU (*to GERTIE GILL*): Oh, Miss Gill, I thought your singin' was just lovely.

GERTIE: Thanks. I'm glad you liked it.

HICKS: Yes, siree! You're the nuts, babe! Listen, folks! Listen, Miss Gill is going to sing her famous Miracle Song.

LADY PAMELA: My God! What a jam! It's as bad as Euston Station.

FIRST CHORUS GIRL (*to SIR JAMES*): Well, most men just call me Polly.

LADY PAMELA (*taking SIR JAMES by the arm*): Let's sit down, Jimmy. I've got a splitting headache.



## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

SIR JAMES (*enjoying himself*): Run along if you want to, dear. I'm going to stay for a bit.

NORA (*to ARCHIE*): Why can't our clergyman perform a miracle?

ARCHIE: Because he's too damn well educated to believe in that kind of thing—that's why! Besides it's not British. (*Pointing at a chorus girl.*) There's the one for me! Look at those eyes!

NORA: Trust you to pick the commonest one of the lot!

MAN WITH CARNATION (*to SECOND CHORUS GIRL*): Haven't I met you before?

SECOND CHORUS GIRL: More than likely. Or perhaps it was my mother?

MAN WITH CARNATION: You must be freezing in that costume.

SECOND CHORUS GIRL (*snuggling up close to him*): There's more than one way of gettin' warm, dearie.

MAN WITH MOUSTACHE (*to THIRD CHORUS GIRL*): Let's have a whirl?

THIRD CHORUS GIRL: No, I've had enough for one night. Let's sit for a while. I want you to meet Bessie. (*Calling to FOURTH CHORUS GIRL.*) Bessie?

FOURTH CHORUS GIRL: Gawd! How I need a drink!

THIRD CHORUS GIRL: Mr. Christie says he has the cutest flat in town. He's invited us to go in with him and see his collection of—what was it again, Mr. Christie?

GERTIE GILL *starts to sing her Miracle Song. Suddenly the noise of toy horns and whistles is heard rising above the orchestra. BELL enters wearing a false-face that makes him look like Santa Claus and carrying a hamper of noisemakers and souvenirs. There is an hilarious scramble as he distributes them among the guests. Shouts of "Look! Santa Claus!" "It's Jimmy", "Good old Jimmy", "Please give me a whistle", etc., etc. There is great excitement and practical joking. SAM HICKS, wearing a ridiculous paper cap and blowing a paper toy which rolls out in the shape of a snake, goes cavorting about the room scaring people. MARY LOU is blowing a horn and having the time of her life. Some people start to call on BELL to make a speech, and the cry is taken up by the others. BELL has taken off his false-face and beams with delight.*

BELL: Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. It's wonderful to know that I have your loyal support, after all the trouble I've had with this Father Malachy and his miracle. (*Applause.*) Not that I'm not a religious man myself just the way all of us are—(*Boos.*)—but it's the religion of a good, honest business man.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

To put it in a few words—"never do the dirty on a pal"—that's my religion! And what's more, our dear Scotland—this blessed land of honesty and common sense—will never bend her proud knee to Italy's alien yoke. We'll show them that Britons never, never shall be slaves! (*Applause.*)

ANDREW: Aye, Jimmy, ye're right! And what's more, I want to tell ye what I think about this whole business.

BELL: Yes, Mr. Gillespie was here the night it happened, folks.

ANDREW: Yes—and I've spent three weeks trying to figure what good it could have done anyone. And just now I've found out. It's brought us all together here tonight so we can get just as drunk as we please and—and—to hell with miracles!

*The CROWD cheers. There is prolonged applause. During the latter part of BELL'S speech, FATHER MALACHY and PETER have entered. They look very bewildered and out of place. They are suddenly noticed by the guests.*

PETER: Come, Father. It's no use.

MALACHY (*to the GUESTS*): I want to speak to Mr. Bell.

*Several guests call BELL. PEGGY sees FATHER MALACHY and runs to him.*

PEGGY (*to the CROWD*): Quiet!

BELL: Well, Father Malachy! I'm glad to see you, Father. And Peter! This is a surprise!

MALACHY: An unpleasant one, I should say.

BELL: No, Father. That's where you're wrong. I admit I was laying it on a bit thick just now, but Jimmy Bell never holds a grudge. Forgive and forget—that's my motto.

PETER: Well, that's just where ye're wrong, Jimmy. We didn't come here to forgive and forget.

BELL: You didn't?

MALACHY: No, Mr. Bell, we came to ask you once more to give this dance hall back to God—to Whom it belongs!

*A GIRL laughs.*

BLEATER (*crossing*): So it belongs to God, does it? And my girls too, I suppose!

BELL: That's a good one! The Garden of Eden belongs to me, Father. That's who it belongs to.

MALACHY: Legally perhaps—but . . . spiritually.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

BLEATER: Spiritually be damned!

BELL: It's no use, Father. Do you think I'm crazy? Give up a place like this—what I've been working for all my life? (*Turning away.*) Now, just make yourselves at home, and have a good time. You're my guests, gentlemen.

*There are cheers from the crowd.*

PETER (*shouting*): Be quiet! Blast ye! Be quiet!

MALACHY: My dear people, think what you are doing. This is Christmas—the anniversary of the birth of Our Dear Saviour. This very spot has been sanctified by Him with one of His miracles.

ANDREW (*stepping forward*): Why should it be sanctified?

MALACHY (*gently*): Why should it be? Isn't that obvious, Andrew?

ANDREW: I asked you a question——

MALACHY: I know, but surely——

PEGGY: Don't answer him, Father. He's drunk.

ANDREW: I'm not! And I've a right to ask!

BELL: Come on, Mr. Gillespie, forget about it.

*People begin to murmur in embarrassment and leave. BELL moves over and signals the pianist to start playing.*

PEGGY: Andrew, please stop!

ANDREW: Let it go on! Let it bring some happiness to someone! (*To MALACHY.*) Do you like to hurt people and make them suffer—you and your God?

PEGGY: How can you be so cruel to Him, Andrew, Who has nothing but love in His heart for you?

ANDREW: Love? You don't even know what it means—— You——

PEGGY: Andrew, I can't stand it!—I can't stand it!

ANDREW: Oh, leave me alone!

*He turns away and goes to bar. The music is playing, people singing and dancing. GERTIE bursts into her Miracle Song. FATHER MALACHY kneels.*

MALACHY (*barely audible*): Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our Death, Amen.

*FATHER MALACHY continues to pray, but his voice cannot be heard, it is drowned out by the rising din. The orchestra has started to play*

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

*a blues number and GERTIE GILL is standing on the bar, singing with savage syncopation. SAM HICKS takes MARY LOU in his arms and they dance. ANDREW and PEGGY are also dancing. PETER and several other people turn and see FATHER MALACHY praying and cross to him.*

*BLEATER runs across to the window.*

MAC (*to the CROWD*): Stop it! Stop it!

PETER: Father! Father! What are you doing?

PEGGY: What is it, Father?

FIRST MAN (*at the window*): Look! Look! We're off the ground!

A GIRL: We're off the ground!

BELL (*to MALACHY*): What do you think you're doing? You can't do this to me!

A GIRL: Jump! Jump!

PETER: But we'll all be killed. Stop! Stop!

PEGGY (*to MALACHY*): What's happening? Where are we going? Where?

PETER: Maybe it's best, Father! Yes, it is. It's better that we should die than let you blasphemers go unpunished. Ye'll fry in hell! The whole miserable pack of ye! And the devil will be lickin' his chops when he sees what a fine catch he's got!

FIRST CHORUS GIRL: Connie!  
I'm frightened!

SECOND CHORUS GIRL: Jean!  
Jean! (*She runs off.*)

FIRST CHORUS GIRL (*going to the bar*): Mac, let me have a drink.

BLEATER (*threatening MALACHY*): I'll show you, Father Malachy! I'll knock your bloody head off! (*PEGGY screams and protects FATHER MALACHY as ANDREW seizes and pushes BLEATER into a chair.*) Let go my arm!

ANDREW: Don't be a damn fool, George!

PEGGY: Are we going to die, Father? Is this the end?

FATHER MALACHY *is very distressed. Standing in the centre of the CROWD, he raises his hand. At last he can be heard.*

MALACHY: My dear people . . . I don't know where we are going . . . any more than you do. We're all in God's hands and at His mercy. . . . Death may be close at hand. . . . We should all prepare. . . . Let us pray together. . . . O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee. And I detest my sins, not only because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell, but most of all because I have offended Thee, my God, Who art so good and deserving of my love.

## FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE

*The hysterical excitement of the CROWD has gradually changed to grim despair. NORA, MARY LOU and PEGGY are kneeling beside FATHER MALACHY, praying earnestly with him. SIR JAMES is standing looking out the window. ARCHIE lights a cigarette and goes to the bar for a drink. BELL and BLEATER are sitting left staring despondently in front of them. BLEATER is mechanically tearing a piece of paper into bits. The orchestra is playing "Abide with Me", and the people in the ballroom are singing. GERTIE starts to sing with them, and the others in the room join her, singing with increasing fervour.*

*PEGGY suddenly leaps to her feet and runs down stage to the door.*

ANDREW (*running after her*): Bubbles! Bubbles, darlin'!

MAN (*excitedly*): Look! Lights! Oh, God! We're going to crash! *A number of people rush to the window, others prepare solemnly for immediate death. There is another wave of hysterical despondency and shouts of "We'll be smashed to bits!" "We're crashing down!" "Oh God!" etc., etc. Those who have gone to the window walk slowly away, horror-stricken.*

ANDREW: Please keep on praying, Father . . . it helps.

*Suddenly there is a strange quiet. A pause. The CONSTABLE appears at the door.*

CONSTABLE: Well, I'll be damned! So ye're back again!

BLEATER: Look! Jimmy, look!

BELL: My God! The Constable! (*Goes to window.*) There's the church across the street. Back at the same bloody spot!

*Church bells are heard.*

NORA: It's the church bells! We're saved, Archie! We're saved!

BLEATER: Lor' blimey!

*Some rush out the door, shouting jubilantly. They are wildly excited and happy. FATHER MALACHY is buffeted by the CROWD. They laugh at him, blow horns, etc. The orchestra is playing dance music again. Some go merrily into the dance floor. GERTIE GILE is heard singing.*

BELL (*to MALACHY*): Well, Father Malachy. I'll say one thing for you—you never do anything by halves. (*He goes off laughing.*)

ANDREW: Bubbles . . . Will ye forgive me?

PEGGY (*in his arms*): Andrew, darling, I think you're the only man in the world who'd need two miracles to wake him up.

PETER (*to MALACHY*): But, Father, two miracles and not a thing to show for it, not even a hole in the ground! Now they'll be sayin' the miracle never happened at all.

*FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE*

MALACHY: Perhaps, Peter. But I'm afraid some people won't believe in Hell—even after they've been there an eternity. Oh, dear!

PEGGY: You mustn't let it worry you, Father.

MALACHY: That's not what's worrying me, my child.

PETER: What is it now, Father?

MALACHY: Another miracle and I forgot to warn the Bishop.

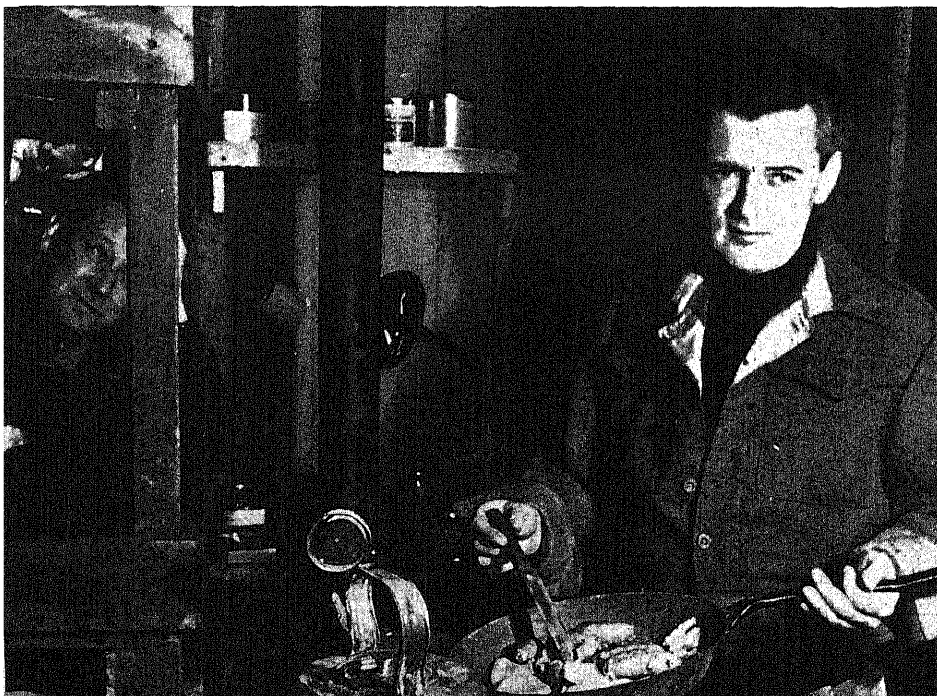
*CURTAIN*



*Above:* JACK : How long has she been eating  
her head off, at my expense ?

ERNIE : She's a nice gentle doe, Jack.  
**HUGH WILLIAMS, PETER BEN-  
NETT, and "JENNY".**

*Below:* HUGH WILLIAMS, as JACK.



ZOO IN SILESIA

BY

*Richard Pollock*



## ZOO IN SILESIA

SMUDGER and TOPPER, *the noisy men, are on their way out. They are dressed in strict military fashion. They argue loudly, above the singing.*

SMUDGER: Now I don't want to argue about it, Topper. I tell you the Jerries took Boulogne (*he says BOO-Lonn*) on the 26th May. I know what I'm talkin' about, and I'll bet you a thousand cigarettes——

TOPPER: A thousand cigarettes! Big-hearted, ain't you? You've got about as many cigarettes as those Jerry bastards out there—and that's sweet Fanny Adams——

SMUDGER: I tell you I'm right. I know what I'm talkin' about—it was a Sunday, the 26th May——

TOPPER: You're all to cock. I tell you it was on the Tuesday, on the 28th, I was there!

*They exit.*

SINGERS (*off*):

I-E-I-O (10)

I-E-I-O (10)

IE

IO

I-AH-HA-HAHA-HA-HA-HA-HA

I-E-I-O etc.,

SAM: Sing, you square-headed bastards, sing! Sing away! Sing, while you can. Sing, for your breakfast.

PAT: Yes—for your sixth of a loaf.

SAM: For four years I've had to listen to the bastards.

PAT: You ain't the only one, Sam.

SAM: That's the last time I'll hear them, anyway.

OLD TOM: Heard them for the last time—eh, Sam? Going home—eh?

SAM: That's right, Tom.

MARK *has been very busy. His accent reeks of affectation.*

MARK: What's the time, Claud?

CLAUD, *at the table, does not look up.*

(*Louder*): Claud!

CLAUD (*irritably*): Yes, Mark, what is it?

MARK: The time! What's the time?

CLAUD: Twenty-two minutes past nine.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MARK : Sacramento! Verflüchter! I'm late for school. I shall be keeping my Russian class waiting.

JACK *has moved from the window. He is coming up, centre. He is thirty-five, smooth, immaculate. He has a habit of looking at and fiddling with silver cigarette-cases, gold rings, wrist-watches, English paper currency, diamonds, which he produces from his pockets.*

JACK (to MARK) : That would be a tragedy.

MARK : Did I ask for any comments from you, old boy?

JACK : That's all right. I make no charge for my comments, тов.учик.

MARK : Pah! I can't waste any more of my precious time on you. (*On his way out—with attempted scorn.*) You—you—capitalist!

MARK *exits, singing "Black Eyes" in phoney Russian.*

JACK *is by PAT, at the stove.*

JACK : Bacon—and—eggs! I'm bored with bacon —and— eggs. Do some sausages, some fried bread, and some tomatoes.

PAT : Wouldn't like some mushrooms, would you?

JACK : I'll think about it.

JACK *is moving away. He comes upstage, to the single bed. OLD TOM starts to sing, and do a little clog dance, as he is sweeping up. He sings in a cracked, high-pitched voice. Whilst he is singing, JACK is at his bed, putting on a brocaded silk dressing-gown, looking at himself in a mirror, fiddling with valuables, smoothing down already immaculate hair, filing his nails.*

OLD TOM (*singing*) :

Good-by-ee, Good-by-ee  
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ce;  
Tho' it's hard to part, I know  
I'll be tickled to death to go;  
Don't sigh-ee, don't sigh-ee,  
There's a silver lining in the sky-ce;  
Cheerio, old thing, toodle-oo chin-chin,  
Napoo, Tiddley-oo, Good-by-ee.

OLD TOM *stoops, collects up the rubbish into dustpan. JACK has gone to box at foot of single bed, unlocked it, taken out two hundred cigarettes, in packets of ten. He relocks the box, takes the cigarettes, concertina-fashion, over to SAM, saying, on the way, to OLD TOM.*

JACK : That's a nice song, Tom. (*And to SAM.*) Here! Have some money . . .

## ZOO IN SILESIA

OLD TOM: Last war song, that. 1914. Used to sing it on the Marne. Give me the old songs. Keep your Rumtee-Tumtee-Tumtee.

*OLD TOM exits, with dustpan. JACK goes to cushioned armchair, settles in it, starts to play patience. JACK plays any amount of patience in this Act—with terrible monotony. SAM lights a cigarette (but not one of JACK'S), saunters over to JACK.*

SAM: What's the idea?

JACK: What idea?

SAM: The fags. The money.

JACK: I'm giving them to you. For the journey.

SAM: I don't like presents.

JACK: Take them. They'll get you a fraulein. On the way back.

SAM: I can get my own women. I don't want no favours.

JACK: I'm not doing you a favour. You know me better than that.

SAM: What's the idea, then?

JACK: I'm selling them to you. I want to know something.

SAM: What?

JACK: I want to know how ill you are.

SAM: You know that. You know I'm so ill they're sending me back to Blighty.

JACK: That's no answer.

SAM: I've passed three Medical Commissions, and I'm on my way back to dear old Civvy Street. I'm no good any more. I'm finished.

JACK: Cock. Bull.

SAM: You don't think I'm okay, do you?

JACK: Yes.

SAM: You don't think I could fool all them M.O.s?

JACK: Yes.

SAM: You don't think I could get away with that, do you?

JACK: It's possible. I think you might.

SAM: You're right. Dead right.

JACK: I usually am.

SAM: I was sick. One time. I'm okay, now. I'm as fit as you.

JACK: Congratulations.

SAM: Perhaps I ought to tell them. So's someone can go in my place. How would that be?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK: You have a right to go back. You're smart. You can tell a tale. You've worked your ticket. You have a better right than a man who is sick, but who can't tell a tale.

SAM: Thanks.

JACK: You're bang up-to-date. This is 1944. You're it. Survival of the most cunning. The bird with the hardest neck.

SAM: Thanks.

JACK: You're the man who deserves to get home. You. The wide boy. Not the sick man.

SAM: Thanks, Jack.

JACK: Look at Old Tom. Look how out-of-date Old Tom is. Old Tom's 1914. He's old and he's sick. He'd never think of telling anyone how sick he is.

SAM: Old Tom's an old fool.

*Pause.*

JACK: Tell me. How does it feel? Going home?

SAM: Home? I ain't got a home. My home's where I am. I'm a regular Army man, ain't I? I'm glad to get away from this dump.

JACK: Don't the thought of seeing England again excite you?

SAM: There's no one waiting for me in Blighty. Not a bloody soul. There's no one I want to see. They're all dead.

JACK: Yes. The England which we knew, that's dead. All of it.

SAM: All? Not all. There'll still be beer there, Jacko, and women.

*PAT has brought over JACK's breakfast, and his own. Also the German morning newspaper, which JACK opens, and reads.*

PAT: Think o' me, Sam, when you're 'avin' your first woman.

SAM: All the time, Pat.

*SAM goes back to finish packing. JACK breakfasts, as if he were at the Savoy.*

PAT (*remembering something*): Say, Jack! I'll tell you what! My cactus is still there. Missus told me, in a letter.

JACK: Your what?

PAT: My cactus. It's a plant. I kept it by my bed.

JACK: I know what a cactus is. What about it?

PAT: It's still there, that's all. You said everythin' in Blighty was gone. That's all.

JACK: Amazing! What made you keep a cactus by your bed?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

PAT: No reason. I just liked to look at it.

JACK: Amazing! Sometimes I think I know everything there is to know about everybody, and then something like this happens. You. Cactus. Hell.

MIKE, *a tough-looking man, comes in. His boots are caked with mud. He carries a large cardboard box. From this, he takes out and puts on the table, near PAT—loaves of white bread: flour: eggs: some stoppered bottles, etc.*

MIKE: Good morning, good morning, good morning. And what a morning.

JACK: Mike! Come here.

MIKE: Yes, Jack.

JACK: How many cigarettes did you make yesterday?

MIKE: Two thousand. Business was never better. Food and smokes. Smokes and food. What a perfect combination. You can't beat it. Buy food from the mugs wot want cigarettes. Lift up the price. Sell the food back to the mugs wot got cigarettes. Two thousand. Business was never better—eh, Jack?

JACK: Never better, my eye. I told you your low limit. What is it?

MIKE: Low limit, Jack?

JACK: Yes, low limit. I'll tell you what it is. It's twenty-five hundred. There are five thousand people in this place. If you can't get half a cigarette a day out of them, I'll find someone who can.

MIKE: That ain't so easy. Cigarettes is getting low again, in the camp.

JACK: Cock. Bull. If I did the work, I'd get five thousand cigarettes a day.

MIKE: That's big talk, Jack. There ain't been many fag parcels comin' in lately. Cigarettes is low.

JACK: There's millions of cigarettes in the camp. Millions I tell you. Tucked away. Down south.

MIKE: I don't know about that, Jack.

JACK: Think out new ways of making cigarettes. What am I paying you for?

MIKE: That ain't so easy, Jack.

JACK: What's this about no more food coming in? No more Red Cross parcels?

MIKE: I ain't 'eard that one.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : Why not ? I've heard about it. I don't move from here, and I've heard about it.

MIKE : Well I ain't 'eard nothin'.

JACK : We've got to be careful.

MIKE : Yes, Jack.

JACK : Got to watch our prices.

MIKE (*remembering*) : Oh—I know what. Know a Sergeant-Major Bannister ? 'Im wots on the Camp Welfare Committee.

JACK : I know Bannister all right. What about him ?

MIKE : I 'eard 'e's tryin' to control prices.

JACK : Ho ! Is he ? Is he, really ?

MIKE : Says we're profiteers.

JACK : Ho ! Does he ? Does he, really ?

MIKE : 'E's got a nerve, ain't he ? This is a free prison camp, ain't it ?

JACK : It must be. Officially, the camp is democratic.

MIKE : What's 'e think 'e's doin', then ?

PAT : Bannister ! Why, that's that bastard who——

JACK : I know all about Bannister. In 1940, in the first days, in the bad days, when the squareheads thought they were on top, R.S.M. Bannister used to clean the boots of German corporals. In 1940, when we were starving, if you remember, Bannister used to help himself to the men's rations—such as they were. He did other things. He killed men. Plenty of men. He killed a man I knew, in 1940. I don't forget these ratbags.

MIKE : The bastard. Now 'e wants to stop 'onest blokes from makin' a livin'.

JACK : Don't worry. I can handle Regimental Sergeant-Major Bannister. In spite of his twenty-one years in the Regular Army.

MIKE : Sure, Jack.

JACK : I'm more worried about the famine that's coming.

MIKE : Famine ?

JACK : Certainly. How d'you think they're going to get food to us when they've torn the guts out of the railways ?

MIKE : That's right.

JACK : What's our food reserve ? How many tins ?

MIKE : About ten thousand.

ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : What are you selling meat roll at ?

MIKE : Forty cigarettes.

JACK : Make it sixty-five. Bully ?

MIKE : Fifty.

JACK : Double it. Make it a hundred. You can get three meals out of a tin of bully. Rolled oats ?

MIKE : Twenty.

JACK : Put it up to forty. It's a good standby, oats.

MIKE : Forty it is.

JACK : How's our stock of prunes ?

MIKE : They keep comin' in.

JACK : Good. We must have prunes.

*He picks up one of the stoppered bottles which MIKE brought in with him, sniffs it, sips from it.*

No matter how old a prune may be, it still makes liquor. How about raisins ?

MIKE : Fair number of raisins, Jack.

JACK : Lay in a big stock. (*Drinking.*) What the hell's this—boot polish ?

MIKE : No, Jack. That's Grade A prunes.

JACK : Now then—Pat. (*To Pat.*) Household shopping. What do you want ?

PAT : Eggs, butter, flour, yeast, raisins, matches, garlic, mustard, vinegar.

*MIKE takes this down on paper.*

JACK : What else ?

PAT : Mushrooms.

MIKE : Mushrooms ?

JACK : Yes! Mushrooms. Unlikely—but by no means impossible. Try the Frenchmen, not the Germans.

MIKE : What Frenchmen ?

JACK : What Frenchmen! The Frenchmen who empty our dustbins, you idiot.

MIKE : Oh—they.

JACK : I won't pay a fancy price. Twenty cigarettes a kilog. No more. (*To Pat.*) Anything else ?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

PAT: A woman.

JACK: Yes. How's the woman deal going?

MIKE: I'm workin' on it. These things take time.

JACK: Get cracking. Shake up Berlin Bertie. Tell him if he don't produce a woman this week, I'll take my business elsewhere.

MIKE: Right, Jack.

JACK: And I don't want an old bag, like last time. I want one with teeth.

MIKE: Right, Jack.

JACK: Apart from women and mushrooms, what else?

PAT: A radio valve.

JACK: Yes. A valve "went" last night. The news bores me, but I must have my Tommy Handley. One valve.

MIKE: I'll put it in order.

PAT: Some bran for the rabbits.

JACK: A sackful. Now is that all? There was something else.

PAT: Yes. A Carlton pudding.

MIKE (*amazed*): A Carlton puddin'!

JACK: That's it! A Carlton pudding! That's what I want. How good that sounds—a Carlton pudding. I think I want a Carlton pudding more than anything else in the world at the moment. Get me one.

MIKE: I ain't seen one in months, Jack. Carlton puddin's is just about extinct. I got a sultana pudding in stock.

JACK: No good.

MIKE: They're almost the same puddin', Jack.

JACK: Cock. Bull. It's a Carlton pudding I want. I've never had one. Get me one.

MIKE: I can't work miracles.

JACK: You can. You can get anything in this camp—if you look in the right place for it.

MIKE: I'll do me best. Is that all?

JACK: For the moment.

BILL *is getting up, out of bed. He is unshaven, haggard, dirty. MIKE goes back to shelf at window, opens window, stays backstage, leaning over, doing business at window.*

BILL (*to MIKE*): Are the two-up tables out, in the square?



## ZOO IN SILESIA

MIKE (*looks out*): Just staitin' up.

BILL *is going through his clothes for a cigarette, but cannot find one. He may be going to ask JACK for one, but changes his mind.*

JACK: What do you want?

BILL: A cigarette.

JACK (*to PAT*): Give him a fag. I have none here.

BILL (*to PAT*): Thanks.

BILL *puts three tins of food on the table, in front of JACK.*

BILL: Bacon. Biscuits. Bully. Give me a hundred for the three.

JACK: They're not worth a hundred to me.

BILL: They're all I have. I must have a hundred. It's not worth playing if I don't have a hundred.

JACK: Don't play.

BILL: I must. I'm in too deep not to. I've had a terrible spin. My luck will change today. I can feel it.

JACK: You'll lose.

BILL: No. Today I'll win. I can feel it.

JACK (*to MIKE*): Give him a hundred.

BILL: Thanks.

JACK: Don't thank me. What are you going to back?

BILL: The tail. It's going to be a record tails day. I can feel it. I'm going to win five thousand, and quit.

JACK: When you go over, tell Nickie the Greek to back the head, to win me five thousand.

BILL: You'll lose.

BILL *is straightening himself. Enter HARRY, OLD TOM behind. OLD TOM carries bowl of potatoes, and some loaves of black bread. HARRY is middle-aged, a pleasant-looking person, soft speaking, usually smiling.*

HARRY (*cheerfully*): Terrible mud this morning.

OLD TOM: Rations up, boys! German rations up! Bread, spuds, and the old blood sausage.

PAT: Spuds any better today, Tom?

OLD TOM: About the same. One in three don't stink.

HARRY (*to SAM*): They're shouting for repats. to go down to the gate, Sam. I'll help you down with your kit.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

SAM: I can manage it, Harry.

SAM *gets ready to leave.* OLD TOM *starts laying out potatoes in lots, on the table.* PAT *starts to cut up the bread, measuring it out with the aid of a ruler.*

OLD TOM: I see some bags of mail come in.

BILL (*all ears*): Mail? How many bags?

OLD TOM: I didn't see them myself. A fellow told me some mail come in.

BILL: Perhaps I'll get a letter today. It's nearly six months since I heard.

OLD TOM: Six months? That's a long time, Bill.

HARRY: There's mail in all right, and there's a small party of men coming into the camp this morning. We shall have to take a man in here.

JACK: Yes.

PAT: Where's the party from?

HARRY: I don't know.

BILL: Any cigarette parcels in?

HARRY: Not that I know of. (*To SAM.*) You have that letter to my wife, Sam?

SAM: Right here. I won't forget.

BILL: And mine, Sam?

SAM: Yes.

BILL: Perhaps I'll get a letter today. It's nearly six months since I heard. Good-bye, Sam.

BILL *exits.*

OLD TOM: Off on your holidays—eh, Sam?

SAM: That's it, Tom. Going on leave. Well, so long, everyone.

SAM *exits, quickly.* *A few mild handshakes and good-byes, but emotion from him, or anyone, noticeably absent.*

HARRY: Oh well, we'll all be back in England by Christmas.

PAT: Which Christmas?

OLD TOM: Any minute now—that's what I say—eh, Jack?

JACK: It wouldn't surprise me, Tom.

PAT: "It may be for years and it may be forever." (*Sings, to tune of "Kathleen Mavourneen".*)

## ZOO IN SILESIA

HARRY *is setting up an easel and canvas.* PAT and OLD TOM *have been cutting cards by which means the bread and potatoes are distributed.* Enter JOHNNY. *A kid—but his step is slow, and he looks a good deal older than he should.*

PAT: Hello, kid. What's up?

JOHNNY: Nothing. Felt a bit queer—kicking a football about.

HARRY: Queer, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Dizzy. Funny. The second time I've had it, (*sits at table*) lately.

PAT (*holding bread ration up to JACK*): The birds?

JACK: Of course. See that you break it up small enough for them.

JOHNNY: Sam gone?

HARRY: Just left. (*Sitting by easel.*) Move around a bit, Jack, so that the light strikes you.

JACK: How's that?

HARRY: Fine.

*There is an air of rest about the hut now. CLAUD—remember him?—is still at the table, thinking, and writing. OLD TOM is sitting in front of the stove, sucking at his pipe, gazing into space. PAT is at window, throwing out bread, afterwards goes back to his cooking. JACK is smoking a pipe and playing patience. HARRY is painting him. MIKE is at back, quietly doing business. JOHNNY is at table, resting his arms on it.*

JOHNNY: Sam lived with us, for nearly four years. Among us. Here. Now he has gone. I don't suppose any of us will ever see him again. It's queer, to think of it.

JACK: I don't suppose any of us will ever think of him again—once we hear that he has reached England.

JOHNNY: I can't feel his going. I get no feeling at all. We must be losing the power to feel.

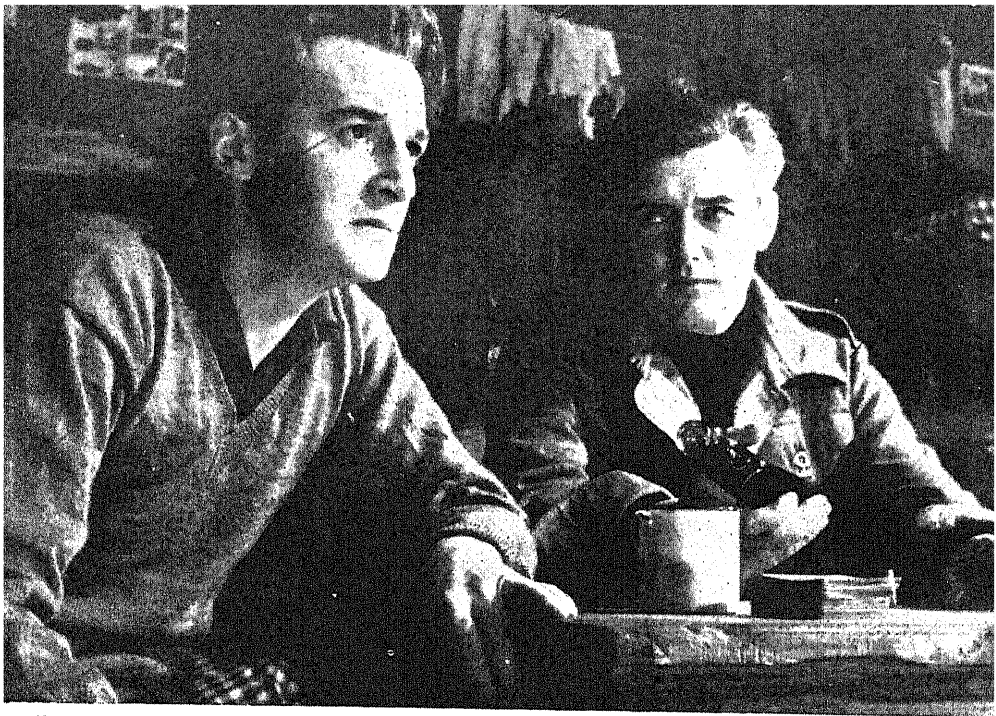
HARRY: Isn't it inevitable that we should, living this existence year after year, winter, autumn, summer.

JOHNNY: England! He'll be in England, in spring. He'll see the beginning of the cricket season. It's hard to realise.

HARRY: He'll see crocuses, and boats on the Thames, and May blossom.

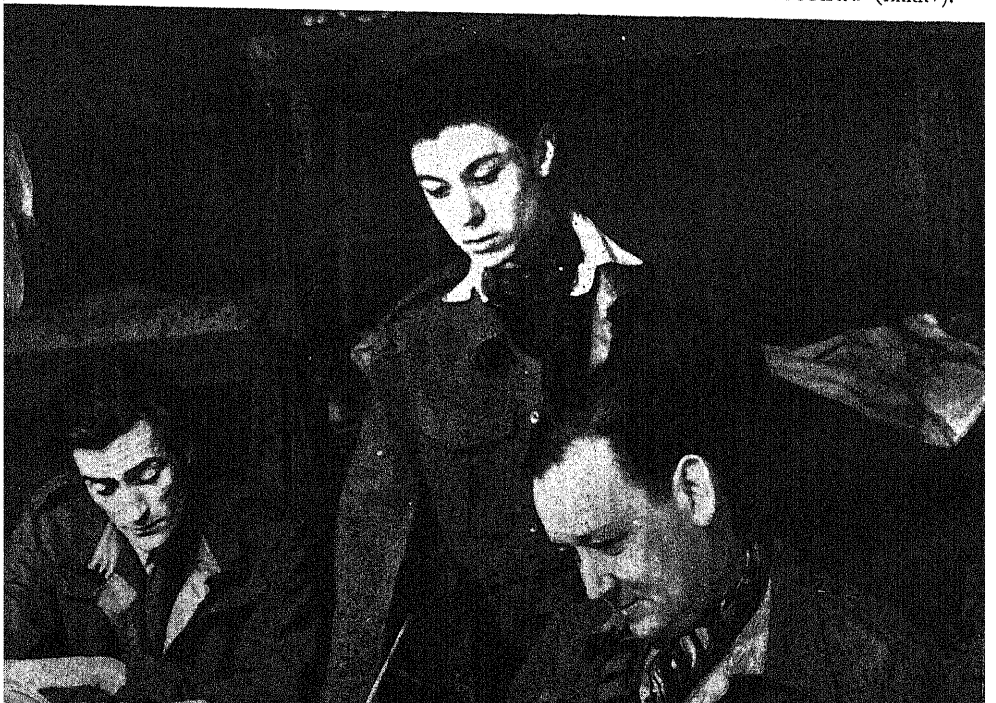
JACK: They may be there, those things. Sam ain't the man to see them.





*Above:* BILL: This isn't what we were born for, is it? This blackness? Surely we were born for the sun, and the roads, and the sea?  
JACK: We're alive. We're still alive.  
NOEL JOHNSON and HUGH WILLIAMS.

*Below:* (L. to R.) GUY ROLFE  
(CLAUD) LIONEL BLAIR  
(JOHNNY), and NOEL  
MORRIS (HARRY).



## ZOO IN SILESIA

JOHNNY : All we have to look at here, in this apology for a spring, in this dustbin of a country, is *mud*.

HARRY : I wouldn't say "all". There are many things here at which I like to look, which I find it good to look at.

JOHNNY : For instance.

HARRY : Have a look at this. This picture of Jack, sitting back in his armchair, playing patience. Tell me what you think of it. Tell me if it suggests anything to you.

JOHNNY : It suggests monotony and boredom to me.

HARRY : That's part of it.

JOHNNY : Has it a name? The painting?

HARRY : Yes. I call it "Tomorrow is another day". That means, doesn't it, Boredom and Monotony. Also, Hope, and the Great Question Mark of Tomorrow. Because we really never do know what's in store for us tomorrow, do we? Anyway, that's something of what I'm trying to get into my picture of Jack in his armchair, playing patience.

JOHNNY : You're getting away from the point. You said there were good things here. Good things to look at.

HARRY : There are. Plenty. The simplest things. They're fine to look at here—where there are so few things to look at. The whiteness of snow. The blue of the sky. Sunshine. The movement of clouds. The green of the grass. The brightness of stars. And at night, the circle of perimeter lights, around the wire. The searchlights swinging down, over the camp. Some of the brightest lights in the world, just now.

JOHNNY : They're bright, but they're awfully sad. They make me think of other lights. The lights of London, from Hampstead Heath, on an evening in May.

HARRY : And the lights along the embankment, at two o'clock in the morning.

JACK : And the lights of the White City. On Dog Derby night.

*Pause.*

HARRY : You, Jack! What do you like to look at, here? Apart from silver cigarette cases and rings?

JACK : I'll tell you! The birds!

JOHNNY : The birds!

JACK : Yes, the birds. They're tame, d'you know that, the birds. They're tame, when you give them bread. I never knew about birds, till I was in this life. Now, I can talk to them. They fascinate me, the

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birds. All the moving things, all the animals in this camp fascinate me. Why d'you think I keep all them rabbits?

JOHNNY: To make cigarettes. To make food. To make money. To live well.

JACK: Yes, but they fascinate me, the rabbits. Black ones, white ones, grey ones. Big ones, little ones. Bouncing bucks. Dreamy does. They fascinate me. I tell you.

JOHNNY: They're caged. I hate to see animals in cages.

JACK: The cats. What about the cats that prowl about the camp, living on their wits? I watched a ginger and white cat for an hour the other day. I watched it killing a young rat. That was great.

JOHNNY: Disgusting.

JACK: No.

JOHNNY: Horrible.

JACK: No. I tell you it was fascinating. Harry's dead right when you weigh it up. This place is full of fine things. (*Touching it.*) A tin of tobacco. How great that is. What power it has. How wonderful it was, when you didn't have it. How wonderful it is, still. How powerful.

HARRY: It smells good, too. It smells of meadowsweet and black treacle. (*Taking one.*) Mind if I have a fill, Jack?

*Enter RAFFLER. He carries a Red Cross parcel. Also paper, pencil and cardboard box.*

RAFFLER: 'Ow d'yer do, gents! 'Ow *do* yer do! Now today's the day, and I'm rafflin' this bee-ootiful Red Cross parcel. It's only two cigarettes a go now, chums—it don't cost you—

JACK: There! A Red Cross parcel! Christ! There's the most wonderful thing of all! Think back—back to the day you had your first Red Cross parcel. Christ! How wonderful it was. You'd been living on spud peelings and fish-heads for months—that's if you were one of the lucky ones. Then—the miracle happened—this! Christ! It was good, then. It's good, now. Take off the lid. Gaze deep into the wonder of it. A week's food, from England, for you! Gentlemen—on my left, one Red Cross parcel. On my right—Death. Which one, sir? Which one? All you have to do is eat it. You don't have to earn it—you simply have to eat it. Jump in, lads. It's your birthday! (*To RAFFLER.*) How does my pater go, boy?

RAFFLER: Couldn't do better meself, cocker—and that's sayin' somethin', I'll tell you. Now you 'eard the gentleman, folks. This lovely Red Cross packet, containing seventeen prime articles of food,

## ZOO IN SILESIA

is being raffled. You might be the lucky one. Two cigarettes a go. Nothin' shady. To be drawn for, in public, by the old man 'isself, this afternoon.

RAFFLER *begins to move round.*

PAT: Sorry—not interested.

RAFFLER: You, sir?

OLD TOM: Sorry, mate. No cigarettes to spare, just now.

RAFFLER: You, sir? 'Ow about you?

CLAUD: What? What's this? Parcel? *No.* Don't bother me. Don't bother me, now.

RAFFLER: Jolly good luck to you, sir.

JACK: Off your food?

RAFFLER: Not exactly, mate. Just 'appen to be a bit short o' smokes at present.

JACK: Ah! The old problem. Food, or cigarettes? Which is the more important.

HARRY: Food.

JACK: Not necessarily. Not to everyone. In 1940, in the bad days. I know that I used to sell my daily dog-biscuit for smokes, sometimes—when I could get 'em.

HARRY: Did you? I took what I was given. That means I more or less did without both. I never smoked nettles. And I didn't scramble for the rotting cheese the bastards used to throw at us. It doesn't mean anything, either way. It's just the way you are. (*To RAFFLER.*) Here—  
2320.

RAFFLER (*to JACK*): 2320. Much obliged, cocker. You, sir?

JACK (*to HARRY*): Give him two cigarettes for me. I have none here. 1948. That's my number. Not the end of the war.

RAFFLER (*exiting*): All the best, gents. Keep those chins up.

*Enter PETER, DRESSMAKER following. PETER is fair of face and figure. He is not effeminate. He is a healthy, vital young man. His profession of chief female impersonator at the Camp Theatre has, however, given him some of a woman's ways and mannerisms. DRESSMAKER is effeminate, and carries a woman's stage dress.*

RAFFLER *exit.*

PETER: I tell you I won't wear that dress on the stage tonight.

DRESSMAKER: But why not, Peter? It looks so becoming on you.

PETER: It doesn't fit me and it's not my style. I won't wear it.



## ZOO IN SILESIA

DRESSMAKER : It will simply have to do, I can't possibly alter it again before tonight.

*Enter* PRODUCER.

PETER : D'*you* hear ? I won't wear it.

PRODUCER : You can go on the stage with nothing on, as far as I am concerned.

DRESSMAKER : Try it on once more. Do. There's a good boy.

PRODUCER : Now, Peter, what about this number. You haven't got it right. Don't just stand up there on the stage opening and shutting your mouth like a dummy. Give it something. Give it some "Oomph".

PETER : Oh—so now I've got no oomph ? I suppose that's why five thousand people are crazy about me.

DRESSMAKER : The dress, Peter, the dress. Please try it on again.

*PETER takes dress and begins to change.*

PRODUCER : The way you sing that song is under the arm.

PETER : Oh—it's under the arm, is it ? Let me tell you—

PRODUCER : Forget it.

DRESSMAKER : The dress, Peter.

PRODUCER : Now, look here. When am I going to get some co-operation from some of you. Here I am. A million things to do. Everything going wrong, as usual—at the last minute. Not a soul helps me. Everybody hinders me. Songs. Dresses. Actors. Authors. Stage managers. Dressmakers. Impersonat—

DRESSMAKER : Well, I must say. I don't see how anyone can accuse me of not doing my little bit—

PETER : For God's sake, stop panicking, both of you.

PRODUCER : Panicking ? I'm not panicking. I never panic.

PETER : So I've noticed.

PRODUCER : Oh—it's all right for you. Your bread's buttered. You don't have any of the responsibility. All you have to do is to get up on a stage and make goo-goo eyes. And half the time you can't even do that.

PETER : Really ? Well, if you think you can get anyone better—

PRODUCER : Stuff it. Now—you, Jack. What about you ? Is everything okay with you for tonight ?

JACK : Don't worry about me.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

PRODUCER : I am not worrying. I simply asked if you were okay.

JACK : My compere-ing will be what it has always been. Immaculate.

PETER *is now in woman's dress. He displays himself.*

PETER : Well—how is it ?

DRESSMAKER (*dreamily*) : It's wonderful.

JACK (*sour*) : It's gorgeous.

PRODUCER : It's terrific.

PETER : I was speaking to the dressmaker.

PRODUCER (*to JACK*) : For God's sake, give me a drink.

JACK : Darling, believe me. When you come on the stage in that dress tonight, you'll make the toughest old sweat in the audience break down and weep. It'll be cruel, to watch it. You'll stop the show, and I shan't get any supper. (*Touches dress.*) Only get those level.

*Enter BILL. He goes to window, moodily.*

DRESSMAKER : Yes. Yes. Without a doubt it is quite my most ravishing creation.

PETER : Oh—d'you really think so ?

PRODUCER : We do, angel, we do.

PETER : In that case—I'll wear it.

PRODUCER : Thank God for that. Right. Tonight at eight. Both of you. And Jack, please. If it's not asking too much, could you, please, keep just a little bit sober.

JACK : Why the hell should I ?

PRODUCER : Thanks very much.

*Exit PRODUCER.*

*Enter ERNIE, the rabbit man. He is small, bald-headed. A tragic entrance. He is distraught.*

ERNIE : The rabbits! The rabbits! Someone's let them all out of their hutches. They're running wild. Young ones, as well. They'll all get lost. Stolen! Quick! Help! Help! Before it's too late.

*ERNIE disappears.*

OLD TOM (*jumps up*) : S.O.S. for the rabbits! All hands to the rabbits! Rabbits running wild!

*OLD TOM exits.*

HARRY : Don't worry, Ernie. They can't get far. We'll catch them all.

PAT (*to JACK*) : How about some rabbit-pie ?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : I'll think about it. See that they're all caught. I can't afford to lose any.

PAT *exits*.

BILL *turns from window and comes upstage*. PETER *still in woman's dress, practising a dance*.

BILL : Rabbits! God! We're all going crazy.

JACK : How did you go, at the two-up ?

BILL : Up the spout.

JACK : How did I go ?

BILL : You won. Your five thousand.

PETER : Hello, Willie. How do I look ?

BILL : Like a tanner tart.

PETER : There's a dance after the show tonight. A party on the stage. Coming ?

BILL : I'm browned-off with dances, and parties.

PETER (*disappointed*) : Oh. I shall have to make do with Jack. Jack's such a lousy dancer.

JACK : I'm a compere. Not a gigolo.

BILL : So you're a compere ? Well, well. We live and learn.

BILL *gets back into bed*.

JOHNNY (*from bed*) : Jack!

JACK : What is it ?

JOHNNY : Got any aspirin ? My head's bad.

JACK : Yes.

JACK *gets up, for the first time since the start of the Act. He gets aspirins, takes them over to JOHNNY*.

Here you are. Let me know if you feel any worse. I'll send for the M.O.

JOHNNY : I wanted to play football this afternoon.

JACK : Stay in bed. Pat will bring you anything you want.

*Enter BANNISTER. An oily man. He wears the R.S.M.'s coat of arms prominently on his sleeve. PETER, during this scene, is changing back into man's dress.*

BANNISTER : Good morning, old man.

JACK (*sour*) : Hello, Bannister.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

BANNISTER : There's a small party of men just arrived. I am afraid you'll have to accommodate someone in here.

JACK : We know about that.

BANNISTER : Good. By the way, old man, who owns those rabbits out there ?

JACK : Why ?

BANNISTER : They want to control them better. Whoever it is.

JACK : Why ?

BANNISTER : The Germans, old man.

JACK : The squareheads aren't going to touch the rabbits, Bannister. Not these days. This isn't 1940. The Germans want cigarettes these days. Not rabbits.

BANNISTER : You know best, old man.

JACK : I wonder. You know all about Germans, don't you, Bannister ?

BANNISTER : I know what bastards they are.

JACK : Yes. You know that. You know that, now. 1944. (*Pause.*) I'm busy, Bannister.

BANNISTER : How is business ?

JACK : Never better. That's right, isn't it, Mike ?

MIKE : What's that, Jack ?

JACK : Our friend here was asking after the state of our business, Mike. It was never better, was it ?

MIKE : Never better, Jack.

JACK : If Mike says it was never better, Mr. Bannister, take it from Mike. Mike knows.

BANNISTER : You're fly all right, Jack. I've got to hand it to you. You see to it that you never go hungry, or smoke butts. Eh ? I bet you've made your pile, in this life. Eh ?

JACK : That's right, Bannister. I'm fly.

BANNISTER : I've been studying prices.

JACK : My prices ?

BANNISTER : Not yours especially. Prices all over the camp.

JACK : That's interesting.

BANNISTER : Prices are high, Jack.

JACK : Yes. They're high.

BANNISTER : They're getting higher. All the time.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : Prices go as high as people are prepared to pay, Bannister. That's a law. A good law. Supply and demand. Ever hear of it ?

BANNISTER : That's a law for the world. That's not a law for a prison camp.

JACK : It works.

BANNISTER : In this life, if one man's hungry, if one man's short of anything, it's up to the next man to help him out. Comradeship, old man! Ever hear of it ?

JACK : I've heard of it, Bannister. I've never seen it.

BANNISTER : The Camp Welfare Committee meet tonight.

JACK : Do they ?

BANNISTER : Profiteering's rife in the camp. We're going to kill it. Kill it dead. We're going to bring in price control. Strict price control.

JACK : Are you ?

BANNISTER : Anyone who ignores it, will be charged. The charge will be sent to England. It will be a pretty serious charge.

JACK : Will it ?

BANNISTER : We have no alternative, in view of the food shortage.

JACK : What food shortage ?

BANNISTER : You must have heard, old man ? There'll be very little, if any, more Red Cross food coming in.

JACK : Is this official, Bannister ?

BANNISTER : It's rather obvious, isn't it ? There's chaos throughout Germany. The bombing. No transport to spare for prisoners-of-war.

JACK : Anything else to say, Bannister ?

BANNISTER : No, old man. Just thought I'd let you know how you stand.

JACK : Thanks. Now I've something to say. You'd better listen. Bring in price control, Bannister, interfere with me in any way at all, and I'll break you.

BANNISTER : You'll break me, old man ?

JACK : That's what I said. I'll break you. I should have broken you long ago. Now get out.

BANNISTER : I ought to put you on a charge, for insolence.

JACK : You're going on a charge, Bannister. Get out of this hut.

BANNISTER : Right. I'll deal with you.

*Exit* BANNISTER.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

*Enter PAT.*

PAT: What did he have to say?

JACK: Not a thing. Not one thing that matters.

MIKE: Cripes, you didn't 'arf put 'im in 'is place, Jack.

JACK: Ach, I haven't started on him yet. (*To PAT.*) What's for lunch?

PAT: Pork chops and Christmas pudding.

JACK: What again? After lunch, you're to go and find Joe. Bring him here.

PAT: Which Joe?

JACK: The fellow who plays the spoons. Slap-Happy.

PAT: Oh—Slappy Joe. Okay.

*From now, until the end of the Act, the hut is a crescendo of noise. People come back. As they do so, they take up their various occupations.*

*Enter OLD TOM.*

OLD TOM: All rabbits present and correct!

OLD TOM *walks up and down the hut, restlessly. He sings to himself "When the Sergeant-Major's on Parade"*. PAT *is by the stove, chopping up wood. Enter HARRY.*

HARRY: That new party's arrived. I'll clean up Sam's corner, ready for the newcomer.

HARRY *takes up a brush, having put his painting tackle away, and starts sweeping out the corner, whistling as he does so.*

Hope Sam doesn't forget that letter to the wife.

PETER *is back in man's clothes again. He is now practising dance steps. Enter ERNIE, wildly. He has a rabbit by the ears. He dumps it in JACK's lap. JACK accepts it.*

ERNIE: Hold him for a minute! I'm still one shout. I can't find Jenny. Must find Jenny. Must find Jenny.

ERNIE *exits.*

*Enter SMUDGER and TOPPER, noisily.*

SMUDGER: Now look here, Topper. I tell you I know what I'm talkin' about. I'll bet you a thousand cigarettes on it——

TOPPER: You're all to cock, I tell you. I don't want to bet and I don't want to argue about it, because I know!

*Enter MARK, the busy man, a mass of books and papers.*

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MARK : What's the time, Claud? Claud! The time!

CLAUD *replies, irritably, but his answer is lost in the noise.*

Leiber Gott! I'm late for my Spanish class. My Spanish!

MARK *exits, singing "La Paloma" in phoney Spanish. The noise is now at its height. SMUDGER and TOPPER are banging, magnificently. GRAHAM, obviously just arrived in camp after a journey, appears in the doorway, stands there a moment. BILL jumps out of bed, comes centre.*

BILL (*shouts*): For God's sake, let's have a little quiet! If this noise doesn't stop, I shall go mad! Mad!

*End of all noise. BILL goes to window, back to audience. JACK notices GRAHAM. JACK takes rabbit by ears and dumps it among CLAUD'S papers, gets up, goes over to GRAHAM.*

JACK : Well! Good morning! Come in! Glad to see you! Come in, and make yourself at home! We do! You look a bit all in. Had a bad trip? One of the Fuehrer's usual tours, I suppose? March. March. March. No eats. No drinks. Fifty men and fifty million lice to a cattle truck. Days of it.

GRAHAM : Yes. We've been travelling for a fortnight. It hasn't been too good.

JACK : You'll be all right here. What's your name?

GRAHAM : Graham.

JACK : How long have you been in the bag?

GRAHAM : I was in England, a month ago.

*The people in the hut, hearing this, crowd curiously in on GRAHAM, the man from another world. All but BILL, at window.*

BILL (*back to audience*): God! Mud! Mud! What a bastard life it is! What a living hell! How much longer can we go on?

HARRY (*quietly to GRAHAM*): Don't pay any attention to him. This is a good camp.

GRAHAM (*looking round, taking some of it in*): Hell? It all seems a little bit like Heaven, to me, at the moment.

## CURTAIN

## ZOO IN SILESIA

### *Act Two :*

*The hut. Afternoon.*

*A very quiet opening.*

JACK and CLAUD are at table, as before.

MARK is a little downstage. He is in vest and shorts. He is swinging a pair of Indian clubs, rhythmically.

Nearly everyone is on their bed, lying down, or sleeping, after lunch. One or two people may be snoring.

A portable gramophone is in use on the table. The record playing at the rise is "Warsaw Concerto".

JACK is, at the moment, still playing patience. Beside him is a bottle of drink, and a glass. The tempo of his drinking increases gradually as the Act progresses. The only effect that it has upon him is to make him talk a little louder and a little quicker.

Outside, the sun is shining, weakly. It becomes noticeably stronger towards the end of the Act.

RAFFLER-POSTMAN comes in. He throws letters on the table.

RAFFLER : Here you are boys. Cry your eyes out.

ERNIE goes downstage to cupboards, looking for something.

PAT (in bed, sitting up) : Hello! Mail up!

At this, there are one or two shouts from the beds—"Anything for me?"—"Come on! let's know the worst", etc.

ERNIE (coming centre) : Wasn't anything left from lunch, for the rabbits?

PAT (getting out of bed) : Your lunch is still on the stove.

ERNIE : I'll have my lunch later. What about the rabbits? Where is their food?



## ZOO IN SILESIA

PAT (*off-hand*): Oh, there's bread, and scraps for the rabbits, in a bowl. Over there. (*To JACK.*) Come on, Jack! Got one for me?

JACK: Nothing for you.

PAT: I can't get a letter.

BILL (*out of bed*): How about me, Jack? Is there one for me?

JACK: Yes. One for you. Here.

JACK *gives* BILL *the letter.* BILL *takes it, walks slowly around the hut, reading it.*

A letter for you, Ernie.

ERNIE: Leave it on the table, Jack. I'll be back later.

*Exit ERNIE, with rabbit food.*

MARK (*swinging*): What's the time, Claud? Claud! The time!

CLAUD: Confound you! Why don't you get a watch? I'm tired of telling you the time (*Pause.*) It is twenty-eight minutes past two.

MARK: Is it, by Jove?

MARK *throws Indian clubs on bed, starts to change out of vest and shorts, afterwards rubbing bare body with a towel, vigorously.*

GRAHAM *enters. He sits down at table.*

SMUDGER (*from bed, to JACK*): Here! What about all this bloody mail? Are you going to sit there all day, lookin' at it? Get mobile, there!

JACK: Patience, my military acquaintance. Patience.

JACK *gets up, slowly, goes round the beds, delivering letters. As he does so—*

PAT (*watching him*): Old Tom, Smudger, Johnny. Same old names. Same old faces. D'you think I can get a letter?

JACK *is by* JOHNNY'S *bed.*

JACK: Two letters, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Thanks, Jack. (*Pause.*) They're from Mum.

JACK: They'll be good letters, then. If they're from your Mum.

JOHNNY: They *are* good letters, aren't they?

JACK: The best.

JOHNNY: I only found that out, a little while ago.

JACK: So long as you found it out. (*Pause.*) How do you feel?

JOHNNY: About the same.

JACK: Want anything to eat, or drink?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JOHNNY: Not yet, Jack.

JACK: Let me know——

JACK *moves round. He still has a letter in his hand.*

OLD TOM (*from bed*): Letter from my youngest daughter! She's had her baby. It's a bonny boy.

PAT: Nice work, grandpop!

JACK (*by HARRY*): Here you are, Harry. Here's a fine thing that we forgot this morning, when we were talking about fine things. A very fine thing. A letter.

HARRY (*takes letter*): From the wife, too.

PAT (*to JACK*): A letter! A fine thing! How do you know? I've never known you get a letter.

JACK: So I couldn't know, could I?

GRAHAM (*conversationally—in CLAUD's direction*): Well! It's quite nice outside now. It's going to be a fine afternoon.

PAT: I'll go and get Joe.

PAT *exiting.*

JACK (*to PAT*): Hey!

PAT: Yes?

JACK: Go by the two-up tables. Tell Nickie the Greek to back that head again. Tell him to win me another five thousand.

PAT: Right.

PAT *exits.*

JACK *is in his armchair again, at ease, filling his pipe. MARK has a towel and soap, and is going out to wash. He privately admires his chest—which is terrible—before going out. MARK exiting.*

JACK (*to GRAHAM*): You, too, can have a body like this.

MARK: You sybarite, you.

MARK *exits.*

BILL (*coming centre*): Got a letter from my wife. At last.

JACK: Good.

BILL: She's all right. She's going to send the photos I asked her to. She says it's hard to get films in England, now.

JACK: I expect it is.

BILL: She's got the money I sent her. She says she won't use it. She says she's going to keep it, till I get back.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK (*sombre*): Oh.

BILL: That's fine, isn't it?

JACK (*sombre*): Yes, Bill, it's fine. Fine.

BILL (*to GRAHAM*): I suppose it must be difficult to get films in England, nowadays.

GRAHAM: Well, it is difficult, in most places. Yes.

BILL: I wish I could get a photo of her.

BILL *goes to window, stands back to audience. HARRY has got out of bed, quickly. He goes to stove, tears up letter into shreds. He starts to put on his boots.*

SMUDGER (*in bed*): Photo, of the old woman and the youngsters, Topper. Here. Take a dekkko.

*He passes photo down.*

TOPPER: All right,—eh, Smudger?

SMUDGER: How is it all right? It's a sunkin' bloody photo. Makes the wife look like the mother-in-law.

TOPPER: Looks all right to me.

SMUDGER: It would look all right to you. Get your head down. It's U.S. I wish she'd stop sending me bloody photos.

JACK *is watching* HARRY.

JACK (*softly*): What's up, Harry?

*No reply.*

(*Sharply*): Harry!

HARRY: Did you say something?

JACK: I said what's the matter?

HARRY: The matter? Nothing's the matter. Not a bastard thing. (*Very different, savage.*) I'm going for a walk. That's what I'm going to do. Damn you. Nothing's the matter, I tell you.

HARRY *exits, quickly.*

GRAHAM (*to CLAUD, again*): Yes. It's going to be a fine afternoon, all right.

JACK *goes over to his bed. He takes off dressing-gown, puts on tunic and a pair of Wellington boots. He looks at big box, making certain it is padlocked, then is exiting.*

BILL (*at window, turns*): I want to talk to you, Jack.

JACK: Later. Later.

BILL: Will you be gone long?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : I doubt it. Is it so urgent ?

BILL : Oh, no. No.

JACK : I'm going to look at rabbits. I'll be back.

JACK *exit*. BILL *goes to bed*. GRAHAM *and* CLAUD *at table*.

GRAHAM : Have a smoke.

CLAUD : No, thank you.

GRAHAM : Busy ?

CLAUD : Yes.

CLAUD *looks up, sits back, takes off glasses, throws down pen, impatiently*.

You are determined to disturb me, I see. Determined to talk to me. (*Pause*.) Well! What have you to say ?

GRAHAM : I have nothing to say. I was wondering if you had. Since I arrived, I haven't heard you speak.

CLAUD : Quite correct.

GRAHAM : All the others want to know things. Your silence made me curious. It doesn't matter. I won't disturb you any more.

CLAUD : I have forgotten the world. Your world. It doesn't interest me any more.

GRAHAM : I see.

CLAUD : I gave up talking. Some time ago.

GRAHAM (*amazed*) : You gave it up ?

CLAUD : Yes. When I had found out everything about these people. Talking to them lost its point.

GRAHAM : I see.

CLAUD : That seems extraordinary to you.

GRAHAM : A bit.

CLAUD : It won't seem so odd, when you have lived here for a few months.

GRAHAM : I suppose that you must get to know each other very intimately. Living like this.

CLAUD : Very intimately. You can watch people's souls—undressing.

GRAHAM : People's souls ? What are they like ?

CLAUD : Naked souls ? Ugly. Mean. Small.

GRAHAM : You sound very certain about it.

CLAUD : Dreadfully certain.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

GRAHAM : How unpleasant it must be for you. Having to live here.

CLAUD : Quite the opposite. I have achieved something wonderful. Perfect peace. The thought that this existence will one day end, is a terrible one.

GRAHAM : I don't understand that.

CLAUD : It's absurdly simple. The ordinary worries of the world don't exist here. The only distraction is people. Shut out people, and you have Peace.

GRAHAM : You really like this life ?

CLAUD : It's wonderful.

GRAHAM : What about the comforts, the little things in life ? Surely you must miss them, at times ?

CLAUD : Comforts ? Little things ? They're without value. The Kingdom of the Mind. Uninterrupted Freedom of Thought. That is all that matters.

*MARK returns from his wash. He comes up, centre. CLAUD goes back to his shell. During this scene, MARK is getting dressed.*

MARK (to GRAHAM) : Well! You haven't been here long, but I see that you have already accomplished something of which the rest of us are not capable.

GRAHAM : What's that ?

MARK : You have extracted speech from the oracle.

GRAHAM : I think I can see his point of view.

MARK : I cannot. But we won't pursue the matter. We will leave the man in peace. For the time being. (*Pause.*) How d'you think you're going to like it, here ?

GRAHAM : It hadn't occurred to me that I might like it.

MARK : An unfortunate choice of a word. But you know what I mean.

GRAHAM : You're better off than one imagines. You have quite a bit of freedom, for one thing.

MARK : Oh, yes. We do as we please here. We are veritably the Gentlemen of Europe.

GRAHAM : It must be fearfully monotonous at times.

MARK : That depends upon oneself.

GRAHAM : Time must be a ton weight occasionally.

MARK : Hardly, old boy. Take myself, for example. My day is magnificently organised, yet I simply cannot fit in all the things I should like to do. The days are simply not long enough for me.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

GRAHAM: You're certainly lucky there.

*BILL is prowling about the hut.*

MARK: Lucky? I wouldn't say that, old boy. It is simply that I do not waste my time. (*Looks at BILL.*) Like some people.

GRAHAM: I'll certainly take up something, while I'm here.

MARK: Well! I must love you and leave you.

*Starts collecting together books and bee frames.*

I have a bee class waiting for me.

GRAHAM (*amazed*): A bee class?

MARK: Oh, yes. We have a Captive Drone Society here.

GRAHAM: Rather apt, that.

MARK: Amazing things, bees. Simply amazing. Do you know that a bee's honeybags—well, would you like to come along with me? I think I can fit you in.

GRAHAM: Tomorrow, perhaps.

MARK: By all means. Let yourself settle down a bit. Oh well—time waits for no man.

GRAHAM: Is there a gymnasium in the camp?

MARK: There certainly is.

GRAHAM: I think I'll go and have a look at it.

MARK: An excellent idea. One can't afford to let one's body go to seed here. Come with me. I'll show you the Gym.

GRAHAM: Good.

*MARK and GRAHAM exit. ERNIE and JACK pass them coming in.*

*A slight collision in the doorway between JACK and MARK.*

MARK: I say, old boy, you might look where you're going. These bee frames are valuable, you know.

*JACK ignores this.*

*MARK exits.*

JACK (*to ERNIE*): Sit down. Get your lunch from the stove. Eat it. And listen to what I have to say.

ERNIE: But, Jack, half the rabbits haven't been fed yet.

JACK: Do as I tell you.

*ERNIE is getting food from stove, unwillingly. JACK sits down, after changing back into dressing-gown. BILL goes over to JACK.*

BILL: Jack!

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : What is it ?

BILL : I want a word with you.

JACK : I'm busy.

BILL : How long will you be ?

JACK : Not long.

BILL *goes back to window.* ERNIE *comes back with food, sits down.*

JACK (*to ERNIE*) : Look! I pay you to look after rabbits. Right ?

ERNIE : You don't have to pay me, I told you that.

JACK : I pay you to look after rabbits. That don't mean I want you to wet nurse them round the clock.

ERNIE : I like doing it. The rabbits give me an interest. If I didn't have the rabbits to look after, I wouldn't know what to do with myself.

JACK : You neglect yourself. If you continue, I'll sell all rabbits.

ERNIE : Very well.

ERNIE *is not eating much.*

JACK : What's the matter ? Anything wrong with the grub ?

ERNIE : It's not the food. I'm not hungry.

JACK : Appetite will come as you eat. You haven't read your letter yet.

ERNIE : It's only from my sister.

JACK : How do you know. You haven't looked at it.

ERNIE : She's the only one who writes. She never has anything to say. I'm not hungry, Jack.

JACK : Go on. Eat it up. Now, what about this doe who won't go with bucks ? What's her name ?

ERNIE : Jenny.

JACK : How long have we had her ? How long has she been eating her head off at my expense ?

ERNIE : About three months.

JACK : I can't afford to keep does with large appetites if they won't produce.

ERNIE : She's a nice gentle doe, Jack.

JACK : I don't give a dam' about her personality. I want rabbits from her.

ERNIE : Yes, Jack.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : She's a dead loss. She'll have to go.

ERNIE : I haven't tried her with that big white buck, Maurice. She might go with him, I think.

JACK : I'll give her that chance.

ERNIE : I'll put her in with him this afternoon.

JACK : I'll give her till teatime. Watch her.

ERNIE : Yes, Jack.

JACK : She can take her choice.

ERNIE : Yes, Jack.

JACK : She goes with Maurice or she goes into the pot.

ERNIE : Yes, Jack.

JACK : We'll have her for lunch.

ERNIE : I'm sure I can make her go with Maurice.

JACK : It's up to her.

ERNIE : Yes, Jack.

JACK (*turns to BILL*) : Now then—you! What is it? What do you want? I know what you want, but what is it?

ERNIE *exits*. BILL *comes up centre*.

BILL : I've been working out my credits.

JACK : Credits? I didn't know you had any credits left.

BILL : I have fifty pounds.

JACK : Four years. You have fifty quid. Nice going.

BILL : I've sent my wife a little.

JACK : How little?

BILL : My luck must change. I can win back everything in five minutes.

JACK : That needs more than luck. That needs guts. That needs nerve. You've lost your nerve.

BILL : No! No, I haven't, Jack.

JACK : You want me to sell you cigarettes to the value of fifty quid? Is that it?

BILL : That's it. It'll have to be that. I've nothing left to sell. It'll have to be that.

JACK : I won't argue with you.

BILL : No. My mind's made up. Sink or swim.



## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK: You bloody young fool.

BILL: Don't you worry about me. I'll be all right.

JACK: Right. I'll sell you a thousand cigarettes.

BILL: A thousand! I want ten thousand cigarettes for fifty pounds.

JACK: One thousand. That's my rate of exchange.

BILL: You gave me ten thousand last time.

JACK: That was last time. That was boom time. There ain't many cigarettes in camp just now.

BILL: That's a lie.

JACK: There's a famine coming. You know there's a famine coming?

BILL: I don't believe it.

JACK: Take it or leave it. I'm not particularly interested.

BILL: You know I'll take it. You money-grabbing bastard.

JACK: Call me that again, and I'll give you five hundred cigarettes for your fifty pounds.

*Enter PAT.*

PAT: You won at the two-up. Joe can't be found.

*BILL starts to write on piece of paper.*

JACK: What the hell d'you mean—he can't be found?

PAT: Ain't been in his hut for days.

JACK: He's still in the camp, ain't he?

PAT: No one don't know where he is.

JACK: He can't get out of the camp, can he?

PAT: The camp's big. You know Joe. He might be any place.

JACK: He must be found. By tonight. Get Mike on it. Where the hell is Mike?

*BILL throws paper in front of him.*

*(Reads):* What's this? "To the Regimental Paymaster—Please pay into the account of Jack Smith, the sum of fifty pounds——" I see.

*Enter MIKE, with various things.*

MIKE: Good afternoon—Good afternoon. And what an afternoon.

JACK: I want you. Where the hell have you been? What about the shop?

MIKE: I can't do two things at once. I been getting things.

JACK: What things?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MIKE : One radio valve. Your household stuff. Three kilogs. of mushrooms. Service! Nothin' doin' in the Carlton puddin' line yet. But I ain't forgot. I'm workin' on it. (*To PAT.*) 'Ere's your 'ouse'old stuff. Everythin' but eggs. 'Ens ain't layin'.

PAT : Don't matter. We're bored with eggs, anyway.

JACK : What did you pay for these mushrooms? If they are mushrooms.

MIKE : Twenty-five cigarettes a kilog.

JACK : Blast you! You've let those lousy Frenchmen rob you again. I told you—not a cigarette over twenty a kilog. You can make up the difference yourself.

*MIKE produces diamond ring.*

MIKE : Yes, Jack. Sorry, Jack.

JACK : What's that you got?

MIKE : Feller gave it to me. Says it's a diamond. Wants a thousand cigarettes.

JACK : It's a diamond all right. It's a good one. I'll give him five hundred. Tell him bad times are coming.

*JACK waves BILL's paper in front of MIKE.*

Here! Take this down to the Pay Office. After you see it's sent away, give him (*indicates BILL*) a thousand cigarettes from you know which Fund.

MIKE : Right, Jack.

JACK : And find Joe. Comb the camp and bring him back alive.

MIKE : Which Joe's that?

JACK : Lord God Almighty! Slappy Joe.

MIKE : Oh—him.

JACK : Now listen—your future depends on you finding Joe and bringing him here by tonight. Get that. And get moving.

MIKE : Yes, Jack.

*MIKE and BILL are going out.*

JACK : Hey! What about that woman?

MIKE : What wom——? Oh, yes, the woman. I'm workin' on it, Jack. I'm workin' on it.

*MIKE and BILL exit.*

JACK (*to PAT*): Hand me down the radio.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

PAT goes to bed, brings over Red Cross parcel box, and a pair of headphones. JACK opens box, disclosing valve radio set. JACK affixes new valve.

PAT: I'm out of smokes.

JACK: What—again? You had your salary.

PAT: It's gone.

JACK: At the two-up?

PAT: No. Not all of it.

JACK: You're all of you after me today. I'm not made of cigarettes. I'm no Friendly Society.

*He puts on earphones.*

Take fifty out of the box.

JACK throws PAT key of big box.

Don't take Churchmans.

PAT at box. JACK at radio.

Take a tin of tobacco over to Old Tom. He's out of tobacco, I know.

JACK throws off earphones, disgustedly.

There's Sweet Fanny Adams on this thing. As usual.

JACK looks round.

Give Peter a shake! He'll be getting circles under those big blue eyes.

PAT does this, takes tobacco over to OLD TOM, in bed.

Go and tell Nickie the Greek to back the head again. Same stake. I'll do a three timer today.

PAT: Okay, Jack.

PAT exits.

PETER (from bed, yawning): What's the time?

JACK: Time you were out of that bed, baby.

JACK, moving quickly, goes to PETER'S bed, strips bedclothes off him.

PETER jumps out of bed, chases him around table. JACK evading him.

PETER: What the hell d'you think you're doing?

JACK: I'm bored. Nothing's happening. Dance for me. Sing to me.

PETER: It's all right for you. You don't need rest. You don't do anything. No wonder you're bored. All you do, is sit. Or walk on a stage, and smile sweetly, and say a few words. I have to work for my sixth of a loaf.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : That's the price you pay for having a public, sweetie pie.

JACK *slaps* PETER'S *bottom, then comes upstage.* OTTO, *a young German soldier, has come in quietly.* OTTO'S *eyes are on the radio on the table.*

JACK : Hello. What have we here? Good afternoon.

OTTO : Gut afternoon. Was haben sie hier? Radio, ja?

JACK : Radio. Try it. Put on the headphones. Listen to the music. The good Englischer music. Go on. Try it. It won't bite you. It is good, ja?

OTTO : Ja, es ist gut. Aber ist verboten.

JACK : Not really?

OTTO : Was ist ihre nummer bitte?

JACK : Nix verstehen.

OTTO : Ihre nummer!

JACK : Sorry, don't know you well enough to give you my number. Come to think of it I don't know you at all. Never saw you before. You must be new here.

*While he is talking JACK picks up radio, OTTO sweeps it from his hands to the floor. OTTO is snarling now, fingering pistol.*

JACK : What the hell do you think you're doing, you stinking Hun bastard?

OTTO : Nummer! Nummer! Englisches hund! Englisches schwein!

*Enter BERLIN BERTIE. He is a genial German-American soldier.*

BERLIN BERTIE : Well, well, well, what's going on here? Was ist den los?

OTTO : Der mann hat ein radio und ich will seine nummer.

BERLIN BERTIE : Aber regen sie sich nicht auf, Beruhigen Siesich. Hiya, Jack.

JACK : Did you let this out of its cage? This young wild beast? I'd like you to know he has just ruined a perfectly good radio. Several thousand cigarettes' worth. And it wasn't insured.

BERLIN BERTIE : Gee, that's tough, Jack. He's new here. Just in from Russland. He don't know the rules here.

JACK : Suggest to him that he learns the rules or goes back to Russland. Tell him that.

BERLIN BERTIE : Es wird besser sein einen anderen ton anzuschlagen . . . oder sie gehen zurück nach Russland.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

OTTO : Ich wollte nur ihm sagen . . .

BERLIN BERTIE : Aber verstehen lie doch aber verstehen sie mich doch. O.K. Jack, I guess he gets the idea.

JACK : He'd better. I hope you told him that the big boy in Berlin might not like it if he don't behave.

BERLIN BERTIE : Sure, I told him.

JACK : Have a drink.

BERLIN BERTIE : Sure, I'd like one.

JACK : Give him one. He looks as if he needs a drink. Tell him to sit down. He gives me the fidgets standing up.

BERLIN BERTIE : Setzen sie sich.

JACK : Ah, I see he has one of the Fuehrer's toys, like the rest of the boys.

BERLIN BERTIE : His iron cross, you mean ?

JACK : Ask him what he wants for it.

BERLIN BERTIE : Ihre eisener kreuze, was wollen sie dafur ?

OTTO : Aber nein, ich verkaufe es nicht.

BERLIN BERTIE : He says he don't want to sell, Jack.

JACK : I'll give him fifty cigarettes for it.

BERLIN BERTIE : Ergibtihnen funfzig cigaretten fur das eisernekreuz.

OTTO : Nein es is nicht genug . . . ich verkaufe es nicht fur cigaretten.

BERLIN BERTIE : He says he don't want to sell.

JACK : A hundred.

BERLIN BERTIE : . . . hundert.

OTTO : Nein, hab' ich schon gesagt nein.

BERLIN BERTIE : No deal, Jack.

JACK : A hundred and a piece of soap. My final offer. (*To otto*) : Gut Englischer siefe.

OTTO : Ich versteh' nich.

BERLIN BERTIE : Das Letzte anesgot, hundert zigaretten und eine gute Englischer siefe.

OTTO *assents, hands over Iron Cross.*

JACK : Fair enough! Here, Peter! Catch! Show it to your grandchildren.

OTTO : Aber wo sind meinen cigaretten ?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

BERLIN BERTIE: . . . O, die zigaretten, ja die sind imbureau der Kommandantur unodasteht, ein posten, der untersucht.

*An accordionist has wandered in, playing softly.*

JACK: Ah! Music! And an audience. (*To PETER.*) How about a song, sweetheart? (*To OTTO.*) Singen—ja?

OTTO: Ja—gut.

JACK: This is his party. He's just in from Russland. (*To BERLIN BERTIE.*) Ask him what he wants.

BERLIN BERTIE: Was wollen zie?

OTTO: "Lilli Marlene".

JACK: "Lilli Marlene". Ja wohl, mein lieber. (*To PETER.*) By special request, from the gentleman from Russland. "Lilli Marlene". I like "Lilli Marlene", too.

PETER: Right. You'll have it.

*PETER is all action now.*

JACK: That's right. Put on a wig and a dress. Make it a real show.

*PETER does a quick change into woman's dress and wig.*

PETER: "Lilli Marlene". As it should be sung. (*To ACCORDEONIST.*) One—two!

(*Singing*):

Underneath the lantern, by the barrack-gate,  
There I met Marlene, every night at eight,  
That was a time in early spring  
When birds all sing, and love was king  
Of my heart and Marlene's.  
Of my heart and Marlene's.

Waiting for the drumbeat, signalling retreat,  
Walking in the shadows, where all lovers meet,  
Those were the days of long ago,  
I loved her so, I couldn't know  
That time would part, Marlene.  
That time would part, Marlene.

Then I heard the bugle, calling me away,  
By the gate I kissed her, kissed her tears away,  
And by the flick'ring lantern light  
I held her tight, 'twas our last night,  
My last night with Marlene.  
My last night with Marlene.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

Still I hear the bugle, hear it's silv'ry call,  
Carried by the night air, telling one and all  
Now is the time to meet your gal,  
To meet your pal, to meet your Sal,  
As once I met Marlene.  
My sweet Lilli Marlene.

Now then—everybody sing!

*Everyone joins in now, including the people in the beds.*

JACK: The song of songs. Thanks, sweetheart. That was fine. Fine.

*Enter MARK.*

Buzz! Buzz! Here he is! In person. The Great Bee Man. How were the bees today, Professor? Buzzing well?

MARK: Amazing! But a bit above your head, old boy.

JACK: Naturally.

MARK: Claud! What's the time? I think I'm late for my building class.

*CLAUD does not reply. MARK is changing his set of books. A pause, a silence. Everything seems, for the moment, to have stopped. Abruptly.*

*JACK stands up.*

JACK: Things are going to start happening! I always know, now, when things are going to start happening. For a long time, nothing much happens, then everything happens at once. I don't know why. It's always like that.

*JACK sits down, abruptly.*

*As he does so, air-raid siren sounds, loudly.*

JACK: There you are! They're beginning!

*Off-stage, loud cheering. OTTO jumps up, dashes out, abruptly. He looks up at the sky for a moment, then disappears.*

BERLIN BERTIE (*looking after him*): Well! What do you know about that?

*In the hut, people react variously. MARK, having collected books, goes out, rather hastily. CLAUD fidgets. SMUDGER and TOPPER, in the beds, cheer loudly. They scramble down, excitedly. They start putting on their boots. OLD TOM does the same. No sound from JOHNNY'S bed. Accordionist stops playing for a few moments, then continues, softly. He plays throughout the next scene. PETER is downstage practising dance steps, and studying his part from the script, with gestures. JACK keeps sitting at the table. BERLIN BERTIE with him.*

## ZOO IN SILESIA

OLD TOM (*imitates siren*): Oooh! Oooh! The boys over again, eh? Good luck to the boys!

SMUDGER: Send it down! Let the bastards have it! Thick and heavy.

TOPPER: It's a great day for it. The old currant bun out and all. Hear anything yet, Smudger?

SMUDGER: We'll hear plenty. In a minute.

*These three people go out, stand in doorway, looking, listening, moving about.* BERLIN BERTIE *leans over to* JACK, *confidentially.* *He whispers something to* JACK.

JACK: What—you mean, now?

BERLIN BERTIE: Sure—when you're ready. Take it easy.

JACK: I'll be right with you.

*JACK is about to get up, when HARRY comes in. JACK relaxes.*

HARRY: It's quite warm outside. The sun's out.

*HARRY sits down at table. In the distance, bombs start falling. They continue, thump-thump, without a break. The accordionist is playing a lively number, softly, and PETER is doing a shuffle dance, to the music.*

SMUDGER: Hear that, Topper?

OLD TOM: Boom! Boom!

TOPPER: I don't hear nothing.

SMUDGER: There! That's music to my ears. Oh—ain't that lovely? Get up them stairs!

TOPPER: I don't hear nothing.

SMUDGER: Can't you hear them, Topper? Surely you can hear them, now?

TOPPER: Yes. Yes. I hear them, now. Just listen to them dropping.

SMUDGER: That's the sweetest music this side of Heaven.

OLD TOM: Boom! Boom! Boys! Boom! Boom! More! More!

*BERLIN BERTIE gets up, saunters to the doorway. He stands looking up, curiously. HARRY and JACK at table.*

JACK (*sombre*): Quite a raid.

HARRY: Yes.

SMUDGER: Ain't that a lovely sound?

TOPPER: Just listen to them dropping.

JACK (*a statement of fact*): Bad news, Harry.



## ZOO IN SILESIA

HARRY: I don't want it to show. It mustn't show.

JACK: It don't show. Only to me. Only to me because I know you.

HARRY: It's happened to a lot of other people. One in four, they say, don't they, in the camp? One in four, that we know about.

JACK: Your wife.

HARRY: My wife. She's had a baby.

JACK: Yes. Yes. Of course. Your wife. It had to happen. It had to happen to you.

HARRY: I can't understand it, Jack. I can't understand how she could do it.

JACK: Don't blame her, Harry. Don't blame her entirely. Blame the war. People don't know what they're doing.

HARRY: I can't understand it. She'd been writing more often. Sent my favourite tobacco. Her letters, lately, were more like they used to be. I can't understand it.

JACK: Don't blame her. You've been away a long time. Longer than we can realise here. Everything's changing. Changing fast. The whole world. All the things which we knew, are going. It isn't her. It's the world. Our world's gone. It went up in flames. It's ashes. The marriages of our world weren't made of asbestos.

HARRY: I suppose not.

*Enter RAFFLER. Wearing red beret.*

RAFFLER: What a smashing raid, eh? How do you like the new tifter?

JACK: Where did you get it?

RAFFLER: Got it from one of the new geezers who just came in for twenty fags.

JACK: I'll give you thirty for it.

RAFFLER: What? Thirty fags for this brand new hat?

JACK: Yes.

RAFFLER: Sold.

JACK: Get the fags from Pat.

RAFFLER: Right.

*RAFFLER is turning away.*

Oh, nearly forgot. Got a cable here for one of the boys.

*Exit RAFFLER.*

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK: Christ! Here's a bad thing. A very bad thing. It can only be a bad thing.

*Enter BILL. In the next scene, he stands a little back, listening, unnoticed, fascinated, horrified by what he sees.*

HARRY (*amazed*): The devil of it is—I can feel it. It's physical, Jack! Red-hot knives, sticking into me, tearing my guts apart. It's physical, Jack!

JACK: Johnny! There's—something here for you.

JOHNNY (*from bed*): What? What is it, Jack?

JACK: It's a cable, Johnny.

JOHNNY (*amazed*): A cable, Jack? For me?

*JOHNNY is getting out of bed, coming slowly over to table.*

HARRY: What am I going to do, Jack?

JACK: There's nothing you can do, Harry.

HARRY: No. I suppose there isn't.

JACK: Wipe her. Wipe the slate.

HARRY: I'm over forty. The kid? What about the kid? My kid?

JACK: It'll work out, Harry. In time, it'll work out.

HARRY: It feels like the end.

JACK: It is the end, Harry. The end, and the beginning. Wipe her.

HARRY: You can't just wipe fifteen years of your life, Jack.

JACK: You can, Harry, because you've got to.

*JOHNNY at table.*

JOHNNY: A cable, Jack? For me?

JACK: Yes. Here!

JOHNNY: No! You read it, Jack. Go on. Read it out.

*The sound of many, many 'planes approaching.*

JACK (*very slowly*): "Regret inform you Mother killed air raid together with Jim." Who's Jim?

JOHNNY: My dog.

SMUDGER (*jubilant, chanting*): Here they come! Here they come! Bloody great bombers, every one!

OLD TOM: More! More! Boom! Boom!

TOPPER: Just look at them! Oh, boy! You'll do me, you beauties! Come over. Let's have a *good* look at you.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

PAT (*has joined them*): God! What a sight! Ain't that wonderful? Look—there's another lot!

SMUDGER: Hundreds of 'em! Ooh—you greedy bastards.

OLD TOM: More! More!

JOHNNY *has wandered to doorway, stands looking up.*

TOPPER: Ooh—you greedy bastards.

PAT: Jesus! What a lovely sight! Jack! Come and look! They're——

JOHNNY *collapses in doorway.*

JACK (*gets up quickly*): Quick! Go and get the doctor.

PAT *stands still.*

Get moving! You lazy, good-for-nothing bastard.

PAT *exits.*

HARRY and JACK *carry JOHNNY back to bed.* ERNIE *comes in.*

ERNIE: Jack! Jack! It's all right! She's going to go with him. She's with him, now. Come and look.

JACK: In a minute.

ERNIE *exits.* JACK, *coming back centre, sees BILL.*  
Fine raid, eh?

BILL: Fine! Fine? What's fine? It's horrible. Everything. The whole world's gone bad. Rotten. It's the end of everything. The end of the world, I tell you.

*The bombers are passing away. The people in the doorway come back into the room.*

SMUDGER: Been worth waiting four years to see that. What d'you say, Topper?

TOPPER: Wonderful. Wonderful.

OLD TOM: Boom! Boom! More! More! (*Thoughtfully.*) Don't like to think of the children. That's the only thing.

JACK: English bombs don't fall on little children, Tom.

OLD TOM: A stray one might, Jack.

JACK: It's the birds that I'm worried about. What about the birds, with all these 'planes in their world? What's it like for the birds?

JACK *has gone to his bed. He takes off dressing-gown, puts on tunic and Wellington boots, selects Australian hat, puts it on, lights a cigar, sees that big box is locked, has a quick drink, goes to door, pauses and looks back.*

PETER: Jack! Where are you going?

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK : Business. Urgent.

PETER : How about the show ?

JACK : I'll be back for the show.

PETER : You'd better be. You haven't told me where you're going.

JACK : Well, you asked for it. I'm sorry to say, my darling, that I am about to be unfaithful to you.

JACK *blows PETER a kiss, pulls down Australian hat to one side.*

(To BERLIN BERTIE) : Let's go.

JACK *and BERLIN BERTIE exit, quickly.*

## CURTAIN

## ZOO IN SILESIA

### *Act Three :*

*The hut—Night.*

*The electric light is on, and the door is shut. The window is open, and the blind is up.*

*Outside, opposite, a theatre flash-light sign, "Stalladium", comes on at intervals of about half-a-minute. Periodically, the beam from a search-light swings across the window. In the distance, there is intermittent artillery fire.*

*At the table, SMUDGER, TOPPER, OLD TOM and GRAHAM are playing at bridge.*

*CLAUD is at the table, as before.*

*PETER is upstage, (Centre) in a woman's stage dress. He is putting the finishing touches to his make-up. He is an altogether dazzling sight. BILL is pouring a drink from a bottle into a mug. He swallows the drink, then paces slowly around the hut.*

*PAT has the gramophone on JACK'S bed.*

*As the curtain rises, a swing record is finishing.*

*PETER (displaying himself): How's that? How do I look?  
One or two people glance at him, but there is no reply.  
(To BILL.) How do you like me, Willie?*

*BILL pauses, glances at PETER, but does not reply. He pouts himself another drink.*

*(To PAT): What's the time?*

*PAT (looks at watch): The show's due to start in about ten minutes.*

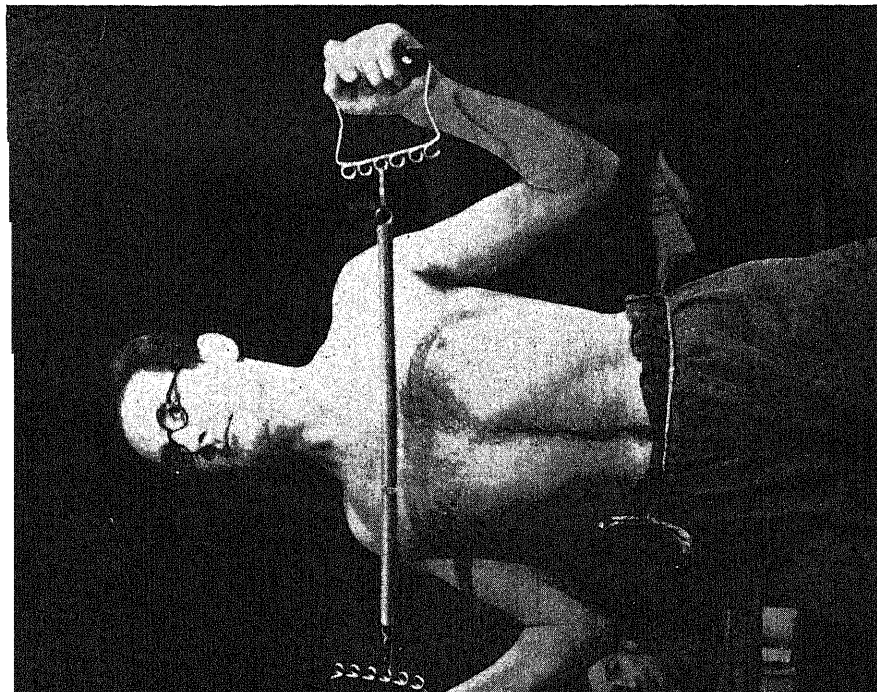
*PETER: I wish to hell Jack would show up.*

*PAT: He will. I'll bet on it.*

*Right:* JACK : I am sorry to say, my darling,  
that I am about to be unfaithful to you.  
*HUGH WILLIAMS and BRIAN  
McIRVINE.*



*Left:* MARK : One can't afford to let the body  
go to seed, here.  
*ANTHONY BAZELL.*





## ZOO IN SILESIA

PETER : He's cutting it bloody fine. (*Scornfully.*) Women!

PAT *is looking through records.*

Play that record of "Jealousy".

PAT : Right, kid.

PAT *puts on the record.*

PETER (*moving to BILL*) : Let's see if you can still dance the tango.

BILL : You haven't time.

PETER : I'm absolutely ready to go on the stage. There's no point in my going to the theatre until Jack comes. The show can't start without him.

BILL : Is he that important ?

PETER : Oh no! He just settles the audience in. Builds up my entrance.

PETER *takes hold of BILL.*

Come on!

BILL : You'll spoil your make-up.

PETER : Not if you don't hold me too close.

PETER *and BILL dance a striking tango. Meanwhile, concurrently, at the bridge table.*

OLD TOM : Six light! Ho! Ho! Hard luck, boys! Better luck next time!

SMUDGER (*to TOPPER*) : What did you bid, there ?

TOPPER : A club.

SMUDGER : No, you didn't. You bid one club.

GRAHAM : What is the difference, might I enquire ?

SMUDGER : Shut up, you!

TOPPER : I said *A* club. Meaning I had Sweet Fanny Adams in my hand.

SMUDGER : You bid one club, I tell you. Meaning you had five honour tricks.

TOPPER : Look here, Smudger. I distinctly said a club.

GRAHAM : There's no such call in bridge as "A Club".

SMUDGER : Oh! Who says there ain't ?

TOPPER : Don't try and tell me how to bid, at this game.

SMUDGER : No, you! Keep out of this. This is between me and Topper. If he says he bid a club, he bid a club.



## ZOO IN SILESIA

GRAHAM : That appears to be that.

BILL *and* PETER *are still dancing.*

PETER : You know you could be a beautiful dancer, with more practice.

BILL : Glad to hear it.

PETER : I wish you'd come in the next show.

BILL : You don't want me in the show, you have Jack.

PETER : Not jealous, are you ?

BILL : Jealous! Ha! That's funny.

*Enter* PRODUCER, *wildly.*

PRODUCER : Well! Here's a fine bloody thing! Curtain going up, and the leading lady entertaining at home. What the hell's the idea ?

PETER : I'm waiting for Jack.

PRODUCER : Jack's at the theatre, you dummy! He's on the stage. Now. For Christ's sake, come on!

PETER : Well! I didn't know! He said he'd be back here, first. I didn't know he was going straight to the theatre.

*Enter* MARK, *quickly.*

PRODUCER : You know nothing. (*To* PAT.) Jack says you're to bring him over a drink. Better make it a small one.

PRODUCER *and* PETER *are at the door.* PETER *turns.*

PETER : Isn't anyone going to wish me luck ?

PRODUCER : For the love of God!

PAT : Best of luck, kid.

OLD TOM : Good luck, Peter boy.

GRAHAM : All the best.

PRODUCER *pulls* PETER *out.* BILL *has another drink.* PAT *takes a bottle and a glass, and exits.* MARK *comes centre.* Music from the theatre is background to the next scene.

MARK (*clears throat*) : I should like the attention of everybody.

*No response.*

(*Claps hands.*) Pay attention to me for a minute. All of you.

SMUDGER : Why ?

MARK : What I have to say is of more importance than bridge. It vitally concerns every one of us.

TOPPER : Come on, then! What is it ? Spit it out!

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MARK : I want to be positive that you are all listening. Claud! Are you listening? Claud! Are you listening?

CLAUD : It's 7.58.

MARK : No. No. Are you listening? I have something of importance to say.

CLAUD (*eyes down*) : I am not interested in anything you may have to say.

MARK : Oh—but you will be in this, you know.

TOPPER : Stop beating around the bush. Let's have it.

SMUDGER : Give him time. Give the man time.

OLD TOM : Fair play for the speaker!

MARK (*pontifically*) : Very well. The position is this. A crisis has come into our lives. Starvation stares us in the face.

*This breaks up the bridge.*

SMUDGER : What? What's this?

TOPPER : How come?

MARK : The Red Cross have advised the Camp authorities that any further deliveries of food parcels are extremely unlikely. Effects of the bombing. No transport.

SMUDGER : Is this right?

TOPPER : That's bad. That's bloody bad, that is.

OLD TOM (*thoughtfully*) : Starvation—eh, boys?

BILL (*coming centre*) : How do you know this?

MARK : My contacts in the camp, old boy.

OLD TOM : Good old Mark! He gets the news.

MARK : It will be announced officially tomorrow.

GRAHAM : I don't see that there's much to be done about it.

MARK : Ah! There's the point. There is something we can do.

OLD TOM : Good old Mark!

GRAHAM : What's that?

MARK : We can pool all our resources. Put everything we possess into the common hat. That is both the sensible and the decent thing to do. That way we should be able to struggle along. For a time, anyway.

SMUDGER : It's an idea. It's certainly an idea.

OLD TOM : The very thing! All for one, and one for all!

TOPPER : I'm in favour of it.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MARK: I take it, that makes four of us, for a start?

*Assent from SMUDGER, TOPPER, OLD TOM.*

How about you, Graham?

GRAHAM: I'm willing to throw in what I have.

MARK: Good. You—Bill?

BILL: I have nothing. It suits me.

MARK: I see your point, old boy. What about you, Claud?

CLAUD (*eyes up*): I repeat. I am not interested. I repeat. I want nothing to do with you. Once and for all, I demand that you stop persecuting me. (*With menace.*) Do I make myself clear?

MARK: No! You live here, and you have certain obligations towards your fellows. In times of crisis, you are no longer free to pursue your policy of isolation.

CLAUD: I warn you. You had better stop this interference. (*Becoming dangerous.*) I have had as much as I will tolerate, from you.

SMUDGER: Oh—leave him alone.

TOPPER: Let the man be.

MARK: Very well. For the present. Now! There's Johnny——

BILL: Johnny's sick. Leave Johnny out, for the moment.

MARK: And there's Harry. Where's Harry?

BILL: Harry's out.

MARK: I know I can count on Harry. That leaves Jack. And his syndicate.

BILL: Exactly, Mr. Bottomley. That leaves Jack.

*A pause, as everyone considers this. Then enter JOE, a busker. JOE flings open the door, and stands in the doorway for a moment, holding on to the knob. He is a small man, unshaven, hollow-eyed. His face is deathly-white, and he is shaking. His clothes are eccentric. He wears a bright green striped shirt, yellow pullover, suède waistcoat, riding-breeches, a pink chequered cravat, brown shoes. On his head is a New Zealand boy scout type of Army hat. He carries a small attaché case and a pair of busker's spoons. A cigarette dangles permanently from his lips. At his sudden appearance, everyone becomes quiet. He is given the hostile silence and stare reserved for the social outcast—OLD TOM alone giving him welcome.*

JOE: Good evening, gentlemen!

OLD TOM: Hello, Joe! Come in!

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JOE (*courtly*): Good evening, sir!

JOE *comes upstage, centre. They move back, make way for him.*

Is there a gentleman here who will oblige me with a tin of boot polish?

The brand, gentlemen, is immaterial. My only stipulation is—it must be black. I literally cannot stomach brown boot polish.

Some gentleman, please! I offer fifty cigarettes for one tin of black boot polish. Fifty cigarettes! A fair price, gentlemen!

Come! Just the one tin.

(*Intense.*) Gentlemen, I ask you! It is a matter of life or death to me that I obtain a tin of black boot polish, now. Now.

OLD TOM (*goes to bed*): Here you are, Joe. I've a tin you can have. Don't like parting with it, but here you are.

JOE: God bless you, sir! A friend in need is a friend indeed. One more request. Two slices of bread.

JOE *sees a loaf which can be lying on a sidetable. He goes over, cuts off two slices. Then he goes to stove, where there is a jug of hot water. He gets a mug. All this very quickly.*

Some hot water. Just the job.

JOE *spreads the boot polish on the bread, devours it. He pours out two mugs of hot water, swallows them, then he seems to straighten up. He pats his belly.*

Richard is himself again! Popeye has had his spinach. .

OLD TOM (*cackling*): Good old Joe!

MARK: Well! As I was saying, before I was interrupted——

JOE (*he still holds the floor*): Now! Is there any gentleman here interested in a gold wristlet watch?

*He produces watch, from attaché case.*

Here you are, gentlemen! Straight from the Klondyke. She has a ten-year guarantee. She is brand new. She sparkles with jewels. Fourteen of them.

Make me an offer, some gentleman! No reasonable offer refused.

OLD TOM: How about giving us a song and dance, Joe?

JOE: Certainly, sir! With the greatest of pleasure.

JOE *gets his spoons, starts song-and-dance.*

(*Singing*):

There stands a lovely line of coconuts  
There stands a lovely line of balls

## ZOO IN SILESIA,

There stands me wife, the idol of me life  
Singing roll-a-bowl-a-pitch-a-penny-a-go  
Gaw blimey! (*etc.*)

MARK: Never mind that fool! To return to what I was saying——

*JOE does a busker's dance, with spoons, as background.*

BILL: You were about to say, weren't you, that you want Jack in your pool because Jack has enough food stored away to keep us all going until the end of the war. Isn't that what you were going to say?

MARK: The amount which each individual may be in a position to contribute to the proposed pool, does not concern me.

BILL: My, you're big-hearted.

MARK: Well! I welcome you, despite the fact that, as you yourself expressed it, you have nothing.

BILL: It won't do, Mark. This beautiful plan of yours is aimed at Jack.

MARK: It is nothing of the sort. Most of us have a little put by for a rainy day. Now that that day is here, the decent thing and the sensible thing is to amalgamate, by which means it will go twice as far. Unity is strength!

BILL: You'll admit it would be convenient, wouldn't it, to have a capitalist in the pool?

MARK: Jack may have a little more than some of us. The difference is negligible.

BILL: You beat the band. D'you think Jack's simple? He'll laugh at you.

MARK: Well, really! That's the thanks I get for trying to do the best for everyone. Personally, I don't give a dam' whether Jack joins us, or not.

BILL: Not much you don't.

GRAHAM: I certainly don't think you're being very fair to Mark.

BILL: Listen, new man, you don't know anything about this. You're new here. I know Mark. You don't.

*JOE has changed his song.*

JOE (*singing*):

Searching the dustbins in the West  
Of the best hotels  
While all the rich folks live in sweet repose  
Eating the pick of the chicken's breast  
And leaving the parson's nose

## 'ZOO IN SILESIA

There is lots of ladies' wear  
In the dustbins there  
I found a can of tomaters  
And a pair of ladies' garters  
Why should the dustman 'ave it all?

JOE *starts turning cartwheels.*

GRAHAM: It seems to me——

BILL: Quiet! You don't know what's going on here. Listen to me. I'm one hundred per cent with you. But I reason differently. I say this. I say that what Jack has—and only Jack knows how much that is—he's stolen from us, all of us, one way and another. By trading on our bad luck. Being short of a smoke. By profiteering. By sucking our blood.

MARK: I am afraid that is only too true. Jack is certainly guilty of ruthless extortion from his comrades. I think we've all found that out, at some time in the last four years.

SMUDGER: Ay, that's right enough. No getting away from that.

OLD TOM: He's always been very good to me.

TOPPER: I bet that box of his is worth a packet. I bet there's fivers, and gold rings, and jewels, and Lord knows what, in there.

SMUDGER: Jack's made his pile out of us, all right.

TOPPER: I'd like to see inside that box, wouldn't you, Smudger?

SMUDGER: Ay, I would, an' all. No chance, though. Never goes out without locking it.

JOE *is well away now. The mixture is taking effect. He rolls up, centre.*

JOE: Gentlemen! Do I understand (*hic*) that you wish to see the inside of that there box? Your problem is solved. Here stands a lovely line of—No—No!—Here stands the man to open it. The only man. That box? Child's play. (*Approaches box.*) I will inform you that I have opened boxes in Yucatan, Bulgaria, Rio de Janeiro, and (*hic*) Ashby-de-la-Zouch. (*Waves wildly.*) Stand aside, gentlemen, and allow me!

JOE *is at box, working on it.*

GRAHAM: Stop him, someone! You can't let him do this.

BILL: You keep out of this.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

OLD TOM: Don't like this. Don't like it at all.

*Nobody does anything. They watch JOE, fascinated.*

*Enter JACK, PAT following. JACK is wearing evening dress (dinner-jacket), and straw hat.*

JACK: Christ! The show's getting the bird.

*A circle of people round the box, so that JACK and PAT do not see, immediately, what is happening.*

PAT: They'll never be able to carry on with the show, will they?

JACK: How can they? (*Taking a drink, chuckling.*) Christ! They're in a state, back-stage. The girl friend's tearing her hair out, by the roots. (*Seeing everything.*) Hey! What the hell's this?

JOE: Quiet, please! I must have absolute quiet, while I work.

*JACK moves quickly, takes hold of JOE by the scruff of the neck, throws him back from box, sends him sprawling.*

JACK (*nasty*): What the hell d'you think you're doing, you drunken bum?

JOE: What's the bloody idea? Oh, it's you, Jack!

JACK: Yes, it's me. And that happens to be my box.

JOE: Yours? That's different. I didn't know that. (*Picking himself up, unsteadily.*) Square. I didn't know.

JACK: I believe you. It's a good job I know you.

JOE: It's not much of a lock. Not worth picking.

JACK (*wheeling, to PAT*): Tomorrow morning. One padlock.

PAT: Right, Jack.

JACK (*to Joe*): You're here, anyway. Where the hell have you been? I've had scouts out for you, all day.

JOE: I had certain (*hic*) matters to attend to.

JACK (*grabbing him*): How drunk are you?

JOE (*shaking him off*): Drunk? Drunk, did you say? Do you suggest—

JACK: Never mind.

*JACK turns, faces the others.*

Who's responsible for this?

*No reply.*

Who is the bastard? Come on! Let's have you. If you've got the guts to speak up.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MARK: I may have been, in part, responsible.

JACK: I'll bet you were.

BILL: I was something to do with it, I expect.

JACK: That don't surprise me. (*To SMUDGER and TOPPER.*) And you two, I suppose—Tweedledum and Tweedledee?

*They have nothing to say.*

Well! What's it all about?

MARK: I'll put all my cards on the table, old boy.

JACK: Fire away. I'm waiting. Tovarich.

JACK *is in his armchair now, a drink at his elbow, straw hat pushed back on his head, smoking a cigar.*

MARK: It's this food crisis, Jack. You know about it, of course?

JACK: Food's finished. For us. I know. I heard tonight. Go on.

MARK: It's like this——

BILL: Perhaps I can explain. Mark's floating a syndicate. He wants us to pool everything.

MARK: All for one, and one for all!

JACK: I see. Mark, the philanthropist.

BILL: He particularly wants you to come in the pool.

JACK: Decent of him.

BILL: For the sake of Auld Lang Syne.

JACK: Ah! Comradeship, again. There seems to be a boom in Comradeship. That's the second time today it has cropped up.

MARK: It's all very well to be sarcastic about it. We've been together now for a long time, in this hut. We may get on each other's nerves at times, but at rock bottom, deep down, we are all friends——

JACK: Friends? Friends? There are no friends in this life. There are acquaintances.

BILL: What *is* your intention? To sit and watch us slowly starve to death? Because that's what it will be, as you know. We can't live on what the Germans give us. You know that.

JACK: Yes. I know that.

BILL: Well! What are you going to do about it?

JACK: Evidently you think you have some claim to what I have. You think I've stolen it from you. Is that it? Is that what you think?



## ZOO IN SILESIA

BILL : That's what I think.

JACK : What about you ?

MARK : That, too, is my considered opinion.

JOE *is doing some juggling.*

JACK (*to SMUDGER, TOPPER*) : What about you two ? Is that your opinion ?

SMUDGER : It is that.

TOPPER : Ay.

JACK : Anyone else ? No, there wouldn't be anyone else. Well! We know where we stand. Relax! I'm going to tell you a story. Go on! Relax! It's the story of how I made my pile. The story of my rise to riches, in prisoner-of-war life. It's quite an interesting story. In the beginning, I was hungry. I was going mad for a smoke. Like everyone else, in the first days, in the bad days. Every night I used to dream of food and fat cigars. Of chocolate eclairs and treacle tart, and loaves of bread. That went on for quite a while. Then the Red Cross parcels came. That gave me what I wanted. A little capital. As I sat and scoffed my first parcel, I made a vow. I swore to myself that I'd never go hungry or short of a smoke again, in this life. Out of my first parcel, I took a tin of peas. I've always loathed peas—they give me wind. I even hated them, in that bad time. I took this tin of peas—it had a beautiful green label, I remember—and I found a man who liked peas, and I swapped it, for something just a little bit better. A tin of margarine. I went on up the scale. For my margarine, I got a tin of cheese. For the cheese, oats. I turned oats into salmon, salmon into biscuits, biscuits into apple pudding, apple pudding into meat roll, meat roll into M and V, and M and V into bacon. Then, for my tin of bacon, I got three tins of peas. See ? You could have done that. Each one of you four. But you didn't. You were too idle, or too busy, or too stupid. Now the bad days are here again. If you thought about it all, you'd have known the bad days were bound to come again, before the end. They're here, and you came squealing to me to help you. Shouting Comradeship. Calling me names. Trying to cheat me, trying to rob me, behind my back. You expect me to look after you. No one ever looked after me. I look after myself. And I can look after myself fine. I can look after myself until the end of the war. You say that I have no right to what I possess. You want to remember this. We were all born into this life, equal. We all started with one Red Cross parcel and fifty cigarettes.

*Enter BANNISTER. He is very much brusquer than in the morning.*

*He has a paper in his hand.*

## ZOO IN SILESIA

BANNISTER: Pay attention! Camp Order. (*Reads.*) "At a meeting of the Camp Welfare Committee, it was decided to institute a price control over all goods offered for sale within the camp by individuals. A complete list of the prices which may be charged for each article will be posted in the main square. Disobeyance to this order will be reported at once to the authorities in England, recommending that the strongest action be taken against the offender."

JACK: Finished?

BANNISTER: That's all.

JACK: Shut that door, Pat.

PAT *moves quickly to door. He shuts it, stands covering it.*

BANNISTER (*to PAT, coldly*): Get out of my way.

PAT: Sorry, chum. Orders is orders.

BANNISTER: Orders? I'll give you an order. I give you a direct order. Stand aside!

PAT (*with menace*): I don't think so, chum.

BANNISTER: Tell that man to get out of my way.

JACK *looks round for JOE. JOE is sitting on the floor, in a corner of the hut.*

JACK (*severely*): Christ! He's drunk. Come here, you.

JOE: What? What's that?

JACK: Come here. I want you.

JOE: Why didn't you say so?

JOE *rolls up.*

You're my pal, Jack.

JACK: Never mind that. (*Points at BANNISTER.*) Know this bastard?

JOE (*peering at BANNISTER*): Never saw him in me life.

JACK (*shaking him*): You bloody drunk. That's Bannister.

JOE (*the perfect gentleman*): So glad to know you, sir.

JACK (*shouting*): Bannister! Bannister! Bannister! You bum!

JACK *moves quickly to stove, gets water, throws some over JOE.*

Now do you know him? That's the bastard who killed that mate of yours, and mine, poor Goofy Jones—back in '40. Now do you know him?

JOE: That son of a bitch. I know the son of a bitch. Let me at him.

JOE *wants to attack BANNISTER. JACK pulls him off.*

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK: Never mind that. Where's that note Goofy wrote, just before he died? That's what I want. I want him to see the note. I want him to know I mean business.

JOE: The note.

JACK: You said you'd carry it with you always—come on, where is it?

JOE: The note.

JACK *starts to go through JOE's pockets.*

JACK: Blast your hide. I should have kept it. Ah!—What's this?

JACK *looking at piece of paper.*

Ah! (*To BANNISTER.*) You didn't know about this, did you, Bannister? This note, Bannister, tells how you made Goofy go out and work for Germans. How you made him go out to a sawmill, shifting bloody great logs, twelve hours every day at revolver point, when poor Goofy was all eaten up with dysentery, and starvation. He wrote it just before he died. Just before you killed him. He's just one of the men you killed. (*Waving paper.*) Your death warrant, Bannister.

BANNISTER: My dear fellow, you don't suppose anyone is going to believe this absurd cock and bull story you've cooked up? You don't really imagine you can fight me, do you? With my record? Twenty-one years in the Regular Army?

JACK: The Regular Army is the only institution in the world which would tolerate your type, Bannister, for twenty-one days.

JOE: What's that? Over there?

JACK: I'd get out now, Bannister.

*Pause. BANNISTER does not move.*

JOE: Look! Look! Toads! Dirty toads! Over there! Oh—horrible! Oh—horrible! Dirty toads! Filthy! Hundreds! Everywhere!

JACK *knocks out JOE, flat.*

JACK: Go on. Get out, Bannister.

BANNISTER *exits.*

JACK (*to PAT*): I need a drink. Get moving.

*Enter PETER, quickly. He bangs the door behind him. He goes over to bed, slaps down blonde wig.*

PETER: I'll never, never, never, never, never go on a stage again. Not as long as I live. Never!

JACK (*to PAT*): Better mix a stiff one, for the girl friend.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

PAT (*coming up, with JACK's drink*): What about the body?

JACK: Take it outside.

PAT *drags* JOE *out*.

BILL (*to* JACK): I'll bet you feel good, now.

JACK: Why?

BILL: Bannister.

JACK: Good? When you kill a rat, it don't make you feel good.

MARK: If the melodrama is over, perhaps we can finish our discussion.

JACK: There's no discussion. I'll put your little minds at ease. You want a pool? You shall have a bloody pool. I'll feed you. I'll give you cigarettes. Indefinitely.

MARK: Well, well!

BILL: What's the catch?

JACK: No catch. Just this. Let me discover one member of the pool—just one—holding out, fiddling, trying to be smart in any way at all, and I pull out.

MARK: I hardly think that will arise, old boy.

JACK: I know that it will. Your pool is doomed at birth. Bad times are coming. Very bad times. From now on, it's every man for himself. Make the most of your pool, because soon, very soon, we'll be tigers. Wolves. Take my advice and sharpen your claws.

MARK: I can't agree with you, I am afraid.

JACK: Give everything you have to Pat. He'll handle it. I trust Pat, so all of you can trust him. (*To* PAT.) How's Jolnny?

PAT: The M.O. came. Gave him a draught. He's asleep.

*The people go to their beds, start handing over tins of food, etc., to PAT, as background to next scene. Enter RAFFLER, with Red Cross parcel.*

RAFFLER: Where is he? Where's my lucky boy? Number 1948. The lucky winner.

JACK: Christ! That had to happen. I had to win that.

RAFFLER: Your lucky day—eh, cocker?

JACK: Every day's my lucky day, son.

RAFFLER: That's what I like to hear. Always merry and bright.

RAFFLER *exit*.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK: Open this up. Put it away. Put it in the pool. (*To PAT.*)  
(*To PETER.*) Sweetheart.

PETER: What do you want?

JACK: To talk to you.

PETER: In a minute.

*PETER is changing out of woman's dress.*

JACK: Pat! Where's Harry?

PAT: Must be out.

*Enter ERNIE.*

JACK (*to ERNIE*): What happened about that doe? Beaucoup jig-a-jig?

ERNIE (*quietly*): Yes, Jack. Yes. She went with him.

PAT (*centre, with tin of food*): Hello! This was what you was wanting.

JACK (*looks at tin*): A Carlton pudding! Where did you get this?

PAT: Out of the parcel you just won.

JACK: It's too late. It's not mine any more. Take it away. I don't even want it any more. Everything always comes too late.

*Enter MIKE.*

MIKE: Good evening, good evening, and what an evening! I been all over, Jack. There ain't a Carlton puddin' in camp. Gospel.

JACK: Gospel?

MIKE: Gospel.

JACK: Cross your heart and hope to die?

MIKE: Cross me 'eart and I 'opc I die.

JACK: Take a look at that.

MIKE: 'Struth! A Carlton puddin'!

JACK: Don't stand gaping at it. Take it away.

MIKE: What am I goin' to do with it?

JACK: Do what you like with it. Flog it. Eat it. Get it out of my sight.

MIKE: Well you're the funniest geezer I ever come across. All day long I'm running around, driving myself scatty trying to get you a Carlton pudding and now that you've got one you say you don't want it. Do you ever know what you want?

JACK: No.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

MIKE : God, you're an awkward screwy bastard.

*Exit MIKE.*

PETER (*centre, to JACK*) : What do you want ? I'm tired. I want to go to bed.

JACK (*to PETER*) : Sit down, child. Relax. Have a cigarette.

PETER (*sits down*) : You know I don't smoke. You know cigarettes hurt my voice.

JACK : Voice ? You never had a voice. That's all finished. Have a cigarette.

PETER : Why did they bird us, Jack ? We were doing our best.

JACK : It wasn't you. It wasn't me. The show was a bit below par. People's nerves are all to hell. We've been here too long. That's why they birded us. Ernie!

ERNIE (*comes centre*) : Yes, Jack ?

JACK : You lied to me just now. Didn't you ?

ERNIE : Yes. She wouldn't go with him.

JACK : Pat!

PAT : Yes, Jack.

JACK : When you're done there, go out and kill a rabbit. Ernie will show you which rabbit. Pop her in a stew-pot tomorrow.

PAT : Right, Jack.

ERNIE : Would you sell her to me, Jack ? She's such a nice gentle doe.

JACK : No. She failed in life. She has to die. We'll see if she is a success in death.

*Exit PAT and ERNIE.*

What happened to you tonight is a good thing. It's brought you back to earth. You've been way up in the clouds. It's easy to lose all sense of values here. You imagined you were going to be a big star in the world when you got back. God knows why, but be honest with me, you did, didn't you ?

PETER : They used to like me. At least they seemed to like me.

JACK : They did like you, here, in this tiny world, for a time. You were even important. You'd never have been important back in that other world, the big world.

PETER : But, Jack, I was so certain about it.

## ZOO IN SILESIA

JACK: You haven't got it in you. You're lucky. You'd have spent your life reaching for the stars and you'd have been miserable and a failure. Now you can go back to the bank, and be happy.

PETER: That doesn't make me feel any better, now.

*Enter HARRY.*

HARRY: The perimeter lights are out.

SMUDGER: That means these will be out, in a minute.

TOPPER: Get your beds made down! Get your beds made down!

OLD TOM: The boys over again, eh? Good luck to the boys! Boom—boom! More! More!

*There is panic, chaos in the hut. SMUDGER, TOPPER, OLD TOM, MARK and, to a lesser extent, GRAHAM, stampede for the beds. CLAUD follows, with more dignity. HARRY takes off overcoat, later coming to table. BILL paces the hut, ignores panic.*

*The lights go out. For a few moments, a dark stage. Much shouting and cursing. Then OLD TOM comes to table, carrying a home-made light in a small pot—the flame coming by burning fat through a pyjama cord. OLD TOM puts the light on the table. The light burns until the end of the play. JACK, OLD TOM and PETER at table, OLD TOM standing. HARRY joins them, sits down.*

OLD TOM: There you are, boys! There's one of my lights, for you!

JACK: Thanks, Old Tom.

OLD TOM: It's a good light, isn't it, Jack?

JACK: Yes, Old Tom. It's a good light. Got another one?

OLD TOM: Yes. I've got another one.

JACK: Have a drink, Harry.

HARRY: No, thanks, I'll have a fill of tobacco?

JACK: Help yourself.

(*To PETER.*) Give us a couple of songs, love.

PETER (*getting up*): No. I'm going to bed. (*Moves away.*)

OLD TOM: There's another one for you, boys. Well—me for some shut-eye, now. Good night, boys.

JACK: Good night, Old Tom.

HARRY: Good night, Old Tom.

JACK: Been walking?

HARRY: Yes, I've walked. And I've walked.

JACK: Better?

## MOO IN SILESIA

HARRY : It's queer. It's like a boil, that's been gathering, inside me, for a long time, and now it's burst and I can feel the poison, draining out of me. I can actually feel it. This morning I was saying that we'd lost the power to feel.

JACK : You know, now, that it's over.

HARRY : Yes. I know that, now.

*From outside come savage screams, an animal in death.*

HARRY : What's that ?

JACK : That's nothing at all. That's only the death of a rabbit.

HARRY : I don't blame her, Jack. I've been away a long time.

*JOHNNY comes up, wearing pyjamas. He is white and trembling.*

JACK : Hello, Johnny. What are you doing out of bed ?

JOHNNY : I woke up, suddenly. Why is it dark, Jack ?

JACK : They're bombing, somewhere.

*BILL appears silently, moving quickly.*

BILL (*quietly*) : Harry.

HARRY : Yes ?

BILL : You'd better come and see to Old Tom.

HARRY : What's happened ?

BILL : He's had another attack. You know what to do, don't you ?

HARRY : Yes. I know what to do.

*HARRY moves off, quickly, followed by BILL. JOHNNY and JACK at table.*

JOHNNY : I felt I must talk to someone, Jack.

JACK : Yes.

JOHNNY : Not about—Mum.

JACK : No. That's over. No good to talk about that.

*The thumping of falling bombs in the distance can be heard distinctly.*

JOHNNY : I don't understand how it's finished. It's so incomplete. I'd only just begun to know her. So many things I could have told her, which I didn't. So many little things I was going to do for her, which I never did, before. It's so incomplete, Jack.

JACK (*savage*) : Don't talk about it. Don't think of it. Wipe it all. D'you hear me ?

JOHNNY : Yes.

JACK : You've got to get yourself well. That's your job, now. You're young. You've got to get yourself well.



## ZOO IN SILESIA

JOHNNY : When I woke up just now and it was dark—I got the feeling I thought I was going to die.

JACK : That's a bad feeling. You want to fight that kind of feeling. Fight it hard. Fight it with everything.

JOHNNY : I don't want to die, Jack. If I die, it means it's all waste. I shan't have done anything.

JACK : Nobody does anything. But you're not going to die, Johnny. Soon, very soon now, you're going to begin to live.

JOHNNY : D'you think so, Jack ? Really ? Soon ?

JACK : Yes. Better go to bed now. Go and sleep. That's a prisoner's best friend—his bed.

JOHNNY : Yes. Perhaps I'll sleep, now. Good night, Jack.

*BILL comes back. JOHNNY moves away. BILL and JACK at table.*

SMUDGER : Quiet a minute!

*Thump-thump can be heard clearly.*

SMUDGER : Hear that, Topper ? Ain't that lovely ?

TOPPER : Thump-thump! My lullaby. Yes, I can hear it.

*In the distance a party of German soldiers are singing "Lilli Marlene". During the next scene they come nearer, nearer.*

SMUDGER : Listen to the squareheads.

TOPPER : They're moving east tonight. Lucky bastards.

JACK : Old Tom ?

BILL : He's not dead. Harry's taking care of him. Just another of his attacks. He'll get over it.

JACK : One of these nights, he won't. One of these nights, his light will go out.

BILL : I want a drink.

JACK : Go ahead.

*Pause.*

How did you finish, at the two-up ?

BILL : I went broke.

JACK : Hard luck.

*Pause.*

BILL : This mud! This blackness! This desolation! Thump-thump. Always thump-thump. God! What an existence.

JACK : It hasn't always been like this.

## MOO IN SILESIA

BILL: Hasn't it? Were there, once, blue summer evenings and beer and the scent of hayfields and picnics and blackberries in the hedges? Were there, really, once these things? Or are they all just a dream of mine?

JACK: There were those things. It won't always be like this.

BILL: It's like this, now. We don't know how much longer it's going to be like this.

JACK: Not long. Not long, now.

BILL: We've been saying that for four years. Not long. Or is it five years, or six?

JACK: It can't be long, now.

BILL: This isn't what we were born for, is it? This blackness? Surely not this blackness? Surely we were born for sun and the roads and the sea?

JACK: We're alive. We're still alive.

BILL: We're dead. Only time remembers us and time's racing by, taking our lives with it. There's no way we can fight time, here.

JACK: One day it will end.

BILL: Yes. It will end. Perhaps. What's going to be left, if the end does come? They're taking everything from us. You can see it. Wives. Mothers. It's happening to all of us. It's going to happen to *me*—

JACK: Wipe all that. Think of the new world. We're going back to a clean, new world. We're lucky. That don't happen to everyone. We'll be free men, you and I. I mean that we'll be truly free. And we'll get a fresh start in a clean new world. It's exciting, to think of it.

CLAUD *came back to collect some of his books. He listened to the last speech. The German soldiers, marching, singing "Lilli Marlene", are getting nearer.*

CLAUD: That's not what you really think. That's not what you really believe.

JACK (*savage*): How in the hell do you know what I think or what I believe?

CLAUD: I know everything about you. And you know that the world and the people in it are not new and they're not clean. They're older and they're dirtier and they're cheaper and nastier than they ever have been, and all the disgusting, dreadful things that are happening here in this camp, in your little world, every day, are happening out-



## ZOO IN SILESIA

side, in that other world—every moment—everywhere—and everybody and everything is getting worse and worse and worse. That's what you know, isn't it?

*The German soldiers must be passing the camp, now. Their voices are very loud.*

JACK: Don't listen to him, Bill. The only thing to do is to believe, to try to believe, that we're going back to a better world. There's nothing we can do about anything except keep thinking that, and that may help us to get through, because it's going to be touch and go whether we do get through, because a lot of things, a lot of bad things, are still going to happen to all of us. We've got to keep thinking and keep saying that it will all come to an end one day and then everything will be all right. That's all we damn well can do.

*JACK gets up, starts to go to bed, blows out one of the lights. BILL blows out the other light, and moves to bed. The voices of the Germans begin to fade, as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS