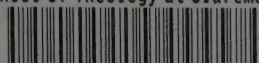


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1909-1950



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T. S. ELIOT

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The Complete  
Poems and Plays

1909-1950

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

NEW YORK



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Printed in the United States of America

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# Collected Poems

1909-1935





Prufrock  
AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS  
1917

For Jean Verdenal, 1889-1915  
mort aux Dardanelles

*Or puoi la quantitate  
Comprender dell' amor ch'a te mi scalda,  
Quando dismento nostra vanitate  
Trattando l'ombre come cosa salda.*

---

THE LOVE SONG  
OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question. . .  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—  
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]  
Do I dare

Disturb the universe?  
 In a minute there is time  
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:—  
 Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
 I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
 I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
 Beneath the music from a farther room.  
 So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
 Then how should I begin  
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
 And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
 Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
 [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]  
 Is it perfume from a dress  
 That makes me so digress?  
 Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
 And should I then presume?  
 And how should I begin?

. . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

. . . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
 Smoothed by long fingers,  
 Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,

Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon  
a platter,  
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.  
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the  
floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
"That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all."

. . . . .

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

---

 PORTRAIT OF A LADY

*Thou hast committed—  
Fornication: but that was in another country,  
And besides, the wench is dead.*

THE JEW OF MALTA.

## I

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon  
 You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—  
 With “I have saved this afternoon for you”;  
 And four wax candles in the darkened room,  
 Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,  
 An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb  
 Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.  
 We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole  
 Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and fingertips.  
 “So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul  
 Should be resurrected only among friends  
 Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom  
 That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room.”  
 —And so the conversation slips  
 Among velleities and carefully caught regrets  
 Through attenuated tones of violins  
 Mingled with remote cornets  
 And begins.  
 “You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,  
 And how, how rare and strange it is, to find  
 In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,  
 [For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind!  
 How keen you are!]  
 To find a friend who has these qualities,  
 Who has, and gives  
 Those qualities upon which friendship lives.  
 How much it means that I say this to you—  
 Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar!*”

Among the windings of the violins  
And the ariettes  
Of cracked cornets  
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins  
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,  
Capricious monotone  
That is at least one definite "false note."  
—Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,  
Admire the monuments,  
Discuss the late events,  
Correct our watches by the public clocks.  
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

## II

Now that lilacs are in bloom  
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room  
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.  
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know  
What life is, you who hold it in your hands";  
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)  
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,  
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse  
And smiles at situations which it cannot see."  
I smile, of course,  
And go on drinking tea.  
"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall  
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,  
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world  
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune  
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:  
"I am always sure that you understand  
My feelings, always sure that you feel,  
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.



You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.  
You will go on, and when you have prevailed  
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.  
But what have I, but what have I, my friend,  
To give you, what can you receive from me?  
Only the friendship and the sympathy  
Of one about to reach her journey's end.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends. . . ."

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends  
For what she has said to me?  
You will see me any morning in the park  
Reading the comics and the sporting page.  
Particularly I remark  
An English countess goes upon the stage.  
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,  
Another bank defaulter has confessed.  
I keep my countenance,  
I remain self-possessed  
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.  
Are these ideas right or wrong?

### III

The October night comes down; returning as before  
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease  
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door  
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.  
"And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?  
But that's a useless question.  
You hardly know when you are coming back,  
You will find so much to learn."  
My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.

"Perhaps you can write to me."  
My self-possession flares up for a second;  
*This* is as I had reckoned.  
"I have been wondering frequently of late  
(But our beginnings never know our ends!)  
Why we have not developed into friends."  
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark  
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.  
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,  
They all were sure our feelings would relate  
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.  
We must leave it now to fate.  
You will write, at any rate.  
Perhaps it is not too late.  
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find expression . . . dance, dance  
Like a dancing bear,  
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.  
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,  
Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;  
Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand  
With the smoke coming down above the housetops;  
Doubtful, for a while  
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand  
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .  
Would she not have the advantage, after all?  
This music is successful with a "dying fall"  
Now that we talk of dying—  
And should I have the right to smile?

---

PRELUDES

## I

The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

## II

The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust-trampled street  
With all its muddy feet that press  
To early coffee-stands.  
With the other masquerades  
That time resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.

## III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,  
You lay upon your back, and waited;  
You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
The thousand sordid images  
Of which your soul was constituted;

They flickered against the ceiling.  
And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

## IV

His soul stretched tight across the skies  
That fade behind a city block,  
Or trampled by insistent feet  
At four and five and six o'clock;  
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,  
And evening newspapers, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling:  
The notion of some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;  
The worlds revolve like ancient women  
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

---

RHAPSODY ON A WINDY NIGHT

Twelve o'clock.  
Along the reaches of the street  
Held in a lunar synthesis,  
Whispering lunar incantations  
Dissolve the floors of memory  
And all its clear relations  
Its divisions and precisions,  
Every street lamp that I pass  
Beats like a fatalistic drum,  
And through the spaces of the dark  
Midnight shakes the memory  
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

Half-past one,  
The street-lamp sputtered,  
The street-lamp muttered,  
The street-lamp said, "Regard that woman  
Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door  
Which opens on her like a grin.  
You see the border of her dress  
Is torn and stained with sand,  
And you see the corner of her eye  
Twists like a crooked pin."

The memory throws up high and dry  
A crowd of twisted things;  
A twisted branch upon the beach  
Eaten smooth, and polished  
As if the world gave up  
The secret of its skeleton,  
Stiff and white.  
A broken spring in a factory yard,  
Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left  
Hard and curled and ready to snap.

Half-past two,  
The street-lamp said,  
"Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,  
Slips out its tongue  
And devours a morsel of rancid butter."  
So the hand of the child, automatic,  
Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running along the quay.  
I could see nothing behind that child's eye.  
I have seen eyes in the street  
Trying to peer through lighted shutters,  
And a crab one afternoon in a pool,  
An old crab with barnacles on his back,  
Gripped the end of a stick which I held him.

Half-past three,  
The lamp sputtered,  
The lamp muttered in the dark.  
The lamp hummed:  
"Regard the moon,  
*La lune ne garde aucune rancune,*  
She winks a feeble eye,  
She smiles into corners.  
She smooths the hair of the grass.  
The moon has lost her memory.  
A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,  
Her hand twists a paper rose,  
That smells of dust and eau de Cologne,  
She is alone  
With all the old nocturnal smells  
That cross and cross across her brain."  
The reminiscence comes  
Of sunless dry geraniums  
And dust in crevices,  
Smells of chestnuts in the streets,  
And female smells in shuttered rooms,  
And cigarettes in corridors  
And cocktail smells in bars.

The lamp said,  
 "Four o'clock,  
 Here is the number on the door.  
 Memory!  
 You have the key,  
 The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair.  
 Mount.  
 The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,  
 Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life."

The last twist of the knife.

---

### MORNING AT THE WINDOW

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,  
 And along the trampled edges of the street  
 I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids  
 Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up to me  
 Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,  
 And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts  
 An aimless smile that hovers in the air  
 And vanishes along the level of the roofs.

---

### THE BOSTON EVENING TRANSCRIPT

The readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript*  
 Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn.

When evening quickens faintly in the street,  
 Wakening the appetites of life in some  
 And to others bringing the *Boston Evening Transcript*,  
 I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning



Wearily, as one would turn to nod good-bye to Rochefoucauld,  
If the street were time and he at the end of the street,  
And I say, "Cousin Harriet, here is the *Boston Evening Transcript*."

---

## AUNT HELEN

Miss Helen Slingsby was my maiden aunt,  
And lived in a small house near a fashionable square  
Cared for by servants to the number of four.  
Now when she died there was silence in heaven  
And silence at her end of the street.  
The shutters were drawn and the undertaker wiped his feet—  
He was aware that this sort of thing had occurred before.  
The dogs were handsomely provided for,  
But shortly afterwards the parrot died too.  
The Dresden clock continued ticking on the mantelpiece,  
And the footman sat upon the dining-table  
Holding the second housemaid on his knees—  
Who had always been so careful while her mistress lived.

---

## COUSIN NANCY

Miss Nancy Ellicott  
Strode across the hills and broke them,  
Rode across the hills and broke them—  
The barren New England hills—  
Riding to hounds  
Over the cow-pasture.

Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked  
And danced all the modern dances;  
And her aunts were not quite sure how they felt about it,  
But they knew that it was modern.

Upon the glazen shelves kept watch  
 Matthew and Waldo, guardians of the faith,  
 The army of unalterable law.

## MR. APOLLINAX

Ω τῆς καινότητος. Ἡράκλεις, τῆς παραδοξολογίας.  
 εὐμήχανος ἄνθρωπος.

LUCIAN.

When Mr. Apollinax visited the United States  
 His laughter tinkled among the teacups.  
 I thought of Fragilion, that shy figure among the birch-trees,  
 And of Priapus in the shrubbery  
 Gaping at the lady in the swing.  
 In the palace of Mrs. Phlaccus, at Professor Channing-Cheetah's  
 He laughed like an irresponsible fœtus.  
 His laughter was submarine and profound  
 Like the old man of the sea's  
 Hidden under coral islands  
 Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence,  
 Dropping from fingers of surf.  
 I looked for the head of Mr. Apollinax rolling under a chair.

Or grinning over a screen  
 With seaweed in its hair.  
 I heard the beat of centaur's hoofs over the hard turf  
 As his dry and passionate talk devoured the afternoon.  
 "He is a charming man"—"But after all what did he mean?"—  
 "His pointed ears. . . . He must be unbalanced,"—  
 "There was something he said that I might have challenged."  
 Of dowager Mrs. Phlaccus, and Professor and Mrs. Cheetah  
 I remember a slice of lemon, and a bitten macaroon.

---

HYSTERIA

As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it, until her teeth were only accidental stars with a talent for squad-drill. I was drawn in by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles. An elderly waiter with trembling hands was hurriedly spreading a pink and white checked cloth over the rusty green iron table, saying: "If the lady and gentleman wish to take their tea in the garden, if the lady and gentleman wish to take their tea in the garden . . ." I decided that if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped, some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected, and I concentrated my attention with careful subtlety to this end.

---

## CONVERSATION GALANTE

I observe: "Our sentimental friend the moon!  
Or possibly (fantastic, I confess)  
It may be Prester John's balloon  
Or an old battered lantern hung aloft  
To light poor travellers to their distress."  
She then: "How you digress!"

And I then: "Someone frames upon the keys  
That exquisite nocturne, with which we explain  
The night and moonshine; music which we seize  
To body forth our own vacuity."  
She then: "Does this refer to me?"  
"Oh no, it is I who am inane."

"You, madam, are the eternal humorist,  
The eternal enemy of the absolute,  
Giving our vagrant moods the slightest twist!

With your air indifferent and imperious  
At a stroke our mad poetics to confute—”  
And—“Are we then so serious?”

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### LA FIGLIA CHE PIANGE

*O quam te memorem virgo . . .*

Stand on the highest pavement of the stair—  
Lean on a garden urn—  
Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair—  
Clasp your flowers to you with a pained surprise—  
Fling them to the ground and turn  
With a fugitive resentment in your eyes:  
But weave, weave the sunlight in your hair.

So I would have had him leave,  
So I would have had her stand and grieve,  
So he would have left  
As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised,  
As the mind deserts the body it has used.  
I should find  
Some way incomparably light and deft,  
Some way we both should understand,  
Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand.

She turned away, but with the autumn weather  
Compelled my imagination many days,  
Many days and many hours:  
Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers.  
And I wonder how they should have been together!  
I should have lost a gesture and a pose.  
Sometimes these cogitations still amaze  
The troubled midnight and the noon's repose.

# Poems

1920

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## GERONTION

*Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after dinner sleep  
Dreaming of both.*

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,  
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.  
I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, fought.  
My house is a decayed house,  
And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,  
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,  
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.  
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;  
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.  
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,  
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.  
I an old man,  
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign!"  
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,  
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year  
Came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,

To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk  
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero  
With caressing hands, at Limoges  
Who walked all night in the next room;

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;  
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room  
Shifting the candles; Fräulein von Kulp  
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door.

Vacant shuttles  
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,  
An old man in a draughty house  
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or if still believed,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon  
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with  
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think  
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices  
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues  
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.  
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think at last  
We have not reached conclusion, when I  
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last  
I have not made this show purposelessly  
And it is not by any concitation  
Of the backward devils.  
I would meet you upon this honestly.

I that was near your heart was removed therefrom  
 To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.  
 I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it  
 Since what is kept must be adulterated?  
 I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:  
 How should I use them for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations  
 Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,  
 Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,  
 With pungent sauces, multiply variety  
 In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,  
 Suspend its operations, will the weevil  
 Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled  
 Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear  
 In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits  
 Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,  
 White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,  
 And an old man driven by the Trades  
 To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house,  
 Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

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BURBANK WITH A BAEDEKER:  
 BLEISTEIN WITH A CIGAR

*Tra-la-la-la-la-la-laire—nil nisi divinum stabile est; caetera fumus—the gondola  
 stopped, the old palace was there, how charming its grey and pink—goats and  
 monkeys, with such hair too!—so the countess passed on until she came through  
 the little park, where Niobe presented her with a cabinet, and so departed.*

Burbank crossed a little bridge  
 Descending at a small hotel;  
 Princess Volupine arrived,  
 They were together, and he fell.

Defunctive music under sea  
Passed seaward with the passing bell  
Slowly: the God Hercules  
Had left him, that had loved him well.

The horses, under the axletree  
Beat up the dawn from Istria  
With even feet. Her shuttered barge  
Burned on the water all the day.

But this or such was Bleistein's way:  
A saggy bending of the knees  
And elbows, with the palms turned out,  
Chicago Semite Viennese.

A lustreless protrusive eye  
Stares from the protozoic slime  
At a perspective of Canaletto.  
The smoky candle end of time

Declines. On the Rialto once.  
The rats are underneath the piles.  
The jew is underneath the lot.  
Money in furs. The boatman smiles,

Princess Volupine extends  
A meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand  
To climb the waterstair. Lights, lights,  
She entertains Sir Ferdinand

Klein. Who clipped the lion's wings  
And flea'd his rump and pared his claws?  
Thought Burbank, meditating on  
Time's ruins, and the seven laws.



## SWEENEY ERECT

*And the trees about me,  
Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks  
Groan with continual surges; and behind me  
Make all a desolation. Look, look, wenches!*

Paint me a cavernous waste shore  
Cast in the unstilled Cyclades,  
Paint me the bold anfractuious rocks  
Faced by the snarled and yelping seas.

Display me Aeolus above  
Reviewing the insurgent gales  
Which tangle Ariadne's hair  
And swell with haste the perjured sails.

Morning stirs the feet and hands  
(Nausicaa and Polypheme).  
Gesture of orang-outang  
Rises from the sheets in steam.

This withered root of knots of hair  
Slitted below and gashed with eyes,  
This oval O cropped out with teeth:  
The sickle motion from the thighs

Jackknives upward at the knees  
Then straightens out from heel to hip  
Pushing the framework of the bed  
And clawing at the pillow slip.

Sweeney addressed full length to shave  
Broadbottomed, pink from nape to base,  
Knows the female temperament  
And wipes the suds around his face.

(The lengthened shadow of a man  
Is history, said Emerson  
Who had not seen the silhouette  
Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.)

Tests the razor on his leg  
Waiting until the shriek subsides.  
The epileptic on the bed  
Curves backward, clutching at her sides.

The ladies of the corridor  
Find themselves involved, disgraced,  
Call witness to their principles  
And deprecate the lack of taste

Observing that hysteria  
Might easily be misunderstood;  
Mrs. Turner intimates  
It does the house no sort of good.

But Doris, towelled from the bath,  
Enters padding on broad feet,  
Bringing sal volatile  
And a glass of brandy neat.

---

### A COOKING EGG

*En l'an trentiesme de mon aage  
Que toutes mes hontes j'ay beues . . .*

Pipit sate upright in her chair  
Some distance from where I was sitting;  
*Views of the Oxford Colleges*  
Lay on the table, with the knitting.

Daguerreotypes and silhouettes,  
 Her grandfather and great great aunts,  
 Supported on the mantelpiece  
*An Invitation to the Dance.*

. . . . .

I shall not want Honour in Heaven  
 For I shall meet Sir Philip Sidney  
 And have talk with Coriolanus  
 And other heroes of that kidney.

I shall not want Capital in Heaven  
 For I shall meet Sir Alfred Mond.  
 We two shall lie together, lapt  
 In a five per cent. Exchequer Bond.

I shall not want Society in Heaven,  
 Lucretia Borgia shall be my Bride;  
 Her anecdotes will be more amusing  
 Than Pipit's experience could provide.

I shall not want Pipit in Heaven:  
 Madame Blavatsky will instruct me  
 In the Seven Sacred Trances;  
 Piccarda de Donati will conduct me.

. . . . .

But where is the penny world I bought  
 To eat with Pipit behind the screen?  
 The red-eyed scavengers are creeping  
 From Kentish Town and Golder's Green;

Where are the eagles and the trumpets?

Buried beneath some snow-deep Alps.  
 Over buttered scones and crumpets  
 Weeping, weeping multitudes  
 Droop in a hundred A.B.C.'s

---

LE DIRECTEUR

Malheur à la malheureuse Tamise  
Qui coule si près du Spectateur.  
Le directeur  
Conservateur  
Du Spectateur  
Empeste la brise.  
Les actionnaires  
Réactionnaires  
Du Spectateur  
Conservateur  
Bras dessus bras dessous  
Font des tours  
A pas de loup.  
Dans un égout  
Une petite fille  
En guenilles  
Camarde  
Regarde  
Le directeur  
Du Spectateur  
Conservateur  
Et crève d'amour.

---

## MÉLANGE ADULTÈRE DE TOUT

En Amérique, professeur;  
En Angleterre, journaliste;  
C'est à grands pas et en sueur  
Que vous suivrez à peine ma piste.  
En Yorkshire, conférencier;  
A Londres, un peu banquier,  
Vous me paierez bien la tête.

C'est à Paris que je me coiffe  
Casque noir de jemenfoutiste.  
En Allemagne, philosophe  
Surexcité par Emporheben  
Au grand air de Bergsteigleben;  
J'erre toujours de-ci de-là  
A divers coups de tra là là  
De Damas jusqu'à Omaha.  
Je célébrai mon jour de fête  
Dans une oasis d'Afrique  
Vetu d'une peau de girafe.

On montrera mon cénotaphe  
Aux côtes brulantes de Mozambique.

---

#### LUNE DE MIEL

Ils ont vu les Pays-Bas, ils rentrent à Terre Haute;  
Mais une nuit d'été, les voici à Ravenne,  
A l'aise entre deux draps, chez deux centaines de punaises;  
La sueur aestivale, et une forte odeur de chienne.  
Ils restent sur le dos écartant les genoux  
De quatre jambes molles tout gonflées de morsures.  
On relève le drap pour mieux égratigner.  
Moins d'une lieue d'ici est Saint Apollinaire  
En Classe, basilique connue des amateurs  
De chapitaux d'acanthé que tournoie le vent.

Ils vont prendre le train de huit heures  
Prolonger leurs misères de Padoue à Milan  
Où se trouvent la Cène, et un restaurant pas cher.  
Lui pense aux pourboires, et rédige son bilan.  
Ils auront vu la Suisse et traversé la France.  
Et Saint Apollinaire, raide et ascétique,  
Vieille usine désaffectée de Dieu, tient encore  
Dans ses pierres écroulantes la forme précise de Byzance.

---

## THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

*Similiter et omnes revereantur Diaconos, ut mandatum Jesu Christi; et Episcopum, ut Jesum Christum, existentem filium Patris; Presbyteros autem, ut concilium Dei et conjunctionem Apostolorum. Sine his Ecclesia non vocatur; de quibus suadeo vos sic habeo.*

S. IGNATI AD TRALLIANOS.

*And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans.*

The broad-backed hippopotamus  
Rests on his belly in the mud;  
Although he seems so firm to us  
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,  
Susceptible to nervous shock;  
While the True Church can never fail  
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err  
In compassing material ends,  
While the True Church need never stir  
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach  
The mango on the mango-tree;  
But fruits of pomegranate and peach  
Refresh the Church from over sea.

At mating time the hippo's voice  
Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,  
But every week we hear rejoice  
The Church, at being one with God.

The hippopotamus's day  
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;

God works in a mysterious way—  
The Church can sleep and feed at once.

I saw the 'potamus take wing  
Ascending from the damp savannas,  
And quiring angels round him sing  
The praise of God, in loud hosannas.

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean  
And him shall heavenly arms enfold,  
Among the saints he shall be seen  
Performing on a harp of gold.

He shall be washed as white as snow,  
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,  
While the True Church remains below  
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

### DANS LE RESTAURANT

Le garçon délabré qui n'a rien à faire  
Que de se gratter les doigts et se pencher sur mon épaule:  
"Dans mon pays il fera temps pluvieux,  
Du vent, du grand soleil, et de la pluie;  
C'est ce qu'on appelle le jour de lessive des gueux."  
(Bavard, baveux, à la croupe arrondie,  
Je te prie, au moins, ne bave pas dans la soupe.)  
"Les saules trempés, et des bourgeons sur les ronces—  
C'est là, dans une averse, qu'on s'abrite.  
J'avais sept ans, elle était plus petite.  
Elle était toute mouillée, je lui ai donné des primevères."  
Les taches de son gilet montent au chiffre de trente-huit.  
"Je la chatouillais, pour la faire rire.  
J'éprouvais un instant de puissance et de délire."

Mais alors, vieux lubrique, à cet âge . . .  
 "Monsieur, le fait est dur.  
 Il est venu, nous peloter, un gros chien;  
 Moi j'avais peur, je l'ai quittée à mi-chemin.  
 C'est dommage."  
 Mais alors, tu as ton vautour!

Va t'en te décrotter les rides du visage;  
 Tiens, ma fourchette, décrasse-toi le crâne.  
 De quel droit payes-tu des expériences comme moi?  
 Tiens, voilà dix sous, pour la salle-de-bains.

Phlébas, le Phénicien, pendant quinze jours noyé,  
 Oubliait les cris des mouettes et la houle de Cornouaille,  
 Et les profits et les pertes, et la cargaison d'étain:  
 Un courant de sous-mer l'emporta très loin,  
 Le repassant aux étapes de sa vie antérieure.  
 Figurez-vous donc, c'était un sort pénible;  
 Cependant, ce fut jadis un bel homme, de haute taille.

### WHISPERS OF IMMORTALITY

Webster was much possessed by death  
 And saw the skull beneath the skin;  
 And breastless creatures under ground  
 Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls  
 Stared from the sockets of the eyes!  
 He knew that thought clings round dead limbs  
 Tightening its lusts and luxuries.

Donne, I suppose, was such another  
 Who found no substitute for sense,  
 To seize and clutch and penetrate;  
 Expert beyond experience,



He knew the anguish of the marrow  
 The ague of the skeleton;  
 No contact possible to flesh  
 Allayed the fever of the bone.

. . . . .

Grishkin is nice: her Russian eye  
 Is underlined for emphasis;  
 Uncorseted, her friendly bust  
 Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.

The couched Brazilian jaguar  
 Compels the scampering marmoset  
 With subtle effluence of cat;  
 Grishkin has a maisonette;

The sleek Brazilian jaguar  
 Does not in its arboreal gloom  
 Distil so rank a feline smell  
 As Grishkin in a drawing-room.

And even the Abstract Entities  
 Circumambulate her charm;  
 But our lot crawls between dry ribs  
 To keep our metaphysics warm.

---

## MR. ELIOT'S SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

*Look, look, master, here comes two religious caterpillars.*

THE JEW OF MALTA.

Polyphiloprogenitive  
 The sapient sutlers of the Lord  
 Drift across the window-panes.  
 In the beginning was the Word.

In the beginning was the Word.  
 Superfetation of τὸ ἔν,

And at the mensual turn of time  
Produced enervate Origen.

A painter of the Umbrian school  
Designed upon a gesso ground  
The nimbus of the Baptized God.  
The wilderness is cracked and browned

But through the water pale and thin  
Still shine the unoffending feet  
And there above the painter set  
The Father and the Paraclete.

. . . . .

The sable presbyters approach  
The avenue of penitence;  
The young are red and pustular  
Clutching piaculative pence.

Under the penitential gates  
Sustained by staring Seraphim  
Where the souls of the devout  
Burn invisible and dim.

Along the garden-wall the bees  
With hairy bellies pass between  
The staminate and pistilate,  
Blest office of the epicene.

Sweeney shifts from ham to ham  
Stirring the water in his bath.  
The masters of the subtle schools  
Are controversial, polymath.

## SWEENEY AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES

ὦμοι, πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πληγὴν ἔσω.

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees  
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,  
The zebra stripes along his jaw  
Swelling to maculate giraffe.

The circles of the stormy moon  
Slide westward toward the River Plate,  
Death and the Raven drift above  
And Sweeney guards the hornèd gate.

Gloomy Orion and the Dog  
Are veiled; and hushed the shrunken seas;  
The person in the Spanish cape  
Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

Slips and pulls the table cloth  
Overturns a coffee-cup,  
Reorganized upon the floor  
She yawns and draws a stocking up;

The silent man in mocha brown  
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes;  
The waiter brings in oranges  
Bananas figs and hothouse grapes;

The silent vertebrate in brown  
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;  
Rachel *née* Rabinovitch  
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

She and the lady in the cape  
Are suspect, thought to be in league;

Therefore the man with heavy eyes  
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

Leaves the room and reappears  
Outside the window, leaning in,  
Branches of wistaria  
Circumscribe a golden grin;

The host with someone indistinct  
Converses at the door apart,  
The nightingales are singing near  
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood  
When Agamemnon cried aloud,  
And let their liquid siftings fall  
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

# The Waste Land

1922

"Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi  
in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σίβυλλα  
τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω."

For Ezra Pound  
*il miglior fabbro.*

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## I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with dried tubers.  
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee  
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,  
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.  
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.  
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,  
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,  
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,  
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.  
In the mountains, there you feel free.  
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

10

[ 37 ]

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
 Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, 20  
 You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
 A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
 And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
 And the dry stone no sound of water. Only  
 There is shadow under this red rock,  
 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
 And I will show you something different from either  
 Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
 I will show you fear in a handful of dust. 30

*Frisch weht der Wind*

*Der Heimat zu*

*Mein Irisch Kind,*

*Wo weilest du?*

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;  
 "They called me the hyacinth girl."  
 —Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,  
 Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
 Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, 40  
 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.  
*Oed' und leer das Meer.*

Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyante,  
 Had a bad cold, nevertheless  
 Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,  
 With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,  
 Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,  
 (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)  
 Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,  
 The lady of situations. 50  
 Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,  
 And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,  
 Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,  
 Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.  
 I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.  
 Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,  
 Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:  
 One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City, 60  
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
 I had not thought death had undone so many.  
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.  
 There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!"  
 "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae! 70  
 "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?  
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?  
 "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,  
 "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!  
 "You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

---

## II. A GAME OF CHESS

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
 Glowed on the marble, where the glass  
 Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines  
 From which a golden Cupidon peeped out 80  
 (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)  
 Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
 Reflecting light upon the table as  
 The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
 From satin cases poured in rich profusion;

In vials of ivory and coloured glass  
 Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
 Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused  
 And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air  
 That freshened from the window, these ascended 90  
 In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,  
 Flung their smoke into the laquearia,  
 Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.  
 Huge sea-wood fed with copper  
 Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,  
 In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.  
 Above the antique mantel was displayed  
 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
 So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale 100  
 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
 And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
 “Jug Jug” to dirty ears.  
 And other withered stumps of time  
 Were told upon the walls; staring forms  
 Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.  
 Footsteps shuffled on the stair.  
 Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair  
 Spread out in fiery points  
 Glowed into words, then would be savagely still. 110

“My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.  
 “Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

“What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?  
 “I never know what you are thinking. Think.”

I think we are in rats’ alley  
 Where the dead men lost their bones.

“What is that noise?”

The wind under the door.

“What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?”

Nothing again nothing.



“Do

“You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember  
“Nothing?”

I remember  
Those are pearls that were his eyes.  
“Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?”  
But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—  
It's so elegant  
So intelligent 130  
“What shall I do now? What shall I do?”  
“I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street  
“With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?  
“What shall we ever do?”

The hot water at ten.  
And if it rains, a closed car at four.  
And we shall play a game of chess,  
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said—  
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself, 140  
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME  
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.  
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you  
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.  
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,  
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.  
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,  
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,  
And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.  
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said. 150  
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a  
straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME  
If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.  
Others can pick and choose if you can't.

But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.  
 You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.  
 (And her only thirty-one.)  
 I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,  
 It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.  
 (She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.) 160  
 The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been  
 the same.  
 You are a proper fool, I said.  
 Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,  
 What you get married for if you don't want children?  
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME  
 Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,  
 And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—  
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME  
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME  
 Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight. 170  
 Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.  
 Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night,  
 good night.

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### III. THE FIRE SERMON

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.  
 Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
 The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
 Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
 Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.  
 And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors; 180  
 Departed, have left no addresses.  
 By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .  
 Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,  
 Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.  
 But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.  
 A rat crept softly through the vegetation  
 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank  
 While I was fishing in the dull canal  
 On a winter evening round behind the gashouse 190  
 Musing upon the king my brother's wreck  
 And on the king my father's death before him.  
 White bodies naked on the low damp ground  
 And bones cast in a little low dry garret,  
 Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.  
 But at my back from time to time I hear  
 The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring  
 Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.  
 O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter  
 And on her daughter 200  
 They wash their feet in soda water  
*Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*

Twit twit twit  
 Jug jug jug jug jug jug  
 So rudely forc'd.  
 Tereu

Unreal City  
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon  
 Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant 210  
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants  
 C.i.f. London: documents at sight,  
 Asked me in demotic French  
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel  
 Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back  
 Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
 Like a taxi throbbing waiting,  
 I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,  
 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see  
 At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives 220

Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,  
 The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights  
 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.  
 Out of the window perilously spread  
 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,  
 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)  
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.  
 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs  
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—  
 I too awaited the expected guest.

230

He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,  
 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,  
 One of the low on whom assurance sits  
 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.  
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,  
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,  
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses  
 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.  
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;  
 Exploring hands encounter no defence;  
 His vanity requires no response,  
 And makes a welcome of indifference.  
 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all  
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;  
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall  
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)  
 Bestows one final patronising kiss,  
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

240

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,  
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
 Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:  
 "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."  
 When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
 Paces about her room again, alone,  
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

250

"This music crept by me upon the waters"  
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.  
 O City city, I can sometimes hear  
 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,  
 The pleasant whining of a mandoline  
 And a clatter and a chatter from within  
 Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls  
 Of Magnus Martyr hold  
 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

260

The river sweats  
 Oil and tar  
 The barges drift  
 With the turning tide  
 Red sails  
 Wide  
 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.  
 The barges wash  
 Drifting logs  
 Down Greenwich reach  
 Past the Isle of Dogs.  
                     Weialala leia  
                     Wallala leialala

270

Elizabeth and Leicester  
 Beating oars  
 The stern was formed  
 A gilded shell  
 Red and gold  
 The brisk swell  
 Rippled both shores  
 Southwest wind  
 Carried down stream  
 The peal of bells  
 White towers

280

                    Weialala leia  
                     Wallala leialala

290

"Trams and dusty trees.  
 Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew  
 Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees  
 Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart  
 Under my feet. After the event  
 He wept. He promised 'a new start.'  
 I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate Sands.  
 I can connect  
 Nothing with nothing.  
 The broken fingernails of dirty hands.  
 My people humble people who expect  
 Nothing."

300

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning  
 O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
 O Lord Thou pluckest

310

burning

---

#### IV. DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,  
 Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell  
 And the profit and loss.

A current under sea  
 Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell  
 He passed the stages of his age and youth  
 Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,  
 Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

320

# V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces  
 After the frosty silence in the gardens  
 After the agony in stony places  
 The shouting and the crying  
 Prison and palace and reverberation  
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains  
 He who was living is now dead  
 We who were living are now dying  
 With a little patience

330

Here is no water but only rock  
 Rock and no water and the sandy road  
 The road winding above among the mountains  
 Which are mountains of rock without water  
 If there were water we should stop and drink  
 Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think  
 Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand  
 If there were only water amongst the rock  
 Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit  
 Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit  
 There is not even silence in the mountains  
 But dry sterile thunder without rain  
 There is not even solitude in the mountains  
 But red sullen faces sneer and snarl  
 From doors of mudcracked houses

340

If there were water

And no rock  
 If there were rock  
 And also water  
 And water  
 A spring

350

A pool among the rock  
If there were the sound of water only  
Not the cicada  
And dry grass singing  
But sound of water over a rock  
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees  
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop  
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you? 360  
When I count, there are only you and I together  
But when I look ahead up the white road  
There is always another one walking beside you  
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded  
I do not know whether a man or a woman  
—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air  
Murmur of maternal lamentation  
Who are those hooded hordes swarming  
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth 370  
Ringed by the flat horizon only  
What is the city over the mountains  
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air  
Falling towers  
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria  
Vienna London  
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight  
And fiddled whisper music on those strings  
And bats with baby faces in the violet light 380  
Whistled, and beat their wings  
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall  
And upside down in air were towers  
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours  
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.



In this decayed hole among the mountains  
 In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing  
 Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel  
 There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.  
 It has no windows, and the door swings,  
 Dry bones can harm no one.  
 Only a cock stood on the rooftree  
 Co co rico co co rico  
 In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust  
 Bringing rain

390

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves  
 Waited for rain, while the black clouds  
 Gathered far distant, over Himavant.  
 The jungle crouched, humped in silence.  
 Then spoke the thunder

400

DA

*Datta:* what have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart  
 The awful daring of a moment's surrender  
 Which an age of prudence can never retract  
 By this, and this only, we have existed  
 Which is not to be found in our obituaries  
 Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider  
 Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor  
 In our empty rooms

410

DA

*Dayadhvam:* I have heard the key

Turn in the door once and turn once only  
 We think of the key, each in his prison  
 Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison  
 Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours  
 Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA

*Damyata:* The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar  
 The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

420

Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore  
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
Shall I at least set my lands in order?  
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*  
*Quando fiam uti chelidon*—O swallow swallow  
*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*  
These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih

430

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## NOTES ON "THE WASTE LAND"

Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean *The Golden Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes *Adonis*, *Attis*, *Osiris*. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognise in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.

### I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Line 20. Cf. Ezekiel II, i.

23. Cf. Ecclesiastes XII, v.

31. V. Tristan und Isolde, I, verses 5-8.

42. Id. III, verse 24.

46. I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards, from which I have obviously departed to suit my own convenience. The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part V. The Phoenician Sailor and the Merchant appear later; also the "crowds of people," and Death by Water is executed in Part IV. The Man with Three Staves (an authentic member of the Tarot pack) I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself.

60. Cf. Baudelaire:

"Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,

"Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant."

63. Cf. Inferno III, 55-57:

"si lunga tratta

di gente, ch'io non avrei mai creduto

che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta."

64. Cf. Inferno IV, 25-27:

"Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,

"non avea pianto, ma' che di sospiri,

"che l'aura eterna facevan tremare."

68. A phenomenon which I have often noticed.

74. Cf. the Dirge in Webster's *White Devil*.

76. V. Baudelaire, Preface to *Fleurs du Mal*.

## II. A GAME OF CHESS

77. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, II, ii, l. 190.

92. Laquearia. V. *Aeneid*, I, 726:

dependent lychni laquearibus aureis incensi, et noctem flammis  
funalia vincunt.

98. Sylvan scene. V. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 140.

99. V. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, Philomela.

100. Cf. Part III, l. 204.

115. Cf. Part III, l. 195.

118. Cf. Webster: "Is the wind in that door still?"

126. Cf. Part I, l. 37, 48.

138. Cf. the game of chess in Middleton's *Women beware Women*.

## III. THE FIRE SERMON

176. V. Spenser, *Prothalamion*.

192. Cf. *The Tempest*, I, ii.

196. Cf. Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress*.

197. Cf. Day, *Parliament of Bees*:

"When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear,

"A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring

"Actaeon to Diana in the spring,

"Where all shall see her naked skin . . ."

199. I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken: it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia.

202. V. Verlaine, *Parsifal*.

210. The currants were quoted at a price "carriage and insurance free to London"; and the Bill of Lading etc. were to be handed to the buyer upon payment of the sight draft.

218. Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. The whole passage from Ovid is of great anthropological interest:

'... Cum Iunone iocos et maior vestra profecto est

Quam, quae contingit maribus,' dixisse, 'voluptas.'

Illa negat; placuit quae sit sententia docti

Quaerere Tiresiae: venus huic erat utraque nota.

Nam duo magnorum viridi coeuntia silva

Corpora serpentum baculi violaverat ictu

Deque viro factus, mirabile, femina septem

Egerat autumnos; octavo rursus eosdem

Vidit et 'est vestrae si tanta potentia plagae,'

Dixit 'ut auctoris sortem in contraria mutet,

Nunc quoque vos feriam!' percussis anguibus isdem

Forma prior rediit genetivaeque venit imago.

Arbiter hic igitur sumptus de lite iocosa

Dicta Iovis firmat; gravius Saturnia iusto

Nec pro materia fertur doluisse suique

Iudicis aeterna damnavit lumina nocte,

At pater omnipotens (neque enim licet inrita cuiquam  
Facta dei fecisse deo) pro lumine adempto  
Scire futura dedit poenamque levavit honore.

221. This may not appear as exact as Sappho's lines, but I had in mind the "longshore" or "dory" fisherman, who returns at nightfall.

253. V. Goldsmith, the song in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

257. V. *The Tempest*, as above.

264. The interior of St. Magnus Martyr is to my mind one of the finest among Wren's interiors. See *The Proposed Demolition of Nineteen City Churches*: (P. S. King & Son, Ltd.).

266. The Song of the (three) Thames-daughters begins here. From line 292 to 306 inclusive they speak in turn. V. *Götterdämmerung*, III, i: the Rhine-daughters.

279. V. Froude, *Elizabeth*, Vol. I, ch. iv, letter of De Quadra to Philip of Spain:

"In the afternoon we were in a barge, watching the games on the river. (The queen) was alone with Lord Robert and myself on the poop, when they began to talk nonsense, and went so far that Lord Robert at last said, as I was on the spot there was no reason why they should not be married if the queen pleased."

293. Cf. *Purgatorio*, V, 133:

"Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia;

"Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma."

307. V. St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "to Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears."

308. The complete text of the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount) from which these words are taken, will be found translated in the late Henry Clarke Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* (Harvard Oriental Series). Mr. Warren was one of the great pioneers of Buddhist studies in the Occident.

309. From St. Augustine's *Confessions* again. The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident.

#### V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

In the first part of Part V three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book) and the present decay of eastern Europe.

357. This is *Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*, the hermit-thrush which I have heard in Quebec Province. Chapman says (*Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*) "it is most at home in secluded woodland and thickety retreats. . . . Its notes are not remarkable for variety or volume, but in purity and sweetness of tone and exquisite modulation they are unequalled." Its "water-dripping song" is justly celebrated.

360. The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted.

367-77. Cf. Hermann Hesse, *Blick ins Chaos*: "Schon ist halb Europa, schon ist zumindest der halbe Osten Europas auf dem Wege zum Chaos, fährt betrunken im heiligem Wahn am Abgrund entlang und singt dazu, singt betrunken und hymnisch wie Dmitri Karamasoff sang. Ueber diese Lieder lacht der Bürger beleidigt, der Heilige und Seher hört sie mit Tränen."

402. "Datta, dayadhvam, damyata" (Give, sympathise, control). The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, 5, 1. A translation is found in Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, p. 489.

408. Cf. Webster, *The White Devil*, V, vi:

" . . . they'll remarry

Ere the worm pierce your winding-sheet, ere the spider  
Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs."

412. Cf. *Inferno*, XXXIII, 46:

"ed io sentii chiavar l'uscio di sotto  
all'orribile torre."

Also F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 346.

"My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. . . . In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul."

425. V. Weston: *From Ritual to Romance*; chapter on the Fisher King.

428. V. *Purgatorio*, XXVI, 148.

"Ara vos prec per aquella valor  
'que vos guida al som de l'escalina,

'sovegna vos a temps de ma dolor.'

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina."

429. V. *Pervigilium Veneris*. Cf. *Philomela* in Parts II and III.

430. V. Gerard de Nerval, Sonnet *El Desdichado*.

432. V. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*.

434. *Shantih*. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad.  
"The Peace which passeth understanding" is our equivalent to this word.

# The Hollow Men

1925

*Mistah Kurtz—he dead.*

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## THE HOLLOW MEN

*A penny for the Old Guy*

### I

We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
Our dried voices, when  
We whisper together  
Are quiet and meaningless  
As wind in dry grass  
Or rats' feet over broken glass  
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men.



## II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear:  
There, the eyes are  
Sunlight on a broken column  
There, is a tree swinging  
And voices are  
In the wind's singing  
More distant and more solemn  
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer  
In death's dream kingdom  
Let me also wear  
Such deliberate disguises  
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves  
In a field  
Behaving as the wind behaves  
No nearer—

Not that final meeting  
In the twilight kingdom

## III

This is the dead land  
This is cactus land  
Here the stone images  
Are raised, here they receive  
The supplication of a dead man's hand  
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this  
In death's other kingdom  
Waking alone  
At the hour when we are

Trembling with tenderness  
 Lips that would kiss  
 Form prayers to broken stone.

## IV

The eyes are not here  
 There are no eyes here  
 In this valley of dying stars  
 In this hollow valley  
 This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places  
 We grope together  
 And avoid speech  
 Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless  
 The eyes reappear  
 As the perpetual star  
 Multifoliate rose  
 Of death's twilight kingdom  
 The hope only  
 Of empty men.

## V

*Here we go round the prickly pear  
 Prickly pear prickly pear  
 Here we go round the prickly pear  
 At five o'clock in the morning.*

Between the idea  
 And the reality  
 Between the motion  
 And the act  
 Falls the Shadow

*For Thine is the Kingdom*

Between the conception  
And the creation  
Between the emotion  
And the response  
Falls the Shadow

*Life is very long*

Between the desire  
And the spasm  
Between the potency  
And the existence  
Between the essence  
And the descent  
Falls the Shadow

*For Thine is the Kingdom*

For Thine is  
Life is  
For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

# Ash-Wednesday

1930

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## I

Because I do not hope to turn again  
Because I do not hope  
Because I do not hope to turn  
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope  
I no longer strive to strive towards such things  
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)  
Why should I mourn  
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know again  
The infirm glory of the positive hour  
Because I do not think  
Because I know I shall not know  
The one veritable transitory power  
Because I cannot drink  
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again

Because I know that time is always time  
And place is always and only place  
And what is actual is actual only for one time  
And only for one place  
I rejoice that things are as they are and  
I renounce the blessed face  
And renounce the voice  
Because I cannot hope to turn again

Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something  
Upon which to rejoice

And pray to God to have mercy upon us  
And I pray that I may forget  
These matters that with myself I too much discuss  
Too much explain  
Because I do not hope to turn again  
Let these words answer  
For what is done, not to be done again  
May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly  
But merely vans to beat the air  
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry  
Smaller and dryer than the will  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death  
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

## II

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree  
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety  
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained  
In the hollow round of my skull. And God said  
Shall these bones live? shall these  
Bones live? And that which had been contained  
In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:  
Because of the goodness of this Lady  
And because of her loveliness, and because  
She honours the Virgin in meditation,  
We shine with brightness. And I who am here dissembled  
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love  
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.  
It is this which recovers  
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions

Which the leopards reject. The Lady is withdrawn  
In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown.  
Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness.  
There is no life in them. As I am forgotten  
And would be forgotten, so I would forget  
Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose. And God said  
Prophecy to the wind, to the wind only for only  
The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping  
With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

Lady of silences  
Calm and distressed  
Torn and most whole  
Rose of memory  
Rose of forgetfulness  
Exhausted and life-giving  
Worried reposeful  
The single Rose  
Is now the Garden  
Where all loves end  
Terminate torment  
Of love unsatisfied  
The greater torment  
Of love satisfied  
End of the endless  
Journey to no end  
Conclusion of all that  
Is inconclusible  
Speech without word and  
Word of no speech  
Grace to the Mother  
For the Garden  
Where all love ends.

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining  
We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other,  
Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of sand,

Forgetting themselves and each other, united  
In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye  
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity  
Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

## III

At the first turning of the second stair  
I turned and saw below  
The same shape twisted on the banister  
Under the vapour in the fetid air  
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears  
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair  
I left them twisting, turning below;  
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,  
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond repair,  
Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

At the first turning of the third stair  
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit  
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene  
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green  
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.  
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,  
Lilac and brown hair;  
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the  
third stair,  
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair  
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy  
Lord, I am not worthy

but speak the word only.

## IV

Who walked between the violet and the violet  
Who walked between  
The various ranks of varied green  
Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour,  
Talking of trivial things  
In ignorance and in knowledge of eternal dolour  
Who moved among the others as they walked,  
Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs

Made cool the dry rock and made firm the sand  
In blue of larkspur, blue of Mary's colour,  
Sovegna vos

Here are the years that walk between, bearing  
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring  
One who moves in the time between sleep and waking, wearing

White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.  
The new years walk, restoring  
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring  
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem  
The time. Redeem  
The unread vision in the higher dream  
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.

The silent sister veiled in white and blue  
Between the yews, behind the garden god,  
Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but spoke no word

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down  
Redeem the time, redeem the dream  
The token of the word unheard, unspoken

Till the wind shake a thousand whispers from the yew

And after this our exile



## V

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent  
If the unheard, unspoken  
Word is unspoken, unheard;  
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,  
The Word without a word, the Word within  
The world and for the world;  
And the light shone in darkness and  
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled  
About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Where shall the word be found, where will the word  
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence  
Not on the sea or on the islands, not  
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,  
For those who walk in darkness  
Both in the day time and in the night time  
The right time and the right place are not here  
No place of grace for those who avoid the face  
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny the voice

Will the veiled sister pray for  
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee,  
Those who are torn on the horn between season and season, time and  
time, between  
Hour and hour, word and word, power and power, those who wait  
In darkness? Will the veiled sister pray  
For children at the gate  
Who will not go away and cannot pray:  
Pray for those who chose and oppose

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Will the veiled sister between the slender  
Yew trees pray for those who offend her

And are terrified and cannot surrender  
And affirm before the world and deny between the rocks  
In the last desert between the last blue rocks  
The desert in the garden the garden in the desert  
Of drouth, spitting from the mouth the withered apple-seed.

O my people.

## VI

Although I do not hope to turn again  
Although I do not hope  
Although I do not hope to turn

Wavering between the profit and the loss  
In this brief transit where the dreams cross  
The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying  
(Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these things  
From the wide window towards the granite shore  
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying  
Unbroken wings

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices  
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices  
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel  
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell  
Quickens to recover  
The cry of quail and the whirling plover  
And the blind eye creates  
The empty forms between the ivory gates  
And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth

This is the time of tension between dying and birth  
The place of solitude where three dreams cross  
Between blue rocks  
But when the voices shaken from the yew-tree drift away  
Let the other yew be shaken and reply.

Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the  
garden,  
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still  
Even among these rocks,  
Our peace in His will  
And even among these rocks  
Sister, mother  
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,  
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.

## Ariel Poems

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### JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

'A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.'  
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

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### A SONG FOR SIMEON

Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and  
The winter sun creeps by the snow hills;  
The stubborn season has made stand.  
My life is light, waiting for the death wind,  
Like a feather on the back of my hand.  
Dust in sunlight and memory in corners  
Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.

Grant us thy peace.  
I have walked many years in this city,  
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,  
Have given and taken honour and ease.  
There went never any rejected from my door.

Who shall remember my house, where shall live my children's children  
When the time of sorrow is come?  
They will take to the goat's path, and the fox's home,  
Fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.

Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation  
Grant us thy peace.  
Before the stations of the mountain of desolation,  
Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,  
Now at this birth season of decease,  
Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,  
Grant Israel's consolation  
To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.

According to thy word.  
They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation  
With glory and derision,  
Light upon light, mounting the saints' stair.  
Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,  
Not for me the ultimate vision.  
Grant me thy peace.  
(And a sword shall pierce thy heart,  
Thine also.)  
I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,  
I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.  
Let thy servant depart,  
Having seen thy salvation.

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### ANIMULA

'Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul'  
To a flat world of changing lights and noise,  
To light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm;  
Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,  
Rising or falling, grasping at kisses and toys,

Advancing boldly, sudden to take alarm,  
Retreating to the corner of arm and knee,  
Eager to be reassured, taking pleasure  
In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,  
Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;  
Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor  
And running stags around a silver tray;  
Confounds the actual and the fanciful,  
Content with playing-cards and kings and queens,  
What the fairies do and what the servants say.  
The heavy burden of the growing soul  
Perplexes and offends more, day by day;  
Week by week, offends and perplexes more  
With the imperatives of 'is and seems'  
And may and may not, desire and control.  
The pain of living and the drug of dreams  
Curl up the small soul in the window seat  
Behind the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.  
Issues from the hand of time the simple soul  
Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,  
Unable to fare forward or retreat,  
Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,  
Denying the importunity of the blood,  
Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,  
Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;  
Living first in the silence after the viaticum.

Pray for Guiterriez, avid of speed and power,  
For Boudin, blown to pieces,  
For this one who made a great fortune,  
And that one who went his own way.  
Pray for Floret, by the boarhound slain between the yew trees,  
Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth.

## MARINA

*Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga?*

What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands  
What water lapping the bow  
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog  
What images return  
O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning  
Death  
Those who glitter with the glory of the humming-bird, meaning  
Death  
Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning  
Death  
Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning  
Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,  
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog  
By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer  
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—  
Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than the eye

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet  
Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.  
I made this, I have forgotten  
And remember.  
The rigging weak and the canvas rotten  
Between one June and another September.  
Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own.  
The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.



This form, this face, this life  
Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me  
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,  
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

What seas what shores what granite islands towards my timbers  
And woodthrush calling through the fog  
My daughter.

# Unfinished Poems

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## SWEENEY AGONISTES

### FRAGMENTS OF AN ARISTOPHANIC MELODRAMA

ORESTES: You don't see them, you don't—but *I* see them: they are hunting me down, I must move on.—*Choephoroi*.

Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings.—*St. John of the Cross*.

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## FRAGMENT OF A PROLOGUE

DUSTY. DORIS.

DUSTY: How about Pereira?

DORIS: What about Pereira?

I don't care.

DUSTY: You don't care!

Who pays the rent?

DORIS: Yes he pays the rent

DUSTY: Well some men don't and some men do

Some men don't and you know who

DORIS: You can have Pereira

DUSTY: What about Pereira?

DORIS: He's no gentleman, Pereira:

You can't trust him!

DUSTY: Well that's true.

He's no gentleman if you can't trust him

And *if* you can't trust him—

Then you never know what he's going to do.

DORIS: No it wouldn't do to be too nice to Pereira.

DUSTY: Now Sam's a gentleman through and through.

DORIS: I like Sam

DUSTY: *I like Sam*

Yes and Sam's a nice boy too.

He's a funny fellow

DORIS: *He is a funny fellow*

He's like a fellow once I knew.

*He* could make you laugh.

DUSTY: Sam can make you laugh:

Sam's all right

DORIS: But Pereira won't do.

We can't have Pereira

DUSTY: Well what you going to do?

TELEPHONE: Ting a ling ling

Ting a ling ling

DUSTY: That's Pereira

DORIS: Yes that's Pereira

DUSTY: Well what you going to do?

TELEPHONE: Ting a ling ling

Ting a ling ling

DUSTY: That's Pereira

DORIS: Well can't you stop that horrible noise?

Pick up the receiver

DUSTY: What'll I say!

DORIS: Say what you like: say I'm ill,

Say I broke my leg on the stairs

Say we've had a fire

DUSTY: Hello Hello are you there?

Yes this is Miss Dorrance's *flat*—

Oh Mr. Pereira is that you? how do you do!

Oh I'm *so* sorry. I *am* so sorry

But Doris came home with a terrible chill

No, just a chill

Oh I *think* it's only a chill

Yes indeed I hope so too—

Well I *hope* we shan't have to call a doctor  
 Doris just hates having a doctor  
 She says will you ring up on Monday  
 She hopes to be all right on Monday  
 I say do you mind if I ring off now  
 She's got her feet in mustard and water  
 I said I'm giving her mustard and water  
 All right, Monday you'll phone through.  
 Yes I'll tell her. Good bye. Gooooood bye.  
 I'm sure, that's very kind of *you*.

Ah-h-h

DORIS: Now I'm going to cut the cards for to-night.

Oh guess what the first is

DUSTY: First is. What is?

DORIS: The King of Clubs

DUSTY: That's Pereira

DORIS: It might be Sweeney

DUSTY: It's Pereira

DORIS: It might *just* as well be Sweeney

DUSTY: Well anyway it's very queer.

DORIS: Here's the four of diamonds, what's that mean?

DUSTY [*reading*]: 'A small sum of money, or a present  
 Of wearing apparel, or a party.'

That's queer too.

DORIS: Here's the three. What's that mean?

DUSTY: 'News of an absent friend.'—Pereira!

DORIS: The Queen of Hearts!—Mrs. Porter!

DUSTY: Or it might be you

DORIS: Or it might be you

We're all hearts. You can't be sure.

It just depends on what comes next.

You've got to *think* when you read the cards,

It's not a thing that anyone can do.

DUSTY: Yes I know you've a touch with the cards

What comes next?

DORIS: What comes next. It's the six.

DUSTY: 'A quarrel. An estrangement. Separation of friends.'

DORIS: Here's the two of spades.

DUSTY:                               The *two of spades!*

    THAT'S THE COFFIN!!

DORIS:                               THAT'S THE COFFIN?

    Oh good heavens what'll I do?

    Just before a party too!

DUSTY: Well it needn't be yours, it may mean a friend.

DORIS: No it's mine. I'm sure it's mine.

    I dreamt of weddings all last night.

    Yes it's mine. I know it's mine.

    Oh good heavens what'll I do.

    Well I'm not going to draw any more,

    You cut for luck. You cut for luck.

    It might break the spell. You cut for luck.

DUSTY: The Knave of Spades.

DORIS:                               That'll be Snow

DUSTY: Or it might be Swarts

DORIS:                               Or it might be Snow

DUSTY: It's a funny thing how I draw court cards

DORIS: There's a lot in the way you pick them up

DUSTY: There's an awful lot in the way you feel

DORIS: Sometimes they'll tell you nothing at all

DUSTY: You've got to know what you want to ask them

DORIS: You've got to know what you want to know

DUSTY: It's no use asking them too much

DORIS: It's no use asking more than once

DUSTY: Sometimes they're no use at all.

DORIS: I'd like to know about that coffin.

DUSTY: Well I never! What did I tell you?

    Wasn't I saying I always draw court cards?

    The Knave of Hearts!

                                  [*Whistle outside of the window.*]

                                  Well I *never*

    What a coincidence! Cards are queer!

                                  [*Whistle again.*]

DORIS: Is that Sam?

DUSTY: Of course it's Sam!

DORIS: Of course, the Knave of Hearts *is* Sam!

DUSTY [*leaning out of the window*]: Hello Sam!

WAUCHOPE: Hello dear  
 How many's up there?  
 DUSTY: Nobody's up here  
 How many's down there?  
 WAUCHOPE: Four of us here.  
 Wait till I put the car round the corner  
 We'll be right up  
 DUSTY: All right, come up.  
 DUSTY [*to DORIS*]: Cards are queer.  
 DORIS: I'd like to know about that coffin.  
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK  
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK  
 KNOCK  
 KNOCK  
 KNOCK

DORIS. DUSTY. WAUCHOPE. HORSFALL. KLIPSTEIN. KRUMPACKER.

WAUCHOPE: Hello Doris! Hello Dusty! How do you do!  
 How come? how come? will you permit me—  
 I think you girls both know Captain Horsfall—  
 We want you to meet two friends of ours,  
 American gentlemen here on business.  
 Meet Mr. Klipstein. Meet Mr. Krumpacker.  
 KLIPSTEIN: How do you do  
 KRUMPACKER: How do you do  
 KLIPSTEIN: I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance  
 KRUMPACKER: Extremely pleased to become acquainted  
 KLIPSTEIN: Sam—I should say Loot Sam Wauchope  
 KRUMPACKER: Of the Canadian Expeditionary Force—  
 KLIPSTEIN: The Loot has told us a lot about you.  
 KRUMPACKER: We were all in the war together  
 Klip and me and the Cap and Sam.  
 KLIPSTEIN: Yes we did our bit, as you folks say,  
 I'll tell the world we got the Hun on the run  
 KRUMPACKER: What about that poker game? eh what Sam?  
 What about that poker game in Bordeaux?  
 Yes Miss Dorrance you get Sam  
 To tell about that poker game in Bordeaux.

DUSTY: Do you know London well, Mr. Krumpacker?

KLIPSTEIN: No we never been here before

KRUMPACKER: We hit this town last night for the first time

KLIPSTEIN: And I certainly hope it won't be the last time.

DORIS: You like London, Mr. Klipstein?

KRUMPACKER: Do we like London? do we like London!

Do we like London!! Eh what Klip?

KLIPSTEIN: Say, Miss—er—uh—London's swell.

We like London fine.

KRUMPACKER: Perfectly slick.

DUSTY: Why don't you come and live here then?

KLIPSTEIN: Well, no, Miss—er—you haven't quite got it

(I'm afraid I didn't quite catch your name—

But I'm very pleased to meet you all the same) —

London's a little too gay for us

Yes I'll say a little too gay.

KRUMPACKER: Yes London's a little too gay for us

Don't think I mean anything *coarse*—

But I'm afraid we couldn't stand the pace.

What about it Klip?

KLIPSTEIN: You said it, Krum.

London's a slick place, London's a swell place,

London's a fine place to come on a visit—

KRUMPACKER: Specially when you got a real live Britisher

A guy like Sam to show you around.

Sam of course is at *home* in London,

And he's promised to show us around.

## FRAGMENT OF AN AGON

SWEENEY. WAUCHOPE. HORSFALL. KLIPSTEIN. KRUMPACKER.

SWARTS. SNOW. DORIS. DUSTY.

SWEENEY: I'll carry you off

To a cannibal isle.

DORIS: You'll be the cannibal!

SWEENEY: You'll be the missionary!

You'll be my little seven stone missionary!

I'll gobble you up. I'll be the cannibal.

DORIS: You'll carry me off? To a cannibal isle?

SWEENEY: I'll be the cannibal.

DORIS: I'll be the missionary.

I'll convert you!

SWEENEY: I'll convert *you*!

Into a stew.

A nice little, white little, missionary stew.

DORIS: You wouldn't eat me!

SWEENEY: Yes I'd eat you!

In a nice little, white little, soft little, tender little,

Juicy little, right little, missionary stew.

You see this egg

You see this egg

Well that's life on a crocodile isle.

There's no telephones

There's no gramophones

There's no motor cars

No two-seaters, no six-seaters,

No Citroën, no Rolls-Royce.

Nothing to eat but the fruit as it grows.

Nothing to see but the palmtrees one way

And the sea the other way,

Nothing to hear but the sound of the surf.

Nothing at all but three things

DORIS: What things?

SWEENEY: Birth, and copulation, and death.

That's all, that's all, that's all, that's all,

Birth, and copulation, and death.

DORIS: I'd be bored.

SWEENEY: You'd be bored.

Birth, and copulation, and death.

DORIS: I'd be bored.

SWEENEY: You'd be bored.

Birth, and copulation, and death.

That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:



Birth, and copulation, and death.  
I've been born, and once is enough.  
You dont remember, but I remember,  
Once is enough.

SONG BY WAUCHOPE AND HORSFALL  
SWARTS AS TAMBO. SNOW AS BONES

*Under the bamboo  
Bamboo bamboo  
Under the bamboo tree  
Two live as one  
One live as two  
Two live as three  
Under the bam  
Under the boo  
Under the bamboo tree.*

*Where the breadfruit fall  
And the penguin call  
And the sound is the sound of the sea  
Under the bam  
Under the boo  
Under the bamboo tree.*

*Where the Gauguin maids  
In the banyan shades  
Wear palmleaf drapery  
Under the bam  
Under the boo  
Under the bamboo tree.*

*Tell me in what part of the wood  
Do you want to flirt with me?  
Under the breadfruit, banyan, palmleaf  
Or under the bamboo tree?  
Any old tree will do for me  
Any old wood is just as good*

*Any old isle is just my style  
 Any fresh egg  
 Any fresh egg  
 And the sound of the coral sea.*

DORIS: I dont like eggs; I never liked eggs;  
 And I dont like life on your crocodile isle.

SONG BY KLIPSTEIN AND KRUMPACKER

SNOW AND SWARTS AS BEFORE

*My little island girl  
 My little island girl  
 I'm going to stay with you  
 And we wont worry what to do  
 We wont have to catch any trains  
 And we wont go home when it rains  
 We'll gather hibiscus flowers  
 For it wont be minutes but hours  
 For it wont be hours but years*

*diminuendo* { *And the morning  
 And the evening  
 And noontime  
 And night  
 Morning  
 Evening  
 Noontime  
 Night*

DORIS: That's not life, that's no life  
 Why I'd just as soon be dead.

SWEENEY: That's what life is. Just is

DORIS: What is?

What's that life is?

SWEENEY: Life is death.

I knew a man once did a girl in—

DORIS: Oh Mr. Sweeney, please dont talk,

I cut the cards before you came

And I drew the coffin

SWARTS:                                *You* drew the coffin?

DORIS: I drew the COFFIN very last card.

I dont care for such conversation

A woman runs a terrible risk.

SNOW: Let Mr. Sweeney continue his story.

I assure you, Sir, we are very interested.

SWEENEY: I knew a man once did a girl in

Any man might do a girl in

Any man has to, needs to, wants to

Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.

Well he kept her there in a bath

With a gallon of lysol in a bath

SWARTS: These fellows always get pinched in the end.

SNOW: Excuse me, they dont all get pinched in the end.

What about them bones on Epsom Heath?

I seen that in the papers

You seen it in the papers

They *dont* all get pinched in the end.

DORIS: A woman runs a terrible risk.

SNOW: Let Mr. Sweeney continue his story.

SWEENEY: This one didn't get pinched in the end

But that's another story too.

This went on for a couple of months

Nobody came

And nobody went

But he took in the milk and he paid the rent.

SWARTS: What did he do?

All that time, what did he do?

SWEENEY: What did he do! what did he do?

That dont apply.

Talk to live men about what they do.

He used to come and see me sometimes

I'd give him a drink and cheer him up.

DORIS: Cheer him up?

DUSTY:                                Cheer him up?

SWEENEY: Well here again that dont apply

But I've gotta use words when I talk to you.

But here's what I was going to say.



it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark  
 And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock for you  
 know the hangman's waiting for you.  
 And perhaps you're alive  
 And perhaps you're dead  
 Hoo ha ha  
 Hoo ha ha  
 Hoo  
 Hoo  
 Hoo  
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK  
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK  
 KNOCK  
 KNOCK  
 KNOCK

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## CORIOLAN

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### I. TRIUMPHAL MARCH

Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels  
 Over the paving.  
 And the flags. And the trumpets. And so many eagles.  
 How many? Count them. And such a press of people.  
 We hardly knew ourselves that day, or knew the City.  
 This is the way to the temple, and we so many crowding the way.  
 So many waiting, how many waiting? what did it matter, on such  
 a day?  
 Are they coming? No, not yet. You can see some eagles. And hear  
 the trumpets.  
 Here they come. Is he coming?  
 The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving.  
 We can wait with our stools and our sausages.  
 What comes first? Can you see? Tell us. It is

5,800,000 rifles and carbines,  
     102,000 machine guns,  
     28,000 trench mortars,  
     53,000 field and heavy guns,  
 I cannot tell how many projectiles, mines and fuses,  
     13,000 aeroplanes,  
     24,000 aeroplane engines,  
     50,000 ammunition waggons,  
 now 55,000 army waggons,  
     11,000 field kitchens,  
     1,150 field bakeries.

What a time that took. Will it be he now? No,  
 Those are the golf club Captains, these the Scouts,  
 And now the *société gymnastique de Poissy*  
 And now come the Mayor and the Liverymen. Look  
 There he is now, look:  
 There is no interrogation in his eyes  
 Or in the hands, quiet over the horse's neck,  
 And the eyes watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent.  
 O hidden under the dove's wing, hidden in the turtle's breast,  
 Under the palmtree at noon, under the running water  
 At the still point of the turning world. O hidden.

Now they go up to the temple. Then the sacrifice.  
 Now come the virgins bearing urns, urns containing  
 Dust  
 Dust  
 Dust of dust, and now  
 Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels  
 Over the paving.

That is all we could see. But how many eagles! and how many  
 trumpets!  
 (And Easter Day, we didn't get to the country,  
 So we took young Cyril to church. And they rang a bell

And he said right out loud, *crumpets*.)

Don't throw away that sausage,

It'll come in handy. He's artful. Please, will you

Give us a light?

Light

Light

*Et les soldats faisaient la haie? ILS LA FAISAIENT.*

## II. DIFFICULTIES OF A STATESMAN

Cry what shall I cry?

All flesh is grass: comprehending

The Companions of the Bath, the Knights of the British Empire,  
the Cavaliers,

O Cavaliers! of the Legion of Honour,

The Order of the Black Eagle (1st and 2nd class),

And the Order of the Rising Sun.

Cry cry what shall I cry?

The first thing to do is to form the committees:

The consultative councils, the standing committees, select committees and sub-committees.

One secretary will do for several committees.

What shall I cry?

Arthur Edward Cyril Parker is appointed telephone operator

At a salary of one pound ten a week rising by annual increments  
of five shillings

To two pounds ten a week; with a bonus of thirty shillings at Christmas

And one week's leave a year.

A committee has been appointed to nominate a commission of engineers

To consider the Water Supply.

A commission is appointed

For Public Works, chiefly the question of rebuilding the fortifications.

A commission is appointed  
To confer with a Volscian commission  
About perpetual peace: the fletchers and javelin-makers and smiths  
Have appointed a joint committee to protest against the reduction  
of orders.

Meanwhile the guards shake dice on the marches  
And the frogs (O Mantuan) croak in the marshes.  
Fireflies flare against the faint sheet lightning  
What shall I cry?

Mother mother

Here is the row of family portraits, dingy busts, all looking remark-  
ably Roman,

Remarkably like each other, lit up successively by the flare  
Of a sweaty torchbearer, yawning.

O hidden under the . . . Hidden under the . . .

Where the dove's foot rested and locked for a moment,  
A still moment, repose of noon, set under the upper branches of  
noon's widest tree

Under the breast feather stirred by the small wind after noon  
There the cyclamen spreads its wings, there the clematis droops over  
the lintel

O mother (not among these busts, all correctly inscribed)

I a tired head among these heads

Necks strong to bear them

Noses strong to break the wind

Mother

May we not be some time, almost now, together,

If the mactations, immolations, oblations, impetrations,

Are now observed

May we not be

O hidden

Hidden in the stillness of noon, in the silent croaking night.

Come with the sweep of the little bat's wing, with the small flare of  
the firefly or lightning bug,

"Rising and falling, crowned with dust," the small creatures,

The small creatures chirp thinly through the dust, through the night.



O mother

What shall I cry?

We demand a committee, a representative committee, a committee of  
investigation

RESIGN RESIGN RESIGN

## Minor Poems

---

### EYES THAT LAST I SAW IN TEARS

Eyes that last I saw in tears  
Through division  
Here in death's dream kingdom  
The golden vision reappears  
I see the eyes but not the tears  
This is my affliction

    This is my affliction  
Eyes I shall not see again  
Eyes of decision  
Eyes I shall not see unless  
At the door of death's other kingdom  
Where, as in this,  
The eyes outlast a little while  
A little while outlast the tears  
And hold us in derision.

---

### THE WIND SPRANG UP AT FOUR O'CLOCK

The wind sprang up at four o'clock  
The wind sprang up and broke the bells  
Swinging between life and death  
Here, in death's dream kingdom  
The waking echo of confusing strife  
Is it a dream or something else  
When the surface of the blackened river

Is a face that sweats with tears?  
 I saw across the blackened river  
 The camp fire shake with alien spears.  
 Here, across death's other river  
 The Tartar horsemen shake their spears.

---

## FIVE-FINGER EXERCISES

### I. *Lines to a Persian Cat*

The songsters of the air repair  
 To the green fields of Russell Square.  
 Beneath the trees there is no ease  
 For the dull brain, the sharp desires  
 And the quick eyes of Woolly Bear.  
 There is no relief but in grief.  
 O when will the creaking heart cease?  
 When will the broken chair give ease?  
 Why will the summer day delay?  
 When will Time flow away?

### II. *Lines to a Yorkshire Terrier*

In a brown field stood a tree  
 And the tree was crookt and dry.  
 In a black sky, from a green cloud  
 Natural forces shriek'd aloud,  
 Screamed, rattled, muttered endlessly.  
 Little dog was safe and warm  
 Under a cretonne eiderdown,  
 Yet the field was cracked and brown  
 And the tree was cramped and dry.  
 Pollicle dogs and cats all must  
 Jellicle cats and dogs all must  
 Like undertakers, come to dust.  
 Here a little dog I pause

Heaving up my prior paws,  
Pause, and sleep endlessly.

III. *Lines to a Duck in the Park*

The long light shakes across the lake,  
The forces of the morning quake,  
The dawn is slant across the lawn,  
Here is no eft or mortal snake  
But only sluggish duck and drake.  
I have seen the morning shine,  
I have had the Bread and Wine,  
Let the feathered mortals take  
That which is their mortal due,  
Pinching bread and finger too,  
Easier had than squirming worm;  
For I know, and so should you  
That soon the enquiring worm shall try  
Our well-preserved complacency.

IV. *Lines to Ralph Hodgson Esqre.*

How delightful to meet Mr. Hodgson!  
(Everyone wants to know *him*) —  
With his musical sound  
And his Baskerville Hound  
Which, just at a word from his master  
Will follow you faster and faster  
And tear you limb from limb.  
How delightful to meet Mr. Hodgson!  
Who is worshipped by all waitresses  
(They regard him as something apart)  
While on his palate fine he presses  
The juice of the gooseberry tart.  
How delightful to meet Mr. Hodgson!  
(Everyone wants to know *him*).  
He has 999 canaries  
And round his head finches and fairies  
In jubilant rapture skim.

How delightful to meet Mr. Hodgson!  
 (Everyone wants to meet *him*).

V. *Lines for Cuscutaraway and Mirza Murad Ali Beg*

How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!  
 With his features of clerical cut,  
 And his brow so grim  
 And his mouth so prim  
 And his conversation, so nicely  
 Restricted to What Precisely  
 And If and Perhaps and But.  
 How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!  
 With a bobtail cur  
 In a coat of fur  
 And a porpentine cat  
 And a wopsical hat:  
 How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!  
 (Whether his mouth be open or shut).

## LANDSCAPES

### I. *New Hampshire*

Children's voices in the orchard  
 Between the blossom- and the fruit-time:  
 Golden head, crimson head,  
 Between the green tip and the root.  
 Black wing, brown wing, hover over;  
 Twenty years and the spring is over;  
 To-day grieves, to-morrow grieves,  
 Cover me over, light-in-leaves;  
 Golden head, black wing,  
 Cling, swing,  
 Spring, sing,  
 Swing up into the apple-tree.

II. *Virginia*

Red river, red river,  
Slow flow heat is silence  
No will is still as a river  
Still. Will heat move  
Only through the mocking-bird  
Heard once? Still hills  
Wait. Gates wait. Purple trees,  
White trees, wait, wait,  
Delay, decay. Living, living,  
Never moving. Ever moving  
Iron thoughts came with me  
And go with me:  
Red river, river, river.

III. *Usk*

Do not suddenly break the branch, or  
Hope to find  
The white hart behind the white well.  
Glance aside, not for lance, do not spell  
Old enchantments. Let them sleep.  
"Gently dip, but not too deep,"  
Lift your eyes  
Where the roads dip and where the roads rise  
Seek only there  
Where the grey light meets the green air  
The hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer.

IV. *Rannoch, by Glencoe*

Here the crow starves, here the patient stag  
Breeds for the rifle. Between the soft moor  
And the soft sky, scarcely room  
To leap or soar. Substance crumbles, in the thin air  
Moon cold or moon hot. The road winds in  
Listlessness of ancient war  
Languor of broken steel,  
Clamour of confused wrong, apt

In silence. Memory is strong  
 Beyond the bone. Pride snapped,  
 Shadow of pride is long, in the long pass  
 No concurrence of bone.

V. *Cape Ann*

O quick quick quick, quick hear the song-sparrow,  
 Swamp-sparrow, fox-sparrow, vesper-sparrow  
 At dawn and dusk. Follow the dance  
 Of the goldfinch at noon. Leave to chance  
 The Blackburnian warbler, the shy one. Hail  
 With shrill whistle the note of the quail, the bob-white  
 Dodging by bay-bush. Follow the feet  
 Of the walker, the water-thrush. Follow the flight  
 Of the dancing arrow, the purple martin. Greet  
 In silence the bullbat. All are delectable. Sweet sweet sweet  
 But resign this land at the end, resign it  
 To its true owner, the tough one, the sea-gull.  
 The palaver is finished.

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LINES FOR AN OLD MAN

The tiger in the tiger-pit  
 Is not more irritable than I.  
 The whipping tail is not more still  
 Than when I smell the enemy  
 Writhing in the essential blood  
 Or dangling from the friendly tree.  
 When I lay bare the tooth of wit  
 The hissing over the archèd tongue  
 Is more affectionate than hate,  
 More bitter than the love of youth,  
 And inaccessible by the young.  
 Reflected from my golden eye  
 The dullard knows that he is mad.  
 Tell me if I am not glad!

## Choruses from "The Rock"

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### I

The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,  
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.  
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,  
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!  
The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.

I journeyed to London, to the timekept City,  
Where the River flows, with foreign flotations.  
There I was told: we have too many churches,  
And too few chop-houses. There I was told:  
Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church  
In the place where they work, but where they spend their  
Sundays.



In the City, we need no bells:  
 Let them waken the suburbs.  
 I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:  
 We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor  
 To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.  
 If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the papers.  
 In industrial districts, there I was told  
 Of economic laws.  
 In the pleasant countryside, there it seemed  
 That the country now is only fit for picnics.  
 And the Church does not seem to be wanted  
 In country or in suburbs; and in the town  
 Only for important weddings.

CHORUS LEADER: Silence! and preserve respectful distance.

For I perceive approaching  
 The Rock. Who will perhaps answer our doubtings.  
 The Rock. The Watcher. The Stranger.  
 He who has seen what has happened.  
 And who sees what is to happen.  
 The Witness. The Critic. The Stranger.  
 The God-shaken, in whom is the truth inborn.

*Enter the ROCK, led by a Boy:*

THE ROCK: The lot of man is ceaseless labour,  
 Or ceaseless idleness, which is still harder,  
 Or irregular labour, which is not pleasant.  
 I have trodden the winepress alone, and I know  
 That it is hard to be really useful, resigning  
 The things that men count for happiness, seeking  
 The good deeds that lead to obscurity, accepting  
 With equal face those that bring ignominy,  
 The applause of all or the love of none.  
 All men are ready to invest their money  
 But most expect dividends.  
 I say to you: *Make perfect your will.*  
 I say: take no thought of the harvest, ✓  
 But only of proper sowing.

The world turns and the world changes,  
 But one thing does not change.  
 In all of my years, one thing does not change.  
 However you disguise it, this thing does not change:  
 The perpetual struggle of Good and Evil.  
 Forgetful, you neglect your shrines and churches;  
 The men you are in these times deride  
 What has been done of good, you find explanations  
 To satisfy the rational and enlightened mind.  
 Second, you neglect and belittle the desert.  
 The desert is not remote in southern tropics,  
 The desert is not only around the corner,  
 The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,  
 The desert is in the heart of your brother.  
 The good man is the builder, if he build what is good.  
 I will show you the things that are now being done,  
 And some of the things that were long ago done,  
 That you may take heart. Make perfect your will.  
 Let me show you the work of the humble. Listen.

*The lights fade; in the semi-darkness the voices of WORKMEN are heard chanting.*

*In the vacant places  
 We will build with new bricks  
 There are hands and machines  
 And clay for new brick  
 And lime for new mortar  
 Where the bricks are fallen  
 We will build with new stone  
 Where the beams are rotten  
 We will build with new timbers  
 Where the word is unspoken  
 We will build with new speech  
 There is work together  
 A Church for all  
 And a job for each  
 Every man to his work.*

*Now a group of WORKMEN is silhouetted against the dim sky. From farther away, they are answered by voices of the UNEMPLOYED.*

*No man has hired us  
With pocketed hands  
And lowered faces  
We stand about in open places  
And shiver in unlit rooms.  
Only the wind moves  
Over empty fields, untilled  
Where the plough rests, at an angle  
To the furrow. In this land  
There shall be one cigarette to two men,  
To two women one half pint of bitter  
Ale. In this land  
No man has hired us.  
Our life is unwelcome, our death  
Unmentioned in "The Times."*

*Chant of WORKMEN again.*

*The river flows, the seasons turn,  
The sparrow and starling have no time to waste.  
If men do not build  
How shall they live?  
When the field is tilled  
And the wheat is bread  
They shall not die in a shortened bed  
And a narrow sheet. In this street  
There is no beginning, no movement, no peace and no end  
But noise without speech, food without taste.  
Without delay, without haste  
We would build the beginning and the end of this street.  
We build the meaning:  
A Church for all  
And a job for each  
Each man to his work.*

## II

Thus your fathers were made  
 Fellow citizens of the saints, of the household of GOD, being built  
 upon the foundation  
 Of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself the chief corner-  
 stone.

But you, have you built well, that you now sit helpless in a  
 ruined house?

Where many are born to idleness, to frittered lives and squalid  
 deaths, embittered scorn in honey-hives,

And those who would build and restore turn out the palms of  
 their hands, or look in vain towards foreign lands for alms to  
 be more or the urn to be filled.

Your building not fitly framed together, you sit ashamed and  
 wonder whether and how you may be builded together for a  
 habitation of GOD in the Spirit, the Spirit which moved on  
 the face of the waters like a lantern set on the back of a  
 tortoise.

And some say: "How can we love our neighbour? For love must  
 be made real in act, as desire unites with desired; we have only  
 our labour to give and our labour is not required.

We wait on corners, with nothing to bring but the songs we can  
 sing which nobody wants to hear sung;

Waiting to be flung in the end, on a heap less useful than dung."

You, have you built well, have you forgotten the cornerstone?  
 Talking of right relations of men, but not of relations of men  
 to GOD.

"Our citizenship is in Heaven"; yes, but that is the model and  
 type for your citizenship upon earth.

When your fathers fixed the place of GOD,  
 And settled all the inconvenient saints,  
 Apostles, martyrs, in a kind of Whipsnade,  
 Then they could set about imperial expansion  
 Accompanied by industrial development.  
 Exporting iron, coal and cotton goods

And intellectual enlightenment  
And everything, including capital  
And several versions of the Word of god:  
The British race assured of a mission  
Performed it, but left much at home unsure.

Of all that was done in the past, you eat the fruit, either rotten  
or ripe.  
And the Church must be forever building, and always decaying,  
and always being restored.  
For every ill deed in the past we suffer the consequence:  
For sloth, for avarice, gluttony, neglect of the Word of god,  
For pride, for lechery, treachery, for every act of sin.  
And of all that was done that was good, you have the inheritance.  
For good and ill deeds belong to a man alone, when he stands  
alone on the other side of death,  
But here upon earth you have the reward of the good and ill that  
was done by those who have gone before you.  
And all that is ill you may repair if you walk together in humble  
repentance, expiating the sins of your fathers;  
And all that was good you must fight to keep with hearts as  
devoted as those of your fathers who fought to gain it.  
The Church must be forever building, for it is forever decaying  
within and attacked from without;  
For this is the law of life; and you must remember that while  
there is time of prosperity  
The people will neglect the Temple, and in time of adversity  
they will decry it.

What life have you if you have not life together?  
There is no life that is not in community,  
And no community not lived in praise of god.  
Even the anchorite who meditates alone,  
For whom the days and nights repeat the praise of god,  
Prays for the Church, the Body of Christ incarnate.  
And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads,  
And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour

Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance,  
 But all dash to and fro in motor cars,  
 Familiar with the roads and settled nowhere.  
 Nor does the family even move about together,  
 But every son would have his motor cycle,  
 And daughters ride away on casual pillions.

Much to cast down, much to build, much to restore;  
 Let the work not delay, time and the arm not waste;  
 Let the clay be dug from the pit, let the saw cut the stone,  
 Let the fire not be quenched in the forge.

### III

The Word of the LORD came unto me, saying:  
 O miserable cities of designing men,  
 O wretched generation of enlightened men,  
 Betrayed in the mazes of your ingenuities,  
 Sold by the proceeds of your proper inventions:  
 I have given you hands which you turn from worship,  
 I have given you speech, for endless palaver,  
 I have given you my Law, and you set up commissions,  
 I have given you lips, to express friendly sentiments,  
 I have given you hearts, for reciprocal distrust.  
 I have given you power of choice, and you only alternate ✓  
 Between futile speculation and unconsidered action.  
 Many are engaged in writing books and printing them,  
 Many desire to see their names in print,  
 Many read nothing but the race reports.  
 Much is your reading, but not the Word of GOD, ✓  
 Much is your building, but not the House of GOD.  
 Will you build me a house of plaster, with corrugated roofing,  
 To be filled with a litter of Sunday newspapers?

1ST MALE VOICE: A Cry from the East:

What shall be done to the shore of smoky ships?  
 Will you leave my people forgetful and forgotten  
 To idleness, labour, and delirious stupor?

There shall be left the broken chimney,  
The peeled hull, a pile of rusty iron,  
In a street of scattered brick where the goat climbs,  
Where My Word is unspoken.

2ND MALE VOICE: A Cry from the North, from the West and from  
the South

Whence thousands travel daily to the timekept City;  
Where My Word is unspoken,  
In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels  
The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,  
The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,  
And the wind shall say: "Here were decent godless people:  
Their only monument the asphalt road  
And a thousand lost golf balls."

CHORUS: We build in vain unless the LORD build with us.

Can you keep the City that the LORD keeps not with you?  
A thousand policemen directing the traffic  
Cannot tell you why you come or where you go.  
A colony of cavies or a horde of active marmots  
Build better than they that build without the LORD.  
Shall we lift up our feet among perpetual ruins?  
I have loved the beauty of Thy House, the peace of Thy  
sanctuary,  
I have swept the floors and garnished the altars.  
Where there is no temple there shall be no homes,  
Though you have shelters and institutions,  
Precarious lodgings while the rent is paid,  
Subsiding basements where the rat breeds  
Or sanitary dwellings with numbered doors  
Or a house a little better than your neighbour's;  
When the Stranger says: "What is the meaning of this city?  
Do you huddle close together because you love each other?"  
What will you answer? "We all dwell together  
To make money from each other"? or "This is a community"?  
And the Stranger will depart and return to the desert.  
O my soul, be prepared for the coming of the Stranger,  
Be prepared for him who knows how to ask questions.



O weariness of men who turn from GOD  
To the grandeur of your mind and the glory of your action,  
To arts and inventions and daring enterprises,  
To schemes of human greatness thoroughly discredited,  
Binding the earth and the water to your service,  
Exploiting the seas and developing the mountains,  
Dividing the stars into common and preferred,  
Engaged in devising the perfect refrigerator,  
Engaged in working out a rational morality,  
Engaged in printing as many books as possible,  
Plotting of happiness and flinging empty bottles,  
Turning from your vacancy to fevered enthusiasm  
For nation or race or what you call humanity;  
Though you forget the way to the Temple,  
There is one who remembers the way to your door:  
Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.  
You shall not deny the Stranger.

## IV

There are those who would build the Temple,  
And those who prefer that the Temples should not be built.  
In the days of Nehemiah the Prophet  
There was no exception to the general rule.  
In Shushan the palace, in the month Nisan,  
He served the wine to the King Artaxerxes,  
And he grieved for the broken city, Jerusalem;  
And the King gave him leave to depart  
That he might rebuild the city.  
So he went, with a few, to Jerusalem,  
And there, by the dragon's well, by the dung gate,  
By the fountain gate, by the king's pool,  
Jerusalem lay waste, consumed with fire;  
No place for a beast to pass.  
There were enemies without to destroy him,  
And spies and self-seekers within,  
When he and his men laid their hands to rebuilding the wall.  
So they built as men must build  
With the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other.



## V

O Lord, deliver me from the man of excellent intention and impure heart: for the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian: were doubtless men of public spirit and zeal.

Preserve me from the enemy who has something to gain: and from the friend who has something to lose.

Remembering the words of Nehemiah the Prophet: "The trowel in hand, and the gun rather loose in the holster."

Those who sit in a house of which the use is forgotten: are like snakes that lie on mouldering stairs, content in the sunlight. And the others run about like dogs, full of enterprise, sniffing and barking: they say, "This house is a nest of serpents, let us destroy it,

And have done with these abominations, the turpitudes of the Christians." And these are not justified, nor the others.

And they write innumerable books; being too vain and distracted for silence: seeking every one after his own elevation, and dodging his emptiness.

If humility and purity be not in the heart, they are not in the home: and if they are not in the home, they are not in the City.

The man who has builded during the day would return to his hearth at nightfall: to be blessed with the gift of silence, and doze before he sleeps.

But we are encompassed with snakes and dogs: therefore some must labour, and others must hold the spears.

## VI

It is hard for those who have never known persecution,  
And who have never known a Christian,

To believe these tales of Christian persecution.

It is hard for those who live near a Bank

To doubt the security of their money.

It is hard for those who live near a Police Station

To believe in the triumph of violence.

Do you think that the Faith has conquered the World

And that lions no longer need keepers?  
 Do you need to be told that whatever has been, can still be?  
 Do you need to be told that even such modest attainments  
 As you can boast in the way of polite society  
 Will hardly survive the Faith to which they owe their significance?  
 Men! polish your teeth on rising and retiring;  
 Women! polish your fingernails:  
 You polish the tooth of the dog and the talon of the cat.  
 Why should men love the Church? Why should they love her laws?  
 She tells them of Life and Death, and of all that they would forget.  
 She is tender where they would be hard, and hard where they like to be soft.  
 She tells them of Evil and Sin, and other unpleasant facts.  
 They constantly try to escape  
 From the darkness outside and within  
 By dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.  
 But the man that is will shadow  
 The man that pretends to be.  
 And the Son of Man was not crucified once for all,  
 The blood of the martyrs not shed once for all,  
 The lives of the Saints not given once for all:  
 But the Son of Man is crucified always  
 And there shall be Martyrs and Saints.  
 And if blood of Martyrs is to flow on the steps  
 We must first build the steps;  
 And if the Temple is to be cast down  
 We must first build the Temple.

## VII

In the beginning GOD created the world. Waste and void. Waste  
 and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep.  
 And when there were men, in their various ways, they struggled  
 in torment towards GOD

Blindly and vainly, for man is a vain thing, and man without  
god is a seed upon the wind: driven this way and that, and  
finding no place of lodgement and germination.  
They followed the light and the shadow, and the light led them  
forward to light and the shadow led them to darkness,  
Worshipping snakes or trees, worshipping devils rather than  
nothing: crying for life beyond life, for ecstasy not of the flesh.  
Waste and void. Waste and void. And darkness on the face of  
the deep.

And the Spirit moved upon the face of the water.  
And men who turned towards the light and were known of the  
light  
Invented the Higher Religions; and the Higher Religions were  
good  
And led men from light to light, to knowledge of Good and Evil.  
But their light was ever surrounded and shot with darkness  
As the air of temperate seas is pierced by the still dead breath of  
the Arctic Current;  
And they came to an end, a dead end stirred with a flicker of life,  
And they came to the withered ancient look of a child that has  
died of starvation.  
Prayer wheels, worship of the dead, denial of this world, affirma-  
tion of rites with forgotten meanings  
In the restless wind-whipped sand, or the hills where the wind  
will not let the snow rest.  
Waste and void. Waste and void. And darkness on the face of  
the deep.

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time  
and of time,  
A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history:  
transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time  
but not like a moment of time,  
A moment in time but time was made through that moment:  
for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment  
of time gave the meaning.

Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light, in the  
 light of the Word,  
 Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative  
 being;  
 Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before,  
 selfish and purblind as ever before,  
 Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their  
 march on the way that was lit by the light;  
 Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, yet fol-  
 lowing no other way.

But it seems that something has happened that has never hap-  
 pened before: though we know not just when, or why, or  
 how, or where.

Men have left god not for other gods, they say, but for no god;  
 and this has never happened before

That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first  
 Reason,

And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race,  
 or Dialectic.

The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells up-  
 turned, what have we to do

But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards

In an age which advances progressively backwards?

VOICE OF THE UNEMPLOYED [*afar off*]:

*In this land*

*There shall be one cigarette to two men,*

*To two women one half pint of bitter*

*Ale. . . .*

CHORUS: What does the world say, does the whole world stray in  
 high-powered cars on a by-pass way?

VOICE OF THE UNEMPLOYED [*more faintly*]

*In this land*

*No man has hired us. . . .*

CHORUS: Waste and void. Waste and void. And darkness on the face  
 of the deep.

Has the Church failed mankind, or has mankind failed the  
 Church?

When the Church is no longer regarded, not even opposed, and  
men have forgotten  
All gods except Usury, Lust and Power.

## VIII

O Father we welcome your words,  
And we will take heart for the future,  
Remembering the past.

The heathen are come into thine inheritance,  
And thy temple have they defiled.

Who is this that cometh from Edom?

He has trodden the wine-press alone.

There came one who spoke of the shame of Jerusalem  
And the holy places defiled;  
Peter the Hermit, scourging with words.  
And among his hearers were a few good men,  
Many who were evil,  
And most who were neither.  
Like all men in all places,

Some went from love of glory,  
Some went who were restless and curious,  
Some were rapacious and lustful.  
Many left their bodies to the kites of Syria  
Or sea-strewn along the routes;  
Many left their souls in Syria,  
Living on, sunken in moral corruption;  
Many came back well broken,  
Diseased and beggared, finding  
A stranger at the door in possession:  
Came home cracked by the sun of the East  
And the seven deadly sins in Syria.

But our King did well at Acre.  
And in spite of all the dishonour,  
The broken standards, the broken lives,  
The broken faith in one place or another,  
There was something left that was more than the tales  
Of old men on winter evenings.  
Only the faith could have done what was good of it,  
Whole faith of a few,  
Part faith of many.  
Not avarice, lechery, treachery,  
Envy, sloth, gluttony, jealousy, pride:  
It was not these that made the Crusades,  
But these that unmade them.

Remember the faith that took men from home  
At the call of a wandering preacher.  
Our age is an age of moderate virtue  
And of moderate vice  
When men will not lay down the Cross  
Because they will never assume it.  
Yet nothing is impossible, nothing,  
To men of faith and conviction.  
Let us therefore make perfect our will.  
O GOD, help us.

## IX

Son of Man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears  
And set thine heart upon all that I show thee.  
Who is this that has said: the House of GOD is a House of Sorrow;  
We must walk in black and go sadly, with long-drawn faces,  
We must go between empty walls, quavering lowly, whispering  
faintly,  
Among a few flickering scattered lights?  
They would put upon GOD their own sorrow, the grief they  
should feel  
For their sins and faults as they go about their daily occasions.  
Yet they walk in the street proudnecked, like thoroughbreds  
ready for races,

Adorning themselves, and busy in the market, the forum,  
And all other secular meetings.  
Thinking good of themselves, ready for any festivity,  
Doing themselves very well.  
Let us mourn in a private chamber, learning the way of pen-  
tence,  
And then let us learn the joyful communion of saints.

The soul of Man must quicken to creation.  
Out of the formless stone, when the artist united himself with  
stone,  
Spring always new forms of life, from the soul of man that is  
joined to the soul of stone;  
Out of the meaningless practical shapes of all that is living or  
lifeless  
Joined with the artist's eye, new life, new form, new colour.  
Out of the sea of sound the life of music,  
Out of the slimy mud of words, out of the sleet and hail of verbal  
imprecisions,  
Approximate thoughts and feelings, words that have taken the  
place of thoughts and feelings,  
There spring the perfect order of speech, and the beauty of  
incantation.

LORD, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?  
Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers  
For life, for dignity, grace and order,  
And intellectual pleasures of the senses?  
The LORD who created must wish us to create  
And employ our creation again in His service  
Which is already His service in creating.  
For Man is joined spirit and body,  
And therefore must serve as spirit and body.  
Visible and invisible, two worlds meet in Man;  
Visible and invisible must meet in His Temple;  
You must not deny the body.



Now you shall see the Temple completed:  
 After much striving, after many obstacles;  
 For the work of creation is never without travail;  
 The formed stone, the visible crucifix,  
 The dressed altar, the lifting light,

Light

Light

The visible reminder of Invisible Light.

# X

You have seen the house built, you have seen it adorned  
 By one who came in the night, it is now dedicated to GOD.  
 It is now a visible church, one more light set on a hill  
 In a world confused and dark and disturbed by portents of fear.  
 And what shall we say of the future? Is one church all we can  
 build?  
 Or shall the Visible Church go on to conquer the World?

The great snake lies ever half awake, at the bottom of the pit  
 of the world, curled  
 In folds of himself until he awakens in hunger and moving his  
 head to right and to left prepares for his hour to devour.  
 But the Mystery of Iniquity is a pit too deep for mortal eyes to  
 plumb. Come  
 Ye out from among those who prize the serpent's golden eyes,  
 The worshippers, self-given sacrifice of the snake. Take  
 Your way and be ye separate.  
 Be not too curious of Good and Evil;  
 Seek not to count the future waves of Time;  
 But be ye satisfied that you have light  
 Enough to take your step and find your foothold.

O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!  
 Too bright for mortal vision.



O Greater Light, we praise Thee for the less;  
The eastern light our spires touch at morning,  
The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,  
The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,  
Moon light and star light, owl and moth light,  
Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.  
O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!

We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled,  
The light of altar and of sanctuary;  
Small lights of those who meditate at midnight  
And lights directed through the coloured panes of windows  
And light reflected from the polished stone,  
The gilded carven wood, the coloured fresco.  
Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward  
And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.  
We see the light but see not whence it comes.  
O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!

In our rhythm of earthly life we tire of light. We are glad  
when the day ends, when the play ends; and ecstasy is too  
much pain.  
We are children quickly tired: children who are up in the night  
and fall asleep as the rocket is fired; and the day is long for  
work or play.  
We tire of distraction or concentration, we sleep and are glad  
to sleep,  
Controlled by the rhythm of blood and the day and the night  
and the seasons.  
And we must extinguish the candle, put out the light and  
relight it;  
Forever must quench, forever relight the flame.  
Therefore we thank Thee for our little light, that is dappled  
with shadow.  
We thank Thee who hast moved us to building, to finding, to  
forming at the ends of our fingers and beams of our eyes.

And when we have built an altar to the Invisible Light, we may  
set thereon the little lights for which our bodily vision is made.  
And we thank Thee that darkness reminds us of light.  
O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory!

# Four Quartets



## Burnt Norton

τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζῶουσιν οἱ πολλοί  
ὥς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

I. p. 77. Fr. 2.

ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὠυτή.

I. p. 89. Fr. 60.

Diels: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Herakleitos).

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### I

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.

Other echoes  
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?  
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,  
Round the corner. Through the first gate,

Into our first world, shall we follow  
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.  
There they were, dignified, invisible,  
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,  
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,  
And the bird called, in response to  
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,  
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses  
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.  
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.  
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,  
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,  
To look down into the drained pool.  
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.  
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.

## II

Garlic and sapphires in the mud  
Clot the bedded axle-tree.  
The trilling wire in the blood  
Sings below inveterate scars  
And reconciles forgotten wars.  
The dance along the artery  
The circulation of the lymph  
Are figured in the drift of stars

Ascend to summer in the tree  
We move above the moving tree  
In light upon the figured leaf  
And hear upon the sodden floor  
Below, the boarhound and the boar  
Pursue their pattern as before  
But reconciled among the stars.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor  
towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,  
*Erhebung* without motion, concentration  
Without elimination, both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood  
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
The resolution of its partial horror.  
Yet the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
Which flesh cannot endure.

Time past and time future  
Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat.

The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered. ✓

## III

Here is a place of disaffection  
Time before and time after  
In a dim light: neither daylight  
Investing form with lucid stillness  
Turning shadow into transient beauty  
With slow rotation suggesting permanence  
Nor darkness to purify the soul  
Emptying the sensual with deprivation  
Cleansing affection from the temporal.  
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker  
Over the strained time-ridden faces  
Distracted from distraction by distraction  
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning  
Tumid apathy with no concentration  
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind  
That blows before and after time,  
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs  
Time before and time after.  
Eructation of unhealthy souls  
Into the faded air, the torpid  
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,  
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,  
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here  
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

Descend lower, descend only  
Into the world of perpetual solitude,  
World not world, but that which is not world,  
Internal darkness, deprivation  
And destitution of all property,  
Desiccation of the world of sense,  
Evacuation of the world of fancy,



Inoperancy of the world of spirit;  
This is the one way, and the other  
Is the same, not in movement  
But abstention from movement; while the world moves  
In appetency, on its metalled ways  
Of time past and time future.

## IV

Time and the bell have buried the day,  
The black cloud carries the sun away.  
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis  
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray  
Clutch and cling?  
Chill  
Fingers of yew be curled  
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing  
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still  
At the still point of the turning world.

## V

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness.  
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,  
Not that only, but the co-existence,  
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,  
And the end and the beginning were always there  
Before the beginning and after the end.  
And all is always now. Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices

Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,  
Always assail them. The Word in the desert  
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,  
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,  
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

The detail of the pattern is movement,  
As in the figure of the ten stairs.  
Desire itself is movement  
Not in itself desirable;  
Love is itself unmoving,  
Only the cause and end of movement,  
Timeless, and undesiring  
Except in the aspect of time  
Caught in the form of limitation  
Between un-being and being.  
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight  
Even while the dust moves  
There rises the hidden laughter  
Of children in the foliage  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
Ridiculous the waste sad time  
Stretching before and after.

## East Coker

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### I

In my beginning is my end. In succession  
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth  
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,  
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.  
Houses live and die: there is a time for building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane  
And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots  
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.

In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls  
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane  
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,  
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,  
And the deep lane insists on the direction  
Into the village, in the electric heat  
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light  
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.  
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.  
Wait for the early owl.

In that open field  
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,  
On a Summer midnight, you can hear the music

Of the weak pipe and the little drum  
And see them dancing around the bonfire  
The association of man and woman  
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—  
A dignified and commodious sacrament.  
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm  
Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire  
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,  
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter  
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,  
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth  
Mirth of those long since under earth  
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,  
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing  
As in their living in the living seasons  
The time of the seasons and the constellations  
The time of milking and the time of harvest  
The time of the coupling of man and woman  
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.  
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

Dawn points, and another day  
Prepares for heat and silence. Out at sea the dawn wind  
Wrinkles and slides. I am here  
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.

## II

What is the late November doing  
With the disturbance of the spring  
And creatures of the summer heat,  
And snowdrops writhing under feet  
And hollyhocks that aim too high  
Red into grey and tumble down  
Late roses filled with early snow?  
Thunder rolled by the rolling stars  
Simulates triumphal cars

Deployed in constellated wars  
Scorpion fights against the Sun  
Until the Sun and Moon go down  
Comets weep and Leonids fly  
Hunt the heavens and the plains  
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring  
The world to that destructive fire  
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory:  
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,  
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle  
With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter.  
It was not (to start again) what one had expected.  
What was to be the value of the long looked forward to,  
Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity  
And the wisdom of age? Had they deceived us  
Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders,  
Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?  
The serenity only a deliberate hebetude,  
The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets  
Useless in the darkness into which they peered  
Or from which they turned their eyes. There is, it seems to us,  
At best, only a limited value  
In the knowledge derived from experience.  
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,  
For the pattern is new in every moment  
And every moment is a new and shocking  
Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived  
Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm.  
In the middle, not only in the middle of the way  
But all the way, in a dark wood, in a bramble,  
On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure foothold,  
And menaced by monsters, fancy lights,  
Risking enchantment. Do not let me hear  
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,  
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,

Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.  
The only wisdom we can hope to acquire  
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

The houses are all gone under the sea.

The dancers are all gone under the hill.

### III

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,  
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,  
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,  
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,  
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,  
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark,  
And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha  
And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors,  
And cold the sense and lost the motive of action.  
And we all go with them, into the silent funeral,  
Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.  
I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you  
Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,  
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed  
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on  
darkness,

And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama  
And the bold imposing façade are all being rolled away—  
Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long be-  
tween stations

And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence  
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen  
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;  
Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of  
nothing—

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith

But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,  
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy  
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth.

You say I am repeating  
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.  
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,  
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not.

## IV

The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
That questions the distempered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel  
The sharp compassion of the healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

Our only health is the disease  
If we obey the dying nurse  
Whose constant care is not to please  
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,  
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.

The whole earth is our hospital  
Endowed by the ruined millionaire,  
Wherein, if we do well, we shall  
Die of the absolute paternal care  
That will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere.

The chill ascends from feet to knees,  
The fever sings in mental wires.  
If to be warmed, then I must freeze  
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires  
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

The dripping blood our only drink,  
The bloody flesh our only food:  
In spite of which we like to think  
That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood—  
Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.

## V

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—  
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—  
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which  
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer  
By strength and submission, has already been discovered  
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope  
To emulate—but there is no competition—  
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions  
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.  
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.



Home is where one starts from. As we grow older  
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated  
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment  
Isolated, with no before and after,  
But a lifetime burning in every moment  
And not the lifetime of one man only  
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.  
There is a time for the evening under starlight,  
A time for the evening under lamplight  
(The evening with the photograph album).  
Love is most nearly itself  
When here and now cease to matter. ✓  
Old men ought to be explorers  
Here and there does not matter  
We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union, a deeper communion  
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,  
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters  
Of the petrel and the porpoise.      In my end is my beginning.

## The Dry Salvages

(The Dry Salvages—presumably *les trois sauvages*—is a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. *Salvages* is pronounced to rhyme with *assuages*. *Groaner*: a whistling buoy.)

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### I

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable,  
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;  
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;  
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.  
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in cities—ever, however, implacable,  
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder  
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated  
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.  
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,  
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,  
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,  
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;  
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite  
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses  
Its hints of earlier and other creation:  
The starfish, the hermit crab, the whale's backbone;  
The pools where it offers to our curiosity  
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.  
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,  
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar  
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,

Many gods and many voices.

The salt is on the briar rose,

The fog is in the fir trees.

The sea howl

And the sea yelp, are different voices

Often together heard; the whine in the rigging,

The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,

The distant rote in the granite teeth,

And the wailing warning from the approaching headland

Are all sea voices, and the heaving groaner

Rounded homewards, and the seagull:

And under the oppression of the silent fog

The tolling bell

Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried

Ground swell, a time

Older than the time of chronometers, older

Than time counted by anxious worried women

Lying awake, calculating the future,

Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel

And piece together the past and the future,

Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,

The future futureless, before the morning watch

When time stops and time is never ending;

And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,

Clangs

The bell.

## II

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing,

The silent withering of autumn flowers

Dropping their petals and remaining motionless;

Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage,

The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayerable

Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?

There is no end, but addition: the trailing

Consequence of further days and hours,

While emotion takes to itself the emotionless

Years of living among the breakage  
Of what was believed in as the most reliable—  
And therefore the fittest for renunciation.

There is the final addition, the failing  
Pride or resentment at failing powers,  
The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,  
In a drifting boat with a slow leakage,  
The silent listening to the undeniable  
Clamour of the bell of the last annunciation.

Where is the end of them, the fishermen sailing  
Into the wind's tail, where the fog cowers?  
We cannot think of a time that is oceanless  
Or of an ocean not littered with wastage  
Or of a future that is not liable  
Like the past, to have no destination.

We have to think of them as forever bailing,  
Setting and hauling, while the North East lowers  
Over shallow banks unchanging and erosionless  
Or drawing their money, drying sails at dockage;  
Not as making a trip that will be unpayable  
For a haul that will not bear examination.

There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,  
No end to the withering of withered flowers,  
To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless,  
To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage,  
The bone's prayer to Death its God. Only the hardly, barely prayable  
Prayer of the one Annunciation.

It seems, as one becomes older,  
That the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence—  
Or even development: the latter a partial fallacy,  
Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,  
Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past.  
The moments of happiness—not the sense of well-being,

Fruition, fulfilment, security or affection,  
Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination—  
We had the experience but missed the meaning,  
And approach to the meaning restores the experience  
In a different form, beyond any meaning  
We can assign to happiness. I have said before  
That the past experience revived in the meaning  
Is not the experience of one life only  
But of many generations—not forgetting  
Something that is probably quite ineffable:  
The backward look behind the assurance  
Of recorded history, the backward half-look  
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.  
Now, we come to discover that the moments of agony  
(Whether, or not, due to misunderstanding,  
Having hoped for the wrong things or dreaded the wrong things,  
Is not in question) are likewise permanent  
With such permanence as time has. We appreciate this better  
In the agony of others, nearly experienced,  
Involving ourselves, than in our own.  
For our own past is covered by the currents of action,  
But the torment of others remains an experience  
Unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.  
People change, and smile: but the agony abides.  
Time the destroyer is time the preserver,  
Like the river with its cargo of dead Negroes, cows and chicken coops,  
The bitter apple and the bite in the apple.  
And the ragged rock in the restless waters,  
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;  
On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,  
In navigable weather it is always a seamount  
To lay a course by: but in the sombre season  
Or the sudden fury, is what it always was.

## III

I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—  
Among other things—or one way of putting the same thing:

That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray  
Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret,  
Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.  
And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back.  
You cannot face it steadily, but this thing is sure,  
That time is no healer: the patient is no longer here.  
When the train starts, and the passengers are settled  
To fruit, periodicals and business letters  
(And those who saw them off have left the platform)  
Their faces relax from grief into relief,  
To the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours.  
Fare forward, travellers! not escaping from the past  
Into different lives, or into any future;  
You are not the same people who left that station  
Or who will arrive at any terminus,  
While the narrowing rails slide together behind you;  
And on the deck of the drumming liner  
Watching the furrow that widens behind you,  
You shall not think "the past is finished"  
Or "the future is before us."  
At nightfall, in the rigging and the aerial,  
Is a voice descanting (though not to the ear,  
The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language)  
"Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;  
You are not those who saw the harbour  
Receding, or those who will disembark.  
Here between the hither and the farther shore  
While time is withdrawn, consider the future  
And the past with an equal mind.  
At the moment which is not of action or inaction  
You can receive this: 'on whatever sphere of being  
The mind of a man may be intent  
At the time of death'—that is the one action  
(And the time of death is every moment)  
Which shall fructify in the lives of others:  
And do not think of the fruit of action.  
Fare forward.

O voyagers, O seamen,  
You who come to port, and you whose bodies  
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,  
Or whatever event, this is your real destination."  
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna  
On the field of battle.

Not fare well,  
But fare forward, voyagers.

## IV

Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory,  
Pray for all those who are in ships, those  
Whose business has to do with fish, and  
Those concerned with every lawful traffic  
And those who conduct them.

Repeat a prayer also on behalf of  
Women who have seen their sons or husbands  
Setting forth, and not returning:  
*Figlia del tuo figlio,*  
Queen of Heaven.

Also pray for those who were in ships, and  
Ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea's lips  
Or in the dark throat which will not reject them  
Or wherever cannot reach them the sound of the sea bell's  
Perpetual angelus.

## V

To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,  
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,  
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,  
Observe disease in signatures, evoke  
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm  
And tragedy from fingers; release omens  
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable  
With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams

Or barbituric acids, or dissect  
The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors—  
To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are usual  
Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:  
And always will be, some of them especially  
When there is distress of nations and perplexity  
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.  
Men's curiosity searches past and future  
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.  
For most of us, there is only the unattended  
Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.  
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union.  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled,  
Where action were otherwise movement  
Of that which is only moved  
And has in it no source of movement—  
Driven by daemonic, chthonic  
Powers. And right action is freedom  
From past and future also.  
For most of us, this is the aim  
Never here to be realised;  
Who are only undefeated



Because we have gone on trying;  
We, content at the last  
If our temporal reversion nourish  
(Not too far from the yew-tree)  
The life of significant soil.

# Little Gidding

---

## I

Midwinter spring is its own season  
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,  
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.  
When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,  
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,  
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,  
Reflecting in a watery mirror  
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.  
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,  
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire  
In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing  
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell  
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time  
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow  
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom  
Of snow, a bloom more sudden  
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,  
Not in the scheme of generation.  
Where is the summer, the unimaginable  
Zero summer?

    If you came this way,  
Taking the route you would be likely to take  
From the place you would be likely to come from,  
If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges  
White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness.  
It would be the same at the end of the journey,  
If you came at night like a broken king,  
If you came by day not knowing what you came for,

It would be the same, when you leave the rough road  
And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull façade  
And the tombstone. And what you thought you came for  
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning  
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled  
If at all. Either you had no purpose  
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured  
And is altered in fulfilment. There are other places  
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,  
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city—  
But this is the nearest, in place and time,  
Now and in England.

                                If you came this way,  
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,  
At any time or at any season,  
It would always be the same: you would have to put off  
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,  
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity  
Or carry report. You are here to kneel  
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more  
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation  
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.  
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead: the communication  
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.  
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment  
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

## II

Ash on an old man's sleeve  
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.  
Dust in the air suspended  
Marks the place where a story ended.  
Dust inbreathed was a house—  
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.  
The death of hope and despair,  
    This is the death of air.

There are flood and drouth  
Over the eyes and in the mouth,  
Dead water and dead sand  
Contending for the upper hand.  
The parched eviscerate soil  
Gapes at the vanity of toil,  
Laughs without mirth.

    This is the death of earth.

Water and fire succeed  
The town, the pasture and the weed.  
Water and fire deride  
The sacrifice that we denied.  
Water and fire shall rot  
The marred foundations we forgot,  
Of sanctuary and choir.

    This is the death of water and fire.

In the uncertain hour before the morning  
Near the ending of interminable night  
At the recurrent end of the unending  
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue  
Had passed below the horizon of his homing  
While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin  
Over the asphalt where no other sound was  
Between three districts whence the smoke arose  
I met one walking, loitering and hurried  
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves  
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.  
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face  
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge  
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk  
I caught the sudden look of some dead master  
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled  
Both one and many; in the brown baked features  
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost  
Both intimate and unidentifiable.

So I assumed a double part, and cried  
And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?'  
Although we were not. I was still the same,  
Knowing myself yet being someone other—  
And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed  
To compel the recognition they preceded.  
And so, compliant to the common wind,  
Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,  
In concord at this intersection time  
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,  
We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.  
I said: 'The wonder that I feel is easy,  
Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:  
I may not comprehend, may not remember.'  
And he: 'I am not eager to rehearse  
My thought and theory which you have forgotten.  
These things have served their purpose: let them be.  
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven  
By others, as I pray you to forgive  
Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten  
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.  
For last year's words belong to last year's language  
And next year's words await another voice.  
But, as the passage now presents no hindrance  
To the spirit unappeased and peregrine  
Between two worlds become much like each other,  
So I find words I never thought to speak  
In streets I never thought I should revisit  
When I left my body on a distant shore.  
Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us  
To purify the dialect of the tribe  
And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,  
Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age  
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.  
First, the cold friction of expiring sense  
Without enchantment, offering no promise  
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit

As body and soul begin to fall asunder.  
 Second, the conscious impotence of rage  
 At human folly, and the laceration  
 Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.  
 And last, the rending pain of re-enactment  
 Of all that you have done, and been; the shame  
 Of motives late revealed, and the awareness  
 Of things ill done and done to others' harm  
 Which once you took for exercise of virtue.  
 Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.  
 From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit  
 Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire  
 Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'  
 The day was breaking. In the disfigured street  
 He left me, with a kind of valediction,  
 And faded on the blowing of the horn.

## III

There are three conditions which often look alike  
 Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:  
 Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment  
 From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between  
 them, indifference  
 Which resembles the others as death resembles life,  
 Being between two lives—unflowering, between  
 The live and the dead nettle. This is the use of memory:  
 For liberation—not less of love but expanding  
 Of love beyond desire, and so liberation  
 From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country  
 Begins as attachment to our own field of action  
 And comes to find that action of little importance  
 Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,  
 History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,  
 The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,  
 To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Sin is Behovely, but  
 All shall be well, and

All manner of thing shall be well.  
If I think, again, of this place,  
And of people, not wholly commendable,  
Of no immediate kin or kindness,  
But some of peculiar genius,  
All touched by a common genius,  
United in the strife which divided them;  
If I think of a king at nightfall,  
Of three men, and more, on the scaffold  
And a few who died forgotten  
In other places, here and abroad,  
And of one who died blind and quiet,  
Why should we celebrate  
These dead men more than the dying?  
It is not to ring the bell backward  
Nor is it an incantation  
To summon the spectre of a Rose.  
We cannot revive old factions  
We cannot restore old policies  
Or follow an antique drum.  
These men, and those who opposed them  
And those whom they opposed  
Accept the constitution of silence  
And are folded in a single party.  
Whatever we inherit from the fortunate  
We have taken from the defeated  
What they had to leave us—a symbol:  
A symbol perfected in death.  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
By the purification of the motive  
In the ground of our beseeching.

## IV

The dove descending breaks the air  
With flame of incandescent terror  
Of which the tongues declare  
The one discharge from sin and error.

The only hope, or else despair  
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—  
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
Love is the unfamiliar Name  
Behind the hands that wove  
The intolerable shirt of flame  
Which human power cannot remove.  
We only live, only suspire  
Consumed by either fire or fire.

## V

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from. And every phrase  
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem an epitaph. And any action  
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat  
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.  
We die with the dying:  
See, they depart, and we go with them.  
We are born with the dead:  
See, they return, and bring us with them.  
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree  
Are of equal duration. A people without history  
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails  
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel



History is now and England.

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.

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Old Possum's Book of  
Practical Cats

This book is respectfully dedicated to those friends who have assisted its composition by their encouragement, criticism and suggestions: and in particular to Mr. T. E. Faber, Miss Alison Tandy, Miss Susan Wolcott, Miss Susanna Morley, and the Man in White Spats.

O. P.

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## THE NAMING OF CATS

The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,  
It isn't just one of your holiday games;  
You may think at first I'm as mad as a hatter  
When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.  
First of all, there's the name that the family use daily,  
Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo or James,  
Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey—  
All of them sensible everyday names.  
There are fancier names if you think they sound sweeter,  
Some for the gentlemen, some for the dames:  
Such as Plato, Admetus, Electra, Demeter—  
But all of them sensible everyday names.  
But I tell you, a cat needs a name that's particular,  
A name that's peculiar, and more dignified,  
Else how can he keep up his tail perpendicular,  
Or spread out his whiskers, or cherish his pride?  
Of names of this kind, I can give you a quorum,  
Such as Munkustrap, Quaxo, or Coricopat,  
Such as Bombalurina, or else Jellylorum—  
Names that never belong to more than one cat.  
But above and beyond there's still one name left over,  
And that is the name that you never will guess;  
The name that no human research can discover—  
But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess.  
When you notice a cat in profound meditation,  
The reason, I tell you, is always the same:  
His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation  
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name:  
His ineffable effable  
Effanineffable  
Deep and inscrutable singular Name.

---

THE OLD GUMBIE CAT

I have a Gumbie Cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;  
Her coat is of the tabby kind, with tiger stripes and leopard spots.  
All day she sits upon the stair or on the steps or on the mat;  
She sits and sits and sits and sits—and that's what makes a Gumbie  
Cat!

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,  
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.  
And when all the family's in bed and asleep,  
She tucks up her skirts to the basement to creep.  
She is deeply concerned with the ways of the mice—  
Their behaviour's not good and their manners not nice;  
So when she has got them lined up on the matting,  
She teaches them music, crocheting and tatting.

I have a Gumbie Cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;  
Her equal would be hard to find, she likes the warm and sunny spots.  
All day she sits beside the hearth or on the bed or on my hat:  
She sits and sits and sits and sits—and that's what makes a Gumbie  
Cat!

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,  
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.  
As she finds that the mice will not ever keep quiet,  
She is sure it is due to irregular diet;  
And believing that nothing is done without trying,  
She sets right to work with her baking and frying.  
She makes them a mouse-cake of bread and dried peas,  
And a *beautiful* fry of lean bacon and cheese.

I have a Gumbie Cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;  
The curtain-cord she likes to wind, and tie it into sailor-knots.

She sits upon the window-sill, or anything that's smooth and flat:  
She sits and sits and sits and sits—and that's what makes a Gumbie  
Cat!

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,  
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.  
She thinks that the cockroaches just need employment  
To prevent them from idle and wanton destruction.  
So she's formed, from that lot of disorderly louts,  
A troop of well-disciplined helpful boy-scouts,  
With a purpose in life and a good deed to do—  
And she's even created a Beetles' Tattoo.

So for Old Gumbie Cats let us now give three cheers—  
On whom well-ordered households depend, it appears.

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### GROWLTIGER'S LAST STAND

GROWLTIGER was a Bravo Cat, who lived upon a barge:  
In fact he was the roughest cat that ever roamed at large.  
From Gravesend up to Oxford he pursued his evil aims,  
Rejoicing in his title of "The Terror of the Thames."

His manners and appearance did not calculate to please;  
His coat was torn and seedy, he was baggy at the knees;  
One ear was somewhat missing, no need to tell you why,  
And he scowled upon a hostile world from one forbidding eye.

The cottagers of Rotherhithe knew something of his fame,  
At Hammersmith and Putney people shuddered at his name.  
They would fortify the hen-house, lock up the silly goose,  
When the rumour ran along the shore: GROWLTIGER'S ON THE LOOSE!

Woe to the weak canary, that fluttered from its cage;  
Woe to the pampered Pekinese, that faced Growltiger's rage.

Woe to the bristly Bandicoot, that lurks on foreign ships,  
And woe to any Cat with whom Growltiger came to grips!

But most to Cats of foreign race his hatred had been vowed;  
To Cats of foreign name and race no quarter was allowed.  
The Persian and the Siamese regarded him with fear—  
Because it was a Siamese had mauled his missing ear.

Now on a peaceful summer night, all nature seemed at play,  
The tender moon was shining bright, the barge at Molesey lay.  
All in the balmy moonlight it lay rocking on the tide—  
And Growltiger was disposed to show his sentimental side.

His bucko mate, GRUMBUSKIN, long since had disappeared,  
For to the Bell at Hampton he had gone to wet his beard;  
And his bosun, TUMBLEBRUTUS, he too had stol'n away—  
In the yard behind the Lion he was prowling for his prey.

In the forepeak of the vessel Growltiger sate alone,  
Concentrating his attention on the Lady GRIDDLEBONE.  
And his raffish crew were sleeping in their barrels and their bunks—  
As the Siamese came creeping in their sampans and their junks.

Growltiger had no eye or ear for aught but Griddlebone,  
And the Lady seemed enraptured by his manly baritone,  
Disposed to relaxation, and awaiting no surprise—  
But the moonlight shone reflected from a thousand bright blue eyes.

And closer still and closer the sampans circled round,  
And yet from all the enemy there was not heard a sound.  
The lovers sang their last duet, in danger of their lives—  
For the foe was armed with toasting forks and cruel carving knives.

Then GILBERT gave the signal to his fierce Mongolian horde;  
With a frightful burst of fireworks the Chinks they swarmed aboard.  
Abandoning their sampans, and their pullaways and junks,  
They battened down the hatches on the crew within their bunks.



Then Griddlebone she gave a screech, for she was badly skeered;  
I am sorry to admit it, but she quickly disappeared.  
She probably escaped with ease, I'm sure she was not drowned—  
But a serried ring of flashing steel Growltiger did surround.

The ruthless foe pressed forward, in stubborn rank on rank;  
Growltiger to his vast surprise was forced to walk the plank.  
He who a hundred victims had driven to that drop,  
At the end of all his crimes was forced to go ker-flip, ker-flop.

Oh there was joy in Wapping when the news flew through the  
land;  
At Maidenhead and Henley there was dancing on the strand.  
Rats were roasted whole at Brentford, and at Victoria Dock,  
And a day of celebration was commanded in Bangkok.

---

### THE RUM TUM TUGGER

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat:  
If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.  
If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,  
If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house.  
If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,  
If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse.  
Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—  
And there isn't any call for me to shout it:  
For he will do  
As he do do  
And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a terrible bore:  
When you let him in, then he wants to be out;  
He's always on the wrong side of every door,  
And as soon as he's at home, then he'd like to get about.

He likes to lie in the bureau drawer,  
 But he makes such a fuss if he can't get out.  
 Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—  
 And it isn't any use for you to doubt it:  
     For he will do  
     As he do do  
     And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a curious beast:  
 His disobliging ways are a matter of habit.  
 If you offer him fish then he always wants a feast;  
 When there isn't any fish then he won't eat rabbit.  
 If you offer him cream then he sniffs and sneers,  
 For he only likes what he finds for himself;  
 So you'll catch him in it right up to the ears,  
 If you put it away on the larder shelf.  
 The Rum Tum Tugger is artful and knowing,  
 The Rum Tum Tugger doesn't care for a cuddle;  
 But he'll leap on your lap in the middle of your sewing,  
 For there's nothing he enjoys like a horrible muddle.  
 Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—  
 And there isn't any need for me to spout it:  
     For he will do  
     As he do do  
     And there's no doing anything about it!

---

### THE SONG OF THE JELLICLES

*Jellicle Cats come out tonight,  
 Jellicle Cats come one come all:  
 The Jellicle Moon is shining bright—  
 Jellicles come to the Jellicle Ball.*

Jellicle Cats are black and white,  
 Jellicle Cats are rather small;

Jellicle Cats are merry and bright,  
And pleasant to hear when they caterwaul.  
Jellicle Cats have cheerful faces,  
Jellicle Cats have bright black eyes;  
They like to practise their airs and graces  
And wait for the Jellicle Moon to rise.

Jellicle Cats develop slowly,  
Jellicle Cats are not too big;  
Jellicle Cats are roly-poly,  
They know how to dance a gavotte and a jig.  
Until the Jellicle Moon appears  
They make their toilette and take their repose:  
Jellicles wash behind their ears,  
Jellicles dry between their toes.

Jellicle Cats are white and black,  
Jellicle Cats are of moderate size;  
Jellicles jump like a jumping-jack,  
Jellicle Cats have moonlit eyes.  
They're quiet enough in the morning hours,  
They're quiet enough in the afternoon,  
Reserving their terpsichorean powers  
To dance by the light of the Jellicle Moon.

Jellicle Cats are black and white,  
Jellicle Cats (as I said) are small;  
If it happens to be a stormy night  
They will practise a caper or two in the hall.  
If it happens the sun is shining bright  
You would say they had nothing to do at all:  
They are resting and saving themselves to be right  
For the Jellicle Moon and the Jellicle Ball.

---

MUNGOJERRIE AND RUMPELTEAZER

Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer were a very notorious couple of cats. As knockabout clowns, quick-change comedians, tight-rope walkers and acrobats

They had an extensive reputation. They made their home in Victoria Grove—

That was merely their centre of operation, for they were incurably given to rove.

They were very well known in Cornwall Gardens, in Launceston Place and in Kensington Square—

They had really a little more reputation than a couple of cats can very well bear.

If the area window was found ajar

And the basement looked like a field of war,

If a tile or two came loose on the roof,

Which presently ceased to be waterproof,

If the drawers were pulled out from the bedroom chests,

And you couldn't find one of your winter vests,

Or after supper one of the girls

Suddenly missed her Woolworth pearls:

Then the family would say: "It's that horrible cat!

It was Mungojerrie—or Rumpelteazer!"—And most of the time they left it at that.

Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer had a very unusual gift of the gab. They were highly efficient cat-burglars as well, and remarkably smart at a smash-and-grab.

They made their home in Victoria Grove. They had no regular occupation.

They were plausible fellows, and liked to engage a friendly policeman in conversation.

When the family assembled for Sunday dinner,

With their minds made up that they wouldn't get thinner

On Argentine joint, potatoes and greens,  
And the cook would appear from behind the scenes  
And say in a voice that was broken with sorrow:  
"I'm afraid you must wait and have dinner *tomorrow!*  
For the joint has gone from the oven—like that!"  
Then the family would say: "It's that horrible cat!  
It was Mungojerrie—or Rumpelteazer!"—And most of the time they  
left it at that.

Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer had a wonderful way of working  
together.  
And some of the time you would say it was luck, and some of the  
time you would say it was weather.  
They would go through the house like a hurricane, and no sober  
person could take his oath  
Was it Mungojerrie—or Rumpelteazer? or could you have sworn that  
it mightn't be both?

And when you heard a dining-room smash  
Or up from the pantry there came a loud crash  
Or down from the library came a loud *ping*  
From a vase which was commonly said to be Ming—  
Then the family would say: "Now which was which cat?  
It was Mungojerrie! AND Rumpelteazer!"—And there's nothing at all  
to be done about that!

---

## OLD DEUTERONOMY

Old Deuteronomy's lived a long time;  
He's a Cat who has lived many lives in succession.  
He was famous in proverb and famous in rhyme  
A long while before Queen Victoria's accession.  
Old Deuteronomy's buried nine wives  
And more—I am tempted to say, ninety-nine;  
And his numerous progeny prospers and thrives

And the village is proud of him in his decline.  
 At the sight of that placid and bland physiognomy,  
 When he sits in the sun on the vicarage wall,  
 The Oldest Inhabitant croaks: "Well, of all . . .  
 Things . . . Can it be . . . really! . . . Nol . . . Yes! . . .  
 Hol hil  
 Oh, my eye!  
 My mind may be wandering, but I confess  
 I *believe* it is Old Deuteronomy!"

Old Deuteronomy sits in the street,  
 He sits in the High Street on market day;  
 The bullocks may bellow, the sheep they may bleat,  
 But the dogs and the herdsmen will turn them away.  
 The cars and the lorries run over the kerb,  
 And the villagers put up a notice: ROAD CLOSED—  
 So that nothing untoward may chance to disturb  
 Deuteronomy's rest when he feels so disposed  
 Or when he's engaged in domestic economy:  
 And the Oldest Inhabitant croaks: "Well, of all . . .  
 Things . . . Can it be . . . really! . . . Nol . . . Yes! . . .  
 Hol hil  
 Oh, my eye!  
 My sight's unreliable, but I can guess  
 That the cause of the trouble is Old Deuteronomy!"

Old Deuteronomy lies on the floor  
 Of the Fox and French Horn for his afternoon sleep;  
 And when the men say: "There's just time for one more,"  
 Then the landlady from her back parlour will peep  
 And say: "Now then, out you go, by the back door,  
 For Old Deuteronomy mustn't be woken—  
 I'll have the police if there's any uproar"—  
 And out they all shuffle, without a word spoken.  
 The digestive repose of that feline's gastronomy  
 Must never be broken, whatever befall:  
 And the Oldest Inhabitant croaks: "Well, of all . . .

Things . . . Can it be . . . really! . . . Yes! . . . No! . . .  
 Ho! hi!  
 Oh, my eye!  
 My legs may be tottery, I must go slow  
 And be careful of Old Deuteronomy!"

---

OF THE AWEFULL BATTLE OF THE PEKES AND  
 THE POLLICLES: TOGETHER WITH SOME AC-  
 COUNT OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PUGS  
 AND THE POMS, AND THE INTERVENTION OF  
 THE GREAT RUMPUSCAT

The Pekes and the Pollices, everyone knows,  
 Are proud and implacable passionate foes;  
 It is always the same, wherever one goes.  
 And the Pugs and the Poms, although most people say  
 That they do not like fighting, yet once in a way,  
 They will now and again join in to the fray  
 And they

Bark bark bark bark  
 Bark bark BARK BARK

Until you can hear them all over the Park.

Now on the occasion of which I shall speak  
 Almost nothing had happened for nearly a week  
 (And that's a long time for a Pol or a Peke).  
 The big Police Dog was away from his beat—  
 I don't know the reason, but most people think  
 He'd slipped into the Wellington Arms for a drink—  
 And no one at all was about on the street  
 When a Peke and a Pollicle happened to meet.  
 They did not advance, or exactly retreat,  
 But they glared at each other, and scraped their hind feet,  
 And started to

Bark bark bark bark

Bark bark BARK BARK  
 Until you could hear them all over the Park.

Now the Peke, although people may say what they please,  
 Is no British Dog, but a Heathen Chinese.  
 And so all the Pokes, when they heard the uproar,  
 Some came to the window, some came to the door;  
 There were surely a dozen, more likely a score.  
 And together they started to grumble and wheeze  
 In their huffery-snuffery Heathen Chinese.  
 But a terrible din is what Pollicles like,  
 For your Pollicle Dog is a dour Yorkshire tyke,  
 And his braw Scottish cousins are snappers and biters,  
 And every dog-jack of them notable fighters;  
 And so they stepped out, with their pipers in order,  
 Playing *When the Blue Bonnets Came Over the Border*.  
 Then the Pugs and the Poms held no longer aloof,  
 But some from the balcony, some from the roof,  
 Joined in  
 To the din  
 With a

Bark bark bark bark  
 Bark bark BARK BARK  
 Until you could hear them all over the Park.

Now when these bold heroes together assembled,  
 The traffic all stopped, and the Underground trembled,  
 And some of the neighbours were so much afraid  
 That they started to ring up the Fire Brigade.  
 When suddenly, up from a small basement flat,  
 Why who should stalk out but the GREAT RUMPUSCAT.  
 His eyes were like fireballs fearfully blazing,  
 He gave a great yawn, and his jaws were amazing;  
 And when he looked out through the bars of the area,  
 You never saw anything fiercer or hairier.  
 And what with the glare of his eyes and his yawning,  
 The Pokes and the Pollicles quickly took warning.



He looked at the sky and he gave a great leap—  
And they every last one of them scattered like sheep.

*And when the Police Dog returned to his beat,  
There wasn't a single one left in the street.*

---

### MR. MISTOFFEELES

You ought to know Mr. Mistoffelees!  
The Original Conjuring Cat—  
(There can be no doubt about that).  
Please listen to me and don't scoff. All his  
Inventions are off his own bat.  
There's no such Cat in the metropolis;  
He holds all the patent monopolies  
For performing surprising illusions  
And creating eccentric confusions.  
At prestidigitation  
And at legerdemain  
He'll defy examination  
And deceive you again.  
The greatest magicians have something to learn  
From Mr. Mistoffelees' Conjuring Turn.  
Presto!  
Away we go!  
And we all say: OH!  
Well I never!  
Was there ever  
A Cat so clever  
As Magical Mr. Mistoffelees!

He is quiet and small, he is black  
From his ears to the tip of his tail;  
He can creep through the tiniest crack,  
He can walk on the narrowest rail.

He can pick any card from a pack,  
He is equally cunning with dice;  
He is always deceiving you into believing  
That he's only hunting for mice.

He can play any trick with a cork

Or a spoon and a bit of fish-paste;

If you look for a knife or a fork

And you think it is merely misplaced—

You have seen it one moment, and then it is *gawn!*

But you'll find it next week lying out on the lawn.

And we all say: OH!

Well I never!

Was there ever

A Cat so clever

As Magical Mr. Mistoffelees!

His manner is vague and aloof,

You would think there was nobody shy—

But his voice has been heard on the roof

When he was curled up by the fire.

And he's sometimes been heard by the fire

When he was about on the roof—

(At least we all *heard* that somebody purred)

Which is incontestable proof

Of his singular magical powers:

And I have known the family to call

Him in from the garden for hours,

While he was asleep in the hall.

And not long ago this phenomenal Cat

Produced *seven kittens* right out of a hat!

And we all said: OH!

Well I never!

Did you ever

Know a Cat so clever

As Magical Mr. Mistoffelees!

---

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw—  
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.  
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:  
For when they reach the scene of crime—*Macavity's not there!*

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.  
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,  
And when you reach the scene of crime—*Macavity's not there!*  
You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air—  
But I tell you once and once again, *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;  
You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.  
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;  
His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.  
He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake;  
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square—  
But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not there!*

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)  
And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.  
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,  
Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled,  
Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair—  
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! *Macavity's not there!*

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone astray,  
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,  
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair—

But it's useless to investigate—*Macavity's not there!*  
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:  
"It *must* have been Macavity!"—but he's a mile away.  
You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs,  
Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.  
He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:  
At whatever time the deed took place—MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!  
And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known  
(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)  
Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time  
Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime!

---

### GUS: THE THEATRE CAT

Gus is the Cat at the Theatre Door.  
His name, as I ought to have told you before,  
Is really Asparagus. That's such a fuss  
To pronounce, that we usually call him just Gus.  
His coat's very shabby, he's thin as a rake,  
And he suffers from palsy that makes his paw shake.  
Yet he was, in his youth, quite the smartest of Cats—  
But no longer a terror to mice and to rats.  
For he isn't the Cat that he was in his prime;  
Though his name was quite famous, he says, in its time.  
And whenever he joins his friends at their club  
(Which takes place at the back of the neighbouring pub)  
He loves to regale them, if someone else pays,  
With anecdotes drawn from his palmiest days.  
For he once was a Star of the highest degree—  
He has acted with Irving, he's acted with Tree.  
And he likes to relate his success on the Halls,  
Where the Gallery once gave him seven cat-calls.

But his grandest creation, as he loves to tell,  
Was Firefrowfiddle, the Fiend of the Fell.

"I have played," so he says, "every possible part,  
And I used to know seventy speeches by heart.  
I'd extemporize back-chat, I knew how to gag,  
And I knew how to let the cat out of the bag.  
I knew how to act with my back and my tail;  
With an hour of rehearsal, I never could fail.  
I'd a voice that would soften the hardest of hearts,  
Whether I took the lead, or in character parts.  
I have sat by the bedside of poor Little Nell;  
When the Curfew was rung, then I swung on the bell.  
In the Pantomime season I never fell flat,  
And I once understudied Dick Whittington's Cat.  
But my grandest creation, as history will tell,  
Was Firefrowfiddle, the Fiend of the Fell."

Then, if someone will give him a toothful of gin,  
He will tell how he once played a part in *East Lynne*.  
At a Shakespeare performance he once walked on pat,  
When some actor suggested the need for a cat.  
He once played a Tiger—could do it again—  
Which an Indian Colonel pursued down a drain.  
And he thinks that he still can, much better than most,  
Produce blood-curdling noises to bring on the Ghost.  
And he once crossed the stage on a telegraph wire,  
To rescue a child when a house was on fire.  
And he says: "Now, these kittens, they do not get trained  
As we did in the days when Victoria reigned.  
They never get drilled in a regular troupe,  
And they think they are smart, just to jump through a hoop."  
And he'll say, as he scratches himself with his claws,  
"Well, the Theatre's certainly not what it was.  
These modern productions are all very well,  
But there's nothing to equal, from what I hear tell,

That moment of mystery  
 When I made history  
 As Firefrowfiddle, the Fiend of the Fell."

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## BUSTOPHER JONES: THE CAT ABOUT TOWN

Bustopher Jones is *not* skin and bones—  
 In fact, he's remarkably fat.  
 He doesn't haunt pubs—he has eight or nine clubs,  
 For he's the St. James's Street Cat!  
 He's the Cat we all greet as he walks down the street  
 In his coat of fastidious black:  
 No commonplace mousers have such well-cut trousers  
 Or such an impeccable back.  
 In the whole of St. James's the smartest of names is  
 The name of this Brummell of Cats;  
 And we're all of us proud to be nodded or bowed to  
 By Bustopher Jones in white spats!

His visits are occasional to the *Senior Educational*  
 And it is against the rules  
 For any one Cat to belong both to that  
 And the *Joint Superior Schools*.  
 For a similar reason, when game is in season  
 He is found, not at *Fox's*, but *Blimp's*;  
 He is frequently seen at the gay *Stage and Screen*  
 Which is famous for winkles and shrimps.  
 In the season of venison he gives his ben'son  
 To the *Pothunter's* succulent bones;  
 And just before noon's not a moment too soon  
 To drop in for a drink at the *Drones*.  
 When he's seen in a hurry there's probably curry  
 At the *Siamese*—or at the *Glutton*;  
 If he looks full of gloom then he's lunched at the *Tomb*  
 On cabbage, rice pudding and mutton.

So, much in this way, passes Bustopher's day—  
At one club or another he's found.  
It can be no surprise that under our eyes  
He has grown unmistakably round.  
He's a twenty-five pounder, or I am a bounder,  
And he's putting on weight every day:  
But he's so well preserved because he's observed  
All his life a routine, so he'll say.  
Or, to put it in rhyme: "I shall last out my time"  
Is the word of this stoutest of Cats.  
It must and it shall be Spring in Pall Mall  
While Bustopher Jones wears white spats!

---

## SKIMBLESHANKS: THE RAILWAY CAT

There's a whisper down the line at 11.39  
When the Night Mail's ready to depart,  
Saying "Skimble where is Skimble has he gone to hunt the thimble?  
We must find him or the train can't start."  
All the guards and all the porters and the stationmaster's daughters  
They are searching high and low,  
Saying "Skimble where is Skimble for unless he's very nimble  
Then the Night Mail just can't go."  
At 11.42 then the signal's nearly due  
And the passengers are frantic to a man—  
Then Skimble will appear and he'll saunter to the rear:  
He's been busy in the luggage van!  
He gives one flash of his glass-green eyes  
And the signal goes "All Clear!"  
And we're off at last for the northern part  
Of the Northern Hemisphere!

You may say that by and large it is Skimble who's in charge  
Of the Sleeping Car Express.  
From the driver and the guards to the bagmen playing cards

He will supervise them all, more or less.  
Down the corridor he paces and examines all the faces  
Of the travellers in the First and in the Third;  
He establishes control by a regular patrol  
And he'd know at once if anything occurred.  
He will watch you without winking and he sees what you are  
    thinking  
And it's certain that he doesn't approve  
Of hilarity and riot, so the folk are very quiet  
When Skimble is about and on the move.  
    You can play no pranks with Skimbleshanks!  
    He's a Cat that cannot be ignored;  
    So nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail  
    When Skimbleshanks is aboard.

Oh it's very pleasant when you have found your little den  
With your name written up on the door.  
And the berth is very neat with a newly folded sheet  
And there's not a speck of dust on the floor.  
There is every sort of light—you can make it dark or bright;  
There's a handle that you turn to make a breeze.  
There's a funny little basin you're supposed to wash your face in  
And a crank to shut the window if you sneeze.  
Then the guard looks in politely and will ask you very brightly  
"Do you like your morning tea weak or strong?"  
But Skimble's just behind him and was ready to remind him,  
For Skimble won't let anything go wrong.  
    And when you creep into your cosy berth  
    And pull up the counterpane,  
    You ought to reflect that it's very nice  
    To know that you won't be bothered by mice—  
    You can leave all that to the Railway Cat,  
    The Cat of the Railway Train!

In the watches of the night he is always fresh and bright;  
Every now and then he has a cup of tea  
With perhaps a drop of Scotch while he's keeping on the watch,



Only stopping here and there to catch a flea.  
You were fast asleep at Crewe and so you never knew  
That he was walking up and down the station;  
You were sleeping all the while he was busy at Carlisle,  
Where he greets the stationmaster with elation.  
But you saw him at Dumfries, where he speaks to the police  
If there's anything they ought to know about:  
When you get to Gallowgate there you do not have to wait—  
For Skimbleshanks will help you to get out!  
    He gives you a wave of his long brown tail  
    Which says: "I'll see you again!  
You'll meet without fail on the Midnight Mail  
    The Cat of the Railway Train."

---

#### THE AD-DRESSING OF CATS

You've read of several kinds of Cat,  
And my opinion now is that  
You should need no interpreter  
To understand their character.  
You now have learned enough to see  
That Cats are much like you and me  
And other people whom we find  
Possessed of various types of mind.  
For some are sane and some are mad  
And some are good and some are bad  
And some are better, some are worse—  
But all may be described in verse.  
You've seen them both at work and games,  
And learnt about their proper names,  
Their habits and their habitat:  
But

*How would you ad-dress a Cat?*

So first, your memory I'll jog,  
And say: A CAT IS NOT A DOG.

Now dogs pretend they like to fight;  
They often bark, more seldom bite;  
But yet a Dog is, on the whole,  
What you would call a simple soul.  
Of course I'm not including Pekes,  
And such fantastic canine freaks.  
The usual Dog about the Town  
Is much inclined to play the clown,  
And far from showing too much pride  
Is frequently undignified.  
He's very easily taken in—  
Just chuck him underneath the chin  
Or slap his back or shake his paw,  
And he will gambol and guffaw.  
He's such an easy-going lout,  
He'll answer any hail or shout.

Again I must remind you that  
A Dog's a Dog—A CAT's A CAT.

With Cats, some say, one rule is true:  
*Don't speak till you are spoken to.*  
Myself, I do not hold with that—  
I say, you should ad-dress a Cat.  
But always keep in mind that he  
Resents familiarity.  
I bow, and taking off my hat,  
Ad-dress him in this form: O CAT!  
But if he is the Cat next door,  
Whom I have often met before  
(He comes to see me in my flat)  
I greet him with an OOPSA CAT!  
I think I've heard them call him James—  
But we've not got so far as names.  
Before a Cat will condescend  
To treat you as a trusted friend,  
Some little token of esteem

Is needed, like a dish of cream;  
And you might now and then supply  
Some caviare, or Strassburg Pie,  
Some potted grouse, or salmon paste—  
He's sure to have his personal taste.  
(I know a Cat, who makes a habit \*  
Of eating nothing else but rabbit,  
And when he's finished, licks his paws  
So's not to waste the onion sauce.)  
A Cat's entitled to expect  
These evidences of respect.  
And so in time you reach your aim,  
And finally call him by his NAME.

So this is this, and that is that:  
And there's how you AD-DRESS A CAT.



# Murder in the Cathedral



# Part I

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## CHARACTERS

A CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY

THREE PRIESTS OF THE CATHEDRAL

A HERALD

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET

FOUR TEMPTERS

ATTENDANTS

*The Scene is the Archbishop's Hall, on December 2nd, 1170*

CHORUS: Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait.

Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety, that draws  
our feet

Towards the cathedral? What danger can be

For us, the poor, the poor women of Canterbury? what tribu-  
lation

With which we are not already familiar? There is no danger

For us, and there is no safety in the cathedral. Some presage of  
an act

Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet

Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.

Since golden October declined into sombre November  
And the apples were gathered and stored, and the land became  
brown sharp points of death in a waste of water and mud,  
The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness  
While the labourer kicks off a muddy boot and stretches his hand  
to the fire,

The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming.

Who has stretched out his hand to the fire and remembered the  
Saints at All Hallows,

Remembered the martyrs and saints who wait? and who shall  
Stretch out his hand to the fire, and deny his master? who shall  
    be warm  
By the fire, and deny his master?

Seven years and the summer is over  
Seven years since the Archbishop left us,  
He who was always kind to his people.  
But it would not be well if he should return.  
King rules or barons rule;  
We have suffered various oppression,  
But mostly we are left to our own devices,  
And we are content if we are left alone.  
We try to keep our households in order;  
The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to compile a little fortune,  
And the labourer bends to his piece of earth, earth-colour, his  
    own colour,  
Preferring to pass unobserved.  
Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons:  
Winter shall come bringing death from the sea,  
Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,  
Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,  
Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams  
And the poor shall wait for another decaying October.  
Why should the summer bring consolation  
For autumn fires and winter fogs?  
What shall we do in the heat of summer  
But wait in barren orchards for another October?  
Some malady is coming upon us. We wait, we wait,  
And the saints and martyrs wait, for those who shall be martyrs  
    and saints.  
Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen:  
I have seen these things in a shaft of sunlight.  
Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the hands of statesmen  
Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,  
Having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern of  
    time.



Come, happy December, who shall observe you, who shall preserve you?

Shall the Son of Man be born again in the litter of scorn?

For us, the poor, there is no action,

But only to wait and to witness.

[Enter PRIESTS.]

FIRST PRIEST: Seven years and the summer is over.

Seven years since the Archbishop left us.

SECOND PRIEST: What does the Archbishop do, and our Sovereign

Lord the Pope

With the stubborn King and the French King

In ceaseless intrigue, combinations,

In conference, meetings accepted, meetings refused,

Meetings unended or endless

At one place or another in France?

THIRD PRIEST: I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,

But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation.

King rules or barons rule:

The strong man strongly and the weak man by caprice.

They have but one law, to seize the power and keep it,

And the steadfast can manipulate the greed and lust of others,

The feeble is devoured by his own.

FIRST PRIEST: Shall these things not end

Until the poor at the gate

Have forgotten their friend, their Father in God, have forgotten

That they had a friend?

[Enter HERALD.]

HERALD: Servants of God, and watchers of the temple,

I am here to inform you, without circumlocution:

The Archbishop is in England, and is close outside the city.

I was sent before in haste

To give you notice of his coming, as much as was possible,

That you may prepare to meet him.

FIRST PRIEST: What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop

Reunited with the King? what reconciliation

Of two proud men? what peace can be found

To grow between the hammer and the anvil? Tell us,  
 Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast down  
 That divided them? Is it peace or war? Does he come  
 In full assurance, or only secure  
 In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,  
 The assurance of right, and the love of the people,  
 Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?

HERALD: You are right to express a certain incredulity.

He comes in pride and sorrow, affirming all his claims,  
 Assured, beyond doubt, of the devotion of the people,  
 Who receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm,  
 Lining the road and throwing down their capes,  
 Strewing the way with leaves and late flowers of the season.  
 The streets of the city will be packed to suffocation,  
 And I think that his horse will be deprived of its tail,  
 A single hair of which becomes a precious relic.  
 He is at one with the Pope, and with the King of France,  
 Who indeed would have liked to detain him in his kingdom:  
 But as for our King, that is another matter.

FIRST PRIEST: But again, is it war or peace?

HERALD: Peace, but not the kiss of peace.

A patched up affair, if you ask my opinion.  
 And if you ask me, I think the Lord Archbishop  
 Is not the man to cherish any illusions,  
 Or yet to diminish the least of his pretensions.  
 If you ask my opinion, I think that this peace  
 Is nothing like an end, or like a beginning.  
 It is common knowledge that when the Archbishop  
 Parted from the King, he said to the King,  
 My Lord, he said, I leave you as a man  
 Whom in this life I shall not see again.  
 I have this, I assure you, on the highest authority;  
 There are several opinions as to what he meant  
 But no one considers it a happy prognostic. [Exit.]

FIRST PRIEST: I fear for the Archbishop, I fear for the Church,  
 I know that the pride bred of sudden prosperity  
 Was but confirmed by bitter adversity.

I saw him as Chancellor, flattered by the King,  
Liked or feared by courtiers, in their overbearing fashion,  
Despised and despising, always isolated,  
Never one among them, always insecure;  
His pride always feeding upon his own virtues,  
Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality,  
Pride drawing sustenance from generosity,  
Loathing power given by temporal devolution,  
Wishing subjection to God alone.

Had the King been greater, or had he been weaker  
Things had perhaps been different for Thomas.

SECOND PRIEST: Yet our lord is returned. Our lord has come back  
to his own again.

We have had enough of waiting, from December to dismal December.

The Archbishop shall be at our head, dispelling dismay and doubt.

He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us.

Our Lord is at one with the Pope, and also the King of France.  
We can lean on a rock, we can feel a firm foothold  
Against the perpetual wash of tides of balance of forces of barons  
and landholders.

The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet the Archbishop with cordial thanksgiving:

Our lord, our Archbishop returns. And when the Archbishop returns

Our doubts are dispelled. Let us therefore rejoice,  
I say rejoice, and show a glad face for his welcome.

I am the Archbishop's man. Let us give the Archbishop welcome!

THIRD PRIEST: For good or ill, let the wheel turn.

The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.

For ill or good, let the wheel turn.

For who knows the end of good or evil?

Until the grinders cease

And the door shall be shut in the street,

And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.

CHORUS: Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger.

O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year;

Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey.

O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return to France.

Return. Quickly. Quietly. Leave us to perish in quiet.

You come with applause, you come with rejoicing, but you come  
bringing death into Canterbury:

A doom on the house, a doom on yourself, a doom on the world.

We do not wish anything to happen.

Seven years we have lived quietly,

Succeeded in avoiding notice,

Living and partly living.

There have been oppression and luxury,

There have been poverty and licence,

There has been minor injustice.

Yet we have gone on living,

Living and partly living.

Sometimes the corn has failed us,

Sometimes the harvest is good,

One year is a year of rain,

Another a year of dryness,

One year the apples are abundant,

Another year the plums are lacking.

Yet we have gone on living,

Living and partly living.

We have kept the feasts, heard the masses,

We have brewed beer and cyder,

Gathered wood against the winter,

Talked at the corner of the fire,

Talked at the corners of streets,

Talked not always in whispers,

Living and partly living.

We have seen births, deaths and marriages,

We have had various scandals,

We have been afflicted with taxes,

We have had laughter and gossip,

Several girls have disappeared  
Unaccountably, and some not able to.  
We have all had our private terrors,  
Our particular shadows, our secret fears.

But now a great fear is upon us, a fear not of one but of many,  
A fear like birth and death, when we see birth and death alone  
In a void apart. We  
Are afraid in a fear which we cannot know, which we cannot  
face, which none understands,  
And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the  
layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost  
In a final fear which none understands. O Thomas Archbishop,  
O Thomas our Lord, leave us and leave us be, in our humble  
and tarnished frame of existence, leave us; do not ask us  
To stand to the doom on the house, the doom on the Arch-  
bishop, the doom on the world.  
Archbishop, secure and assured of your fate, unaffrayed among  
the shades, do you realise what you ask, do you realise what  
it means  
To the small folk drawn into the pattern of fate, the small folk  
who live among small things,  
The strain on the brain of the small folk who stand to the doom  
of the house, the doom of their lord, the doom of the world?  
O Thomas, Archbishop, leave us, leave us, leave sullen Dover,  
and set sail for France. Thomas our Archbishop still our Arch-  
bishop even in France. Thomas Archbishop, set the white sail  
between the grey sky and the bitter sea, leave us, leave us for  
France.

SECOND PRIEST: What a way to talk at such a juncture!  
You are foolish, immodest and babbling women.  
Do you not know that the good Archbishop  
Is likely to arrive at any moment?  
The crowds in the streets will be cheering and cheering,  
You go on croaking like frogs in the treetops:  
But frogs at least can be cooked and eaten.  
Whatever you are afraid of, in your craven apprehension,

Let me ask you at the least to put on pleasant faces,  
And give a hearty welcome to our good Archbishop.  
[Enter THOMAS.]

THOMAS: Peace. And let them be, in their exaltation.

They speak better than they know, and beyond your understanding.

They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.

They know and do not know, that acting is suffering

And suffering is action. Neither does the actor suffer

Nor the patient act. But both are fixed

In an eternal action, an eternal patience

To which all must consent that it may be willed

And which all must suffer that they may will it,

That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action

And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still

Be forever still.

SECOND PRIEST: O my Lord, forgive me, I did not see you coming,  
Engrossed by the chatter of these foolish women.

Forgive us, my Lord, you would have had a better welcome

If we had been sooner prepared for the event.

But your Lordship knows that seven years of waiting,

Seven years of prayer, seven years of emptiness,

Have better prepared our hearts for your coming,

Than seven days could make ready Canterbury.

However, I will have fires laid in all your rooms

To take the chill off our English December,

Your Lordship now being used to a better climate.

Your Lordship will find your rooms in order as you left them.

THOMAS: And will try to leave them in order as I find them.

I am more than grateful for all your kind attentions.

These are small matters. Little rest in Canterbury

With eager enemies restless about us.

Rebellious bishops, York, London, Salisbury,

Would have intercepted our letters,

Filled the coast with spies and sent to meet me

Some who hold me in bitterest hate.

By God's grace aware of their prevision

I sent my letters on another day,

Had fair crossing, found at Sandwich  
Broc, Warrene, and the Sheriff of Kent,  
Those who had sworn to have my head from me.  
Only John, the Dean of Salisbury,  
Fearing for the King's name, warning against treason,  
Made them hold their hands. So for the time  
We are unmolested.

FIRST PRIEST: But do they follow after?

THOMAS: For a little time the hungry hawk  
Will only soar and hover, circling lower,  
Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.  
End will be simple, sudden, God-given.  
Meanwhile the substance of our first act  
Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows.  
Heavier the interval than the consummation.  
All things prepare the event. Watch.  
[Enter FIRST TEMPTER.]

FIRST TEMPTER: You see, my Lord, I do not wait upon ceremony:  
Here I have come, forgetting all acrimony,  
Hoping that your present gravity  
Will find excuse for my humble levity  
Remembering all the good time past.  
Your Lordship won't despise an old friend out of favour?  
Old Tom, gay Tom, Becket of London,  
Your Lordship won't forget that evening on the river  
When the King, and you and I were all friends together?  
Friendship should be more than biting Time can sever.  
What, my Lord, now that you recover  
Favour with the King, shall we say that summer's over  
Or that the good time cannot last?  
Fluting in the meadows, viols in the hall,  
Laughter and apple-blossom floating on the water,  
Singing at nightfall, whispering in chambers,  
Fires devouring the winter season,  
Eating up the darkness, with wit and wine and wisdom!  
Now that the King and you are in amity,  
Clergy and laity may return to gaiety,  
Mirth and sportfulness need not walk warily.



THOMAS: You talk of seasons that are past. I remember  
Not worth forgetting.

TEMPER: And of the new season.  
 Spring has come in winter. Snow in the branches  
 Shall float as sweet as blossoms. Ice along the ditches  
 Mirror the sunlight. Love in the orchard  
 Send the sap shooting. Mirth matches melancholy.

THOMAS: We do not know very much of the future  
Except that from generation to generation  
The same things happen again and again.  
Men learn little from others' experience.  
But in the life of one man, never  
The same time returns. Sever  
The cord, shed the scale. Only  
The fool, fixed in his folly, may think  
He can turn the wheel on which he turns.

TEMPTER: My Lord, a nod is as good as a wink.  
A man will often love what he spurns.  
For the good times past, that are come again  
I am your man.

THOMAS: Not in this train.  
Look to your behaviour. You were safer  
Think of penitence and follow your master.

TEMPER: Not at this gait!  
If you go so fast, others may go faster.  
Your Lordship is too proud!  
The safest beast is not the one that roars most loud.  
This was not the way of the King our master!  
You were not used to be so hard upon sinners  
When they were your friends. Be easy, man!  
The easy man lives to eat the best dinners.  
Take a friend's advice. Leave well alone,  
Or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone.

THOMAS: You come twenty years too late.

TEMPTER: Then I leave you to your fate.  
I leave you to the pleasures of your higher vices,  
Which will have to be paid for at higher prices.  
Farewell, my Lord, I do not wait upon ceremony.



I leave as I came, forgetting all acrimony,  
Hoping that your present gravity  
Will find excuse for my humble levity.  
If you will remember me, my Lord, at your prayers,  
I'll remember you at kissing-time below the stairs.

THOMAS: Leave-well-alone, the springtime fancy,  
So one thought goes whistling down the wind.  
The impossible is still temptation.  
The impossible, the undesirable,  
Voices under sleep, waking a dead world,  
So that the mind may not be whole in the present.

[Enter SECOND TEMPTER.]

SECOND TEMPTER. Your Lordship has forgotten me, perhaps. I will remind you.

We met at Clarendon, at Northampton,  
And last at Montmirail, in Maine. Now that I have recalled  
them,

Let us but set these not too pleasant memories  
In balance against other, earlier  
And weightier ones: those of the Chancellorship.  
See how the late ones rise! The master of policy  
Whom all acknowledged, should guide the state again.

THOMAS: Your meaning?

TEMPLETER:                   The Chancellorship that you resigned  
When you were made Archbishop—that was a mistake  
On your part—still may be regained. Think, my Lord,  
Power obtained grows to glory,  
Life lasting, a permanent possession,  
A templed tomb, monument of marble.  
Rule over men reckon no madness.

THOMAS: To the man of God what gladness?

TEMPTER: Sadness

Only to those giving love to God alone.  
Fare forward, shun two files of shadows:  
Mirth merrymaking, melting strength in sweetness,  
Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain;  
And godlovers' longings, lost in God.  
Shall he who held the solid substance

Wander waking with deceitful shadows?

Power is present. Holiness hereafter.

THOMAS: Who then?

TEMPTER:                   The Chancellor. King and Chancellor.

King commands. Chancellor richly rules.

This is a sentence not taught in the schools.

To set down the great, protect the poor,

Beneath the throne of God can man do more?

Disarm the ruffian, strengthen the laws,

Rule for the good of the better cause,

Dispensing justice make all even,

Is thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven.

THOMAS: What means?

TEMPTER:                   Real Power

Is purchased at price of a certain submission.

Your spiritual power is earthly perdition.

Power is present, for him who will wield.

THOMAS: Whose was it?

TEMPTER:                   His who is gone.

THOMAS: Who shall have it?

TEMPTER:                   He who will come.

THOMAS: What shall be the month?

TEMPTER:                   The last from the first.

THOMAS: What shall we give for it?

TEMPTER:                   Pretence of priestly power.

THOMAS: Why should we give it?

TEMPTER:                   For the power and the glory.

THOMAS: No!

TEMPTER: Yes! Or bravery will be broken,

Cabined in Canterbury, realmless ruler,

Self-bound servant of a powerless Pope,

The old stag, circled with hounds.

THOMAS: No!

TEMPTER: Yes! men must manoeuvre. Monarchs also,

Waging war abroad, need fast friends at home.

Private policy is public profit;

Dignity still shall be dressed with decorum.

THOMAS: You forget the bishops

Whom I have laid under excommunication.

TEMPTER: Hungry hatred

Will not strive against intelligent self-interest.

THOMAS: You forget the barons. Who will not forget

Constant curbing of pretty privilege.

TEMPTER: Against the barons

Is King's cause, churl's cause, Chancellor's cause.

THOMAS: No! shall I, who keep the keys

Of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England,

Who bind and loose, with power from the Pope,

Descend to desire a punier power?

Delegate to deal the doom of damnation,

To condemn kings, not serve among their servants,

Is my open office. No! Go.

TEMPTER: Then I leave you to your fate.

Your sin soars sunward, covering kings' falcons.

THOMAS: Temporal power, to build a good world,

To keep order, as the world knows order.

Those who put their faith in worldly order

Not controlled by the order of God,

In confident ignorance, but arrest disorder,

Make it fast, breed fatal disease,

Degrade what they exalt. Power with the King—

*I was the King, his arm, his better reason.*

But what was once exaltation

Would now be only mean descent.

[Enter THIRD TEMPTER.]

THIRD TEMPTER: I am an unexpected visitor.

THOMAS: I expected you.

TEMPTER: But not in this guise, or for my present purpose.

THOMAS: No purpose brings surprise.

TEMPTER: Well, my Lord,

I am no trifler, and no politician.

To idle or intrigue at court

I have no skill. I am no courtier.

I know a horse, a dog, a wench;

I know how to hold my estates in order,  
 A country-keeping lord who minds his own business.  
 It is we country lords who know the country  
 And we who know what the country needs.  
 It is our country. We care for the country.  
 We are the backbone of the nation.  
 We, not the plotting parasites  
 About the King. Excuse my bluntness:  
 I am a rough straightforward Englishman.

THOMAS: Proceed straight forward.

TEMPER: Purpose is plain.

Endurance of friendship does not depend  
 Upon ourselves, but upon circumstance.  
 But circumstance is not undetermined.  
 Unreal friendship may turn to real  
 But real friendship, once ended, cannot be mended.  
 Sooner shall enmity turn to alliance.  
 The enmity that never knew friendship  
 Can sooner know accord.

THOMAS: For a countryman  
 You wrap your meaning in as dark generality  
 As any courtier.

TEMPER: This is the simple fact!  
 You have no hope of reconciliation  
 With Henry the King. You look only  
 To blind assertion in isolation.  
 That is a mistake.

THOMAS: O Henry, O my King!

TEMPER: Other friends

May be found in the present situation.  
 King in England is not all-powerful;  
 King is in France, squabbling in Anjou;  
 Round him waiting hungry sons.  
 We are for England. We are in England.  
 You and I, my Lord, are Normans.  
 England is a land for Norman  
 Sovereignty. Let the Angevin  
 Destroy himself, fighting in Anjou.

He does not understand us, the English barons.

We are the people.

THOMAS: To what does this lead?

TEMPTER: To a happy coalition  
Of intelligent interests.

THOMAS: But what have you—

If you do speak for barons—

TEMPTER: For a powerful party

Which has turned its eyes in your direction—

To gain from you, your Lordship asks.

For us, Church favour would be an advantage,

Blessing of Pope powerful protection

In the fight for liberty. You, my Lord,

In being with us, would fight a good stroke

At once, for England and for Rome,

Ending the tyrannous jurisdiction

Of king's court over bishop's court,

Of king's court over baron's court.

THOMAS: Which I helped to found.

TEMPTER: Which you helped to found.

But time past is time forgotten.

We expect the rise of a new constellation.

THOMAS: And if the Archbishop cannot trust the King,

How can he trust those who work for King's undoing?

TEMPTER: Kings will allow no power but their own;

Church and people have good cause against the throne.

THOMAS: If the Archbishop cannot trust the Throne,

He has good cause to trust none but God alone.

It is not better to be thrown

To a thousand hungry appetites than to one.

At a future time this may be shown.

I ruled once as Chancellor

And men like you were glad to wait at my door.

Not only in the court, but in the field

And in the tilt-yard I made many yield.

Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves

Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves?

Pursue your treacheries as you have done before:

No one shall say that I betrayed a king.

TEMPTER: Then, my Lord, I shall not wait at your door;  
And I well hope, before another spring  
The King will show his regard for your loyalty.

THOMAS: To make, then break, this thought has come before,  
The desperate exercise of failing power.  
Samson in Gaza did no more.  
But if I break, I must break myself alone.

[Enter FOURTH TEMPTER.]

FOURTH TEMPTER: Well done, Thomas, your will is hard to bend.  
And with me beside you, you shall not lack a friend.

THOMAS: Who are you? I expected  
Three visitors, not four.

TEMPTER: Do not be surprised to receive one more.  
Had I been expected, I had been here before.  
I always precede expectation.

THOMAS: Who are you?

TEMPTER: As you do not know me, I do not need a name,  
And, as you know me, that is why I come.  
You know me, but have never seen my face.  
To meet before was never time or place.

THOMAS: Say what you come to say.

TEMPTER: It shall be said at last.

Hooks have been baited with morsels of the past.  
Wantonness is weakness. As for the King,  
His hardened hatred shall have no end.  
You know truly, the King will never trust  
Twice, the man who has been his friend.  
Borrow use cautiously, employ  
Your services as long as you have to lend.  
You would wait for trap to snap  
Having served your turn, broken and crushed.  
As for barons, envy of lesser men  
Is still more stubborn than king's anger.  
Kings have public policy, barons private profit,  
Jealousy raging possession of the fiend.  
Barons are employable against each other;  
Greater enemies must kings destroy.

THOMAS: What is your counsel?

TEMPTER: Fare forward to the end.

All other ways are closed to you  
 Except the way already chosen.  
 But what is pleasure, kingly rule,  
 Or rule of men beneath a king,  
 With craft in corners, stealthy stratagem,  
 To general grasp of spiritual power?  
 Man oppressed by sin, since Adam fell—  
 You hold the keys of heaven and hell.  
 Power to bind and loose: bind, Thomas, bind,  
 King and bishop under your heel.  
 King, emperor, bishop, baron, king:  
 Uncertain mastery of melting armies,  
 War, plague, and revolution,  
 New conspiracies, broken pacts;  
 To be master or servant within an hour,  
 This is the course of temporal power.  
 The Old King shall know it, when at last breath,  
 No sons, no empire, he bites broken teeth.  
 You hold the skein: wind, Thomas, wind  
 The thread of eternal life and death.  
 You hold this power, hold it.

THOMAS: Supreme, in this land?

TEMPTER: Supreme, but for one.

THOMAS: That I do not understand.

TEMPTER: It is not for me to tell you how this may be so;

I am only here, Thomas, to tell you what you know.

THOMAS: How long shall this be?

TEMPTER: Save what you know already, ask nothing of me.

But think, Thomas, think of glory after death.

When king is dead, there's another king,

And one more king is another reign.

King is forgotten, when another shall come:

Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb.

Think, Thomas, think of enemies dismayed,

Creeping in penance, frightened of a shade;

Think of pilgrims, standing in line



Before the glittering jewelled shrine,  
From generation to generation  
Bending the knee in supplication.  
Think of the miracles, by God's grace,  
And think of your enemies, in another place.

THOMAS: I have thought of these things.

TEMPER: That is why I tell you.  
Your thoughts have more power than kings to compel you.  
You have also thought, sometimes at your prayers,  
Sometimes hesitating at the angles of stairs,  
And between sleep and waking, early in the morning,  
When the bird cries, have thought of further scorning.  
That nothing lasts, but the wheel turns,  
The nest is rifled, and the bird mourns;  
That the shrine shall be pillaged, and the gold spent,  
The jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,  
The sanctuary broken, and its stores  
Swept into the laps of parasites and whores.  
When miracles cease, and the faithful desert you,  
And men shall only do their best to forget you.  
And later is worse, when men will not hate you  
Enough to defame or to execrate you,  
But pondering the qualities that you lacked  
Will only try to find the historical fact.  
When men shall declare that there was no mystery  
About this man who played a certain part in history.

THOMAS: But what is there to do? what is left to be done?  
Is there no enduring crown to be won?

TEMPER: Yes, Thomas, yes; you have thought of that too.  
What can compare with glory of Saints  
Dwelling forever in presence of God?  
What earthly glory, of king or emperor,  
What earthly pride, that is not poverty  
Compared with richness of heavenly grandeur?  
Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest  
On earth, to be high in heaven.



And see far off below you, where the gulf is fixed,  
Your persecutors, in timeless torment,  
Parched passion, beyond expiation.

THOMAS: Nol

Who are you, tempting with my own desires?  
Others have come, temporal tempters,  
With pleasure and power at palpable price.  
What do you offer? what do you ask?

TEMPTER: I offer what you desire. I ask  
What you have to give. Is it too much  
For such a vision of eternal grandeur?

THOMAS: Others offered real goods, worthless  
But real. You only offer  
Dreams to damnation.

TEMPTER: You have often dreamt them.

THOMAS: Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,  
Does not lead to damnation in pride?  
I well know that these temptations  
Mean present vanity and future torment.  
Can sinful pride be driven out  
Only by more sinful? Can I neither act nor suffer  
Without perdition?

TEMPTER: You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.  
You know and do not know, that acting is suffering,  
And suffering action. Neither does the actor suffer  
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed  
In an eternal action, an eternal patience  
To which all must consent that it may be willed  
And which all must suffer that they may will it,  
That the pattern may subsist, that the wheel may turn and still  
Be forever still.

CHORUS: There is no rest in the house. There is no rest in the street.  
I hear restless movement of feet. And the air is heavy and thick.  
Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up beneath my  
feet.

What is the sickly smell, the vapour? the dark green light from

a cloud on a withered tree? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand?

THE FOUR TEMPTERS: Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment;

All things are unreal,

Unreal or disappointing:

The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,

The prizes given at the children's party,

The prize awarded for the English Essay,

The scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration.

All things become less real, man passes

From unreality to unreality.

This man is obstinate, blind, intent

On self-destruction,

Passing from deception to deception,

From grandeur to grandeur to final illusion,

Lost in the wonder of his own greatness,

The enemy of society, enemy of himself.

THE THREE PRIESTS: O Thomas my Lord do not fight the intractable tide,

Do not sail the irresistible wind; in the storm,

Should we not wait for the sea to subside, in the night

Abide the coming of day, when the traveller may find his way,

The sailor lay course by the sun?

CHORUS, PRIESTS *and* TEMPTERS *alternately*:

C. Is it the owl that calls, or a signal between the trees?

P. Is the window-bar made fast, is the door under lock and bolt?

T. Is it rain that taps at the window, is it wind that pokes at the door?

C. Does the torch flame in the hall, the candle in the room?

P. Does the watchman walk by the wall?

T. Does the mastiff prowl by the gate?

C. Death has a hundred hands and walks by a thousand ways.

P. He may come in the sight of all, he may pass unseen unheard.

T. Come whispering through the ear, or a sudden shock on the skull.

C. A man may walk with a lamp at night, and yet be drowned in a ditch.

P. A man may climb the stair in the day, and slip on a broken step.

T. A man may sit at meat, and feel the cold in his groin.

CHORUS: We have not been happy, my Lord, we have not been too happy.

We are not ignorant women, we know what we must expect and not expect.

We know of oppression and torture,

We know of extortion and violence,

Destitution, disease,

The old without fire in winter,

The child without milk in summer,

Our labour taken away from us,

Our sins made heavier upon us.

We have seen the young man mutilated,

The torn girl trembling by the mill-stream.

And meanwhile we have gone on living,

Living and partly living,

Picking together the pieces,

Gathering faggots at nightfall,

Building a partial shelter,

For sleeping, and eating and drinking and laughter.

God gave us always some reason, some hope; but now a new terror has soiled us, which none can avert, none can avoid, flowing under our feet and over the sky;

Under doors and down chimneys, flowing in at the ear and the mouth and the eye.

God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more pang, more pain, than birth or death.

Sweet and cloying through the dark air

Falls the stifling scent of despair;

The forms take shape in the dark air:

Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding bear,

Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena waiting  
 For laughter, laughter, laughter. The Lords of Hell are here.  
 They curl round you, lie at your feet, swing and wing through  
 the dark air.

O Thomas Archbishop, save us, save us, save yourself that we  
 may be saved;

Destroy yourself and we are destroyed.

THOMAS: Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain:

Temptation shall not come in this kind again.

The last temptation is the greatest treason:

To do the right deed for the wrong reason.

The natural vigour in the venial sin

Is the way in which our lives begin.

Thirty years ago, I searched all the ways

That lead to pleasure, advancement and praise.

Delight in sense, in learning and in thought,

Music and philosophy, curiosity,

The purple bullfinch in the lilac tree,

The tiltyard skill, the strategy of chess,

Love in the garden, singing to the instrument,

Were all things equally desirable.

Ambition comes when early force is spent

And when we find no longer all things possible.

Ambition comes behind and unobservable.

Sin grows with doing good. When I imposed the King's law

In England, and waged war with him against Toulouse,

I beat the barons at their own game. I

Could then despise the men who thought me most contemptible,

The raw nobility, whose manners matched their fingernails.

While I ate out of the King's dish

To become servant of God was never my wish.

Servant of God has chance of greater sin

And sorrow, than the man who serves a king.

For those who serve the greater cause may make the cause serve  
 them,

Still doing right: and striving with political men

May make that cause political, not by what they do

But by what they are. I know

What yet remains to show you of my history  
Will seem to most of you at best futility,  
Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic,  
Arrogant passion of a fanatic.  
I know that history at all times draws  
The strangest consequence from remotest cause.  
But for every evil, every sacrilege,  
Crime, wrong, oppression and the axe's edge,  
Indifference, exploitation, you, and you,  
And you, must all be punished. So must you.  
I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.  
Now my good Angel, whom God appoints  
To be my guardian, hover over the swords' points.

## Interlude

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THE ARCHBISHOP *preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning*, 1170

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' *The fourteenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke.* In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dear children of God, my sermon this morning will be a very short one. I wish only that you should ponder and meditate the deep meaning and mystery of our masses of Christmas Day. For whenever Mass is said, we re-enact the Passion and Death of Our Lord; and on this Christmas Day we do this in celebration of His Birth. So that at the same moment we rejoice in His coming for the salvation of men, and offer again to God His Body and Blood in sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. It was in this same night that has just passed, that a multitude of the heavenly host appeared before the shepherds at Bethlehem, saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'; at this same time of all the year that we celebrate at once the Birth of Our Lord and His Passion and Death upon the Cross. Beloved, as the World sees, this is to behave in a strange fashion. For who in the World will both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason? For either joy will be overborne by mourning, or mourning will be cast out by joy; so it is only in these our Christian mysteries that we can rejoice and mourn at once for the same reason. But think for a while on the meaning of this word 'peace.' Does it seem strange to you that the angels should have announced Peace, when ceaselessly the world has been stricken with War and the fear of War? Does it seem to you that the angelic voices were mistaken, and that the promise was a disappointment and a cheat?

Reflect now, how Our Lord Himself spoke of Peace. He said to His disciples 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.' Did

He mean peace as we think of it: the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the King, the householder counting over his peaceful gains, the swept hearth, his best wine for a friend at the table, his wife singing to the children? Those men His disciples knew no such things: they went forth to journey afar, to suffer by land and sea, to know torture, imprisonment, disappointment, to suffer death by martyrdom. What then did He mean? If you ask that, remember then that He said also, 'Not as the world gives, give I unto you.' So then, He gave to His disciples peace, but not peace as the world gives.

Consider also one thing of which you have probably never thought. Not only do we at the feast of Christmas celebrate at once Our Lord's Birth and His Death: but on the next day we celebrate the martyrdom of His first martyr, the blessed Stephen. Is it an accident, do you think, that the day of the first martyr follows immediately the day of the Birth of Christ? By no means. Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of Our Lord; so also, in a smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice, that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men.

Beloved, we do not think of a martyr simply as a good Christian who has been killed because he is a Christian: for that would be solely to mourn. We do not think of him simply as a good Christian who has been elevated to the company of the Saints: for that would be simply to rejoice: and neither our mourning nor our rejoicing is as the world's is. A Christian martyrdom is no accident. Saints are not made by accident. Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. Ambition fortifies the will of man to become ruler over other men: it operates with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven. A martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. A martyrdom is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no longer desires anything for him-



self, not even the glory of martyrdom. So thus as on earth the Church mourns and rejoices at once, in a fashion that the world cannot understand; so in Heaven the Saints are most high, having made themselves most low, seeing themselves not as we see them, but in the light of the Godhead from which they draw their being.

I have spoken to you today, dear children of God, of the martyrs of the past, asking you to remember especially our martyr of Canterbury, the blessed Archbishop Elphege; because it is fitting, on Christ's birth day, to remember what is that Peace which He brought; and because, dear children, I do not think I shall ever preach to you again; and because it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last. I would have you keep in your hearts these words that I say, and think of them at another time. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.



## Part II

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### CHARACTERS

THREE PRIESTS

FOUR KNIGHTS

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET

CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY

ATTENDANTS

*The first scene is in the Archbishop's Hall, the second scene  
is in the Cathedral, on December 29th, 1170*

CHORUS: Does the bird sing in the South?

Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by the storm.

What sign of the spring of the year?

Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a shoot, not a breath.

Do the days begin to lengthen?

Longer and darker the day, shorter and colder the night.

Still and stifling the air: but a wind is stored up in the East.

The starved crow sits in the field, attentive; and in the wood

The owl rehearses the hollow note of death.

What signs of a bitter spring?

The wind stored up in the East.

What, at the time of the birth of Our Lord, at Christmastide,

Is there not peace upon earth, goodwill among men?

The peace of this world is always uncertain, unless men keep the  
peace of God.

And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord  
renews it,

And the world must be cleaned in the winter, or we shall have  
only

A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest.

Between Christmas and Easter what work shall be done?

The ploughman shall go out in March and turn the same earth  
He has turned before, the bird shall sing the same song.  
When the leaf is out on the tree, when the elder and may  
Burst over the stream, and the air is clear and high,  
And voices trill at windows, and children tumble in front of the  
door,

What work shall have been done, what wrong  
Shall the bird's song cover, the green tree cover, what wrong  
Shall the fresh earth cover? We wait, and the time is short  
But waiting is long.

[*Enter the FOUR KNIGHTS.*]

FIRST KNIGHT: Servants of the king.

FIRST PRIEST: And known to us.

You are welcome. Have you ridden far?

FIRST KNIGHT: Not far today, but matters urgent  
Have brought us from France. We rode hard,  
Took ship yesterday, landed last night,  
Having business with the Archbishop.

SECOND KNIGHT: Urgent business.

THIRD KNIGHT: From the King.

FOURTH KNIGHT: By the King's order.

FIRST KNIGHT: Our men are outside.

FIRST PRIEST: You know the Archbishop's hospitality.

We are about to go to dinner.

The good Archbishop would be vexed

If we did not offer you entertainment

Before your business. Please dine with us.

Your men shall be looked after also.

Dinner before business. Do you like roast pork?

FIRST KNIGHT: Business before dinner. We will roast your pork  
First, and dine upon it after.

SECOND KNIGHT: We must see the Archbishop.

THIRD KNIGHT: Go, tell the Archbishop

We have no need of his hospitality.

We will find our own dinner.

FIRST PRIEST [*to attendant*]: Go, tell His Lordship.

FOURTH KNIGHT: How much longer will you keep us waiting?

[Enter THOMAS.]

THOMAS [to PRIESTS]: However certain our expectation  
The moment foreseen may be unexpected  
When it arrives. It comes when we are  
Engrossed with matters of other urgency.  
On my table you will find  
The papers in order, and the documents signed.

[To KNIGHTS.]

You are welcome, whatever your business may be.  
You say, from the King?

FIRST KNIGHT: Most surely from the King.  
We must speak with you alone.

THOMAS [to PRIESTS]: Leave us then alone.  
Now what is the matter?

FIRST KNIGHT: This is the matter.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS: You are the Archbishop in revolt against the  
King; in rebellion to the King and the law of the land;  
You are the Archbishop who was made by the King; whom he  
set in your place to carry out his command.  
You are his servant, his tool, and his jack,  
You wore his favours on your back,  
You had your honours all from his hand; from him you had the  
power, the seal and the ring.  
This is the man who was the tradesman's son: the backstairs brat  
who was born in Cheapside;  
This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen with  
blood and swollen with pride.  
Creeping out of the London dirt,  
Crawling up like a louse on your shirt,  
The man who cheated, swindled, lied; broke his oath and be-  
trayed his King.

THOMAS: This is not true.  
Both before and after I received the ring  
I have been a loyal vassal to the King.  
Saving my order, I am at his command,  
As his most faithful vassal in the land.

FIRST KNIGHT: Saving your order! let your order save you—

As I do not think it is like to do.

Saving your ambition is what you mean,

Saving your pride, envy and spleen.

SECOND KNIGHT: Saving your insolence and greed.

Won't you ask us to pray to God for you, in your need?

THIRD KNIGHT: Yes, we'll pray for you!

FOURTH KNIGHT: Yes, we'll pray for you!

THE FOUR KNIGHTS: Yes, we'll pray that God may help you!

THOMAS: But, gentlemen, your business

Which you said so urgent, is it only

Scolding and blaspheming?

FIRST KNIGHT: That was only

Our indignation, as loyal subjects.

THOMAS: Loyal? to whom?

FIRST KNIGHT: To the King!

SECOND KNIGHT: The King!

THIRD KNIGHT: The King!

FOURTH KNIGHT: God bless him!

THOMAS: Then let your new coat of loyalty be worn

Carefully, so it get not soiled or torn.

Have you something to say?

FIRST KNIGHT: By the King's command.

Shall we say it now?

SECOND KNIGHT: Without delay,

Before the old fox is off and away.

THOMAS: What you have to say

By the King's command—if it be the King's command—

Should be said in public. If you make charges,

Then in public I will refute them.

FIRST KNIGHT: No! here and now!

*[They make to attack him, but the priests and attendants return  
and quietly interpose themselves.]*

THOMAS: Now and here!

FIRST KNIGHT: Of your earlier misdeeds I shall make no mention.

They are too well known. But after dissension

Had ended, in France, and you were endued

With your former privilege, how did you show your gratitude?

You had fled from England, not exiled

Or threatened, mind you; but in the hope  
Of stirring up trouble in the French dominions.  
You sowed strife abroad, you reviled  
The King to the King of France, to the Pope,  
Raising up against him false opinions.

SECOND KNIGHT: Yet the King, out of his charity,  
And urged by your friends, offered clemency,  
Made a pact of peace, and all dispute ended  
Sent you back to your See as you demanded.

THIRD KNIGHT: And burying the memory of your transgressions  
Restored your honours and your possessions.  
All was granted for which you sued:  
Yet how, I repeat, did you show your gratitude?

FOURTH KNIGHT: Suspending those who had crowned the young  
prince,  
Denying the legality of his coronation;  
Binding with the chains of anathema,  
Using every means in your power to evince  
The King's faithful servants, everyone who transacts  
His business in his absence, the business of the nation.

FIRST KNIGHT: These are the facts.  
Say therefore if you will be content  
To answer in the King's presence. Therefore were we sent.

THOMAS: Never was it my wish  
To uncrown the King's son, or to diminish  
His honour and power. Why should he wish  
To deprive my people of me and keep me from my own  
And bid me sit in Canterbury, alone?  
I would wish him three crowns rather than one,  
And as for the bishops, it is not my yoke  
That is laid upon them, or mine to revoke.  
Let them go to the Pope. It was he who condemned them.

FIRST KNIGHT: Through you they were suspended.

SECOND KNIGHT: By you be this amended.

THIRD KNIGHT: Absolve them.

FOURTH KNIGHT: Absolve them.

THOMAS: I do not deny  
That this was done through me. But it is not I

Who can loose whom the Pope has bound.  
Let them go to him, upon whom redounds  
Their contempt towards me, their contempt towards the Church  
shown.

FIRST KNIGHT: Be that as it may, here is the King's command:

That you and your servants depart from this land.

THOMAS: If that *is* the King's command, I will be bold

To say: seven years were my people without  
My presence; seven years of misery and pain.  
Seven years a mendicant on foreign charity  
I lingered abroad: seven years is no brevity.  
I shall not get those seven years back again.  
Never again, you must make no doubt,  
Shall the sea run between the shepherd and his fold.

FIRST KNIGHT: The King's justice, the King's majesty,

You insult with gross indignity;  
Insolent madman, whom nothing deters  
From attaining his servants and ministers.

THOMAS: It is not I who insult the King,

And there is higher than I or the King.  
It is not I, Becket from Cheapside,  
It is not against me, Becket, that you strive.  
It is not Becket who pronounces doom,  
But the Law of Christ's Church, the judgement of Rome.  
Go then to Rome, or let Rome come  
Here, to you, in the person of her most unworthy son.  
Petty politicians in your endless adventure!  
Rome alone can absolve those who break Christ's indenture.

FIRST KNIGHT: Priest, you have spoken in peril of your life.

SECOND KNIGHT: Priest, you have spoken in danger of the knife.

THIRD KNIGHT: Priest, you have spoken treachery and treason.

FOURTH KNIGHT: Priest! traitor confirmed in malfeasance.

THOMAS: I submit my cause to the judgement of Rome.

But if you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb  
To submit my cause before God's throne.

KNIGHTS: Priest! monk! and servant! take, hold, detain,

Restrain this man, in the King's name;

Or answer with your bodies, if he escape before we come,

We come for the King's justice, we come again. [Exeunt.]

THOMAS: Pursue those who flee, track down those who evade;

Come for arrest, come with the sword,

Here, here, you shall find me ready, in the battle of the Lord.

At whatsoever time you are ready to come,

You will find me still more ready for martyrdom.

CHORUS: I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened

By subtile forebodings; I have heard

Fluting in the nighttime, fluting and owls, have seen at noon

Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridiculous. I have tasted

The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon. I have felt

The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd. I have heard

Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises: jackal,

jackass, jackdaw; the scurrying noise of mouse and jerboa; the

laugh of the loon, the lunatic bird. I have seen

Grey necks twisting, rat tails twining, in the thick light of dawn.

I have eaten

Smooth creatures still living, with the strong salt taste of living things under sea; I have tasted

The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the

prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels

dissolve in the light of dawn. I have smelt

Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth,

primrose and cowslip. I have seen

Trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd places;

I have lain on the floor of the sea and breathed with the breath-

ing of the sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgitation of the

sponge. I have lain in the soil and criticised the worm. In the

air

Flirted with the passage of the kite, I have plunged with the kite

and cowered with the wren. I have felt

The horn of the beetle, the scale of the viper, the mobile hard

insensitive skin of the elephant, the evasive flank of the fish.

I have smelt

Corruption in the dish, incense in the latrine, the sewer in the

incense, the smell of sweet soap in the woodpath, a hellish



sweet scent in the woodpath, while the ground heaved. I have  
seen

Rings of light coiling downwards, leading  
To the horror of the ape. Have I not known, not known  
What was coming to be? It was here, in the kitchen, in the  
passage,

In the mews in the barn in the byre in the market place  
In our veins our bowels our skulls as well  
As well as in the plottings of potentates  
As well as in the consultations of powers.  
What is woven on the loom of fate  
What is woven in the councils of princes  
Is woven also in our veins, our brains,  
Is woven like a pattern of living worms  
In the guts of the women of Canterbury.

I have smelt them, the death-bringers; now is too late  
For action, too soon for contrition.

Nothing is possible but the shamed swoon  
Of those consenting to the last humiliation.

I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented.

Am torn away, subdued, violated,

United to the spiritual flesh of nature,

Mastered by the animal powers of spirit,

Dominated by the lust of self-demolition,

By the final utter uttermost death of spirit,

By the final ecstasy of waste and shame,

O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us, forgive  
us, pray for us that we may pray for you, out of our shame.

THOMAS: Peace, and be at peace with your thoughts and visions.

These things had to come to you and you to accept them.

This is your share of the eternal burden,

The perpetual glory. This is one moment,

But know that another

Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy

When the figure of God's purpose is made complete.

You shall forget these things, toiling in the household,

You shall remember them, droning by the fire,



When age and forgetfulness sweeten memory  
Only like a dream that has often been told  
And often been changed in the telling. They will seem unreal.  
Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

PRIESTS [*severally*]: My Lord, you must not stop here. To the minster. Through the cloister. No time to waste. They are coming back, armed. To the altar, to the altar. They are here already. To the sanctuary. They are breaking in. We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.

THOMAS: All my life they have been coming, these feet. All my life I have waited. Death will come only when I am worthy,  
And if I am worthy, there is no danger.  
I have therefore only to make perfect my will.

PRIESTS: My Lord, they are coming. They will break through presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

THOMAS: Peace! be quiet! remember where you are, and what is happening;

No life here is sought for but mine,  
And I am not in danger: only near to death.

PRIESTS: Make haste, my Lord. Don't stop here talking. It is not right. What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed; what shall become of us?

THOMAS: That again is another theme  
To be developed and resolved in the pattern of time.  
It is not for me to run from city to city;  
To meet death gladly is only  
The only way in which I can defend  
The Law of God, the holy canons.

PRIESTS: My Lord, to vespers! You must not be absent from vespers.  
You must not be absent from the divine office. To vespers.  
Into the cathedral!

THOMAS: Go to vespers, remember me at your prayers.  
They shall find the shepherd here; the flock shall be spared.  
I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,  
And I would no longer be denied; all things  
Proceed to a joyful consummation.

PRIESTS: Seize him! force him! drag him!

THOMAS: Keep your hands off!

PRIESTS: To vespers! Take his feet! Up with him! Hurry.

[*They drag him off. While the CHORUS speak, the scene is changed to the cathedral.*]

CHORUS [*while a Dies Irae is sung in Latin by a choir in the distance*]:

Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,

Still the horror, but more horror

Than when tearing in the belly.

Still the horror, but more horror

Than when twisting in the fingers,

Than when splitting in the skull.

More than footfall in the passage,

More than shadow in the doorway,

More than fury in the hall.

The agents of hell disappear, the human, they shrink and dissolve

Into dust on the wind, forgotten, unmemorable; only is here

The white flat face of Death, God's silent servant,

And behind the face of Death the Judgement

And behind the Judgement the Void, more horrid than active shapes of hell;

Emptiness, absence, separation from God;

The horror of the effortless journey, to the empty land

Which is no land, only emptiness, absence, the Void,

Where those who were men can no longer turn the mind

To distraction, delusion, escape into dream, pretence,

Where the soul is no longer deceived, for there are no objects, no tones,

No colours, no forms to distract, to divert the soul

From seeing itself, foully united forever, nothing with nothing,

Not what we call death, but what beyond death is not death,

We fear, we fear. Who shall then plead for me,

Who intercede for me, in my most need?

Dead upon the tree, my Saviour,  
Let not be in vain Thy labour;  
Help me, Lord, in my last fear.

Dust I am, to dust am bending,  
From the final doom impending  
Help me, Lord, for death is near.

*In the cathedral.* THOMAS and PRIESTS

PRIESTS: Bar the door. Bar the door.

The door is barred.

We are safe. We are safe.

The enemy may rage outside, he will tire

In vain. They cannot break in.

They dare not break in.

They cannot break in. They have not the force.

We are safe. We are safe.

THOMAS: Unbar the doors! throw open the doors!

I will not have the house of prayer, the church of Christ,

The sanctuary, turned into a fortress.

The church shall protect her own, in her own way, not

As oak and stone; stone and oak decay,

Give no stay, but the Church shall endure.

The church shall be open, even to our enemies. Open the door!

PRIEST: My Lord! these are not men, these come not as men come,  
but

Like maddened beasts. They come not like men, who

Respect the sanctuary, who kneel to the Body of Christ,

But like beasts. You would bar the door

Against the lion, the leopard, the wolf or the boar,

Why not more

Against beasts with the souls of damned men, against men

Who would damn themselves to beasts. My Lord! My Lord!

THOMAS: Unbar the door!

You think me reckless, desperate and mad.

You argue by results, as this world does,

To settle if an act be good or bad.

You defer to the fact. For every life and every act  
 Consequence of good and evil can be shown.  
 And as in time results of many deeds are blended  
 So good and evil in the end become confounded.  
 It is not in time that my death shall be known;  
 It is out of time that my decision is taken  
 If you call that decision  
 To which my whole being gives entire consent.  
 I give my life  
 To the Law of God above the Law of Man.  
 Those who do not the same  
 How should they know what I do?  
 How should you know what I do? Yet how much more  
 Should you know than these madmen beating on the door.  
 Unbar the door! unbar the door!  
 We are not here to triumph by fighting, by stratagem, or by  
     resistance,  
 Not to fight with beasts as men. We have fought the beast  
 And have conquered. We have only to conquer  
 Now, by suffering. This is the easier victory.  
 Now is the triumph of the Cross, now  
 Open the door! I command it. OPEN THE DOOR!  
 [*The door is opened. The KNIGHTS enter, slightly tipsy.*]  
 PRIESTS: This way, my Lord! Quick. Up the stair. To the roof.  
     To the crypt. Quick. Come. Force him.  
 KNIGHTS [*one line each*]: Where is Becket, the traitor to the King?  
     Where is Becket, the meddling priest?  
 Come down Daniel to the lions' den,  
     Come down Daniel for the mark of the beast.

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
 Are you marked with the mark of the beast?  
 Come down Daniel to the lions' den,  
     Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

Where is Becket the Cheapside brat?  
 Where is Becket the faithless priest?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,  
Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

THOMAS: It is the just man who  
Like a bold lion, should be without fear.  
I am here.  
No traitor to the King. I am a priest,  
A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ,  
Ready to suffer with my blood.  
This is the sign of the Church always,  
The sign of blood. Blood for blood.  
His blood given to buy my life,  
My blood given to pay for His death,  
My death for His death.

KNIGHTS: Absolve all those you have excommunicated.  
Resign the powers you have arrogated.  
Restore to the King the money you appropriated.  
Renew the obedience you have violated.

THOMAS: For my Lord I am now ready to die,  
That His Church may have peace and liberty.  
Do with me as you will, to your hurt and shame;  
But none of my people, in God's name,  
Whether layman or clerk, shall you touch.  
This I forbid.

KNIGHTS: Traitor! traitor! traitor! traitor!

THOMAS: You, Reginald, three times traitor you:  
Traitor to me as my temporal vassal,  
Traitor to me as your spiritual lord,  
Traitor to God in desecrating His Church.

FIRST KNIGHT: No faith do I owe to a renegade,  
And what I owe shall now be paid.

THOMAS: Now to Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin,  
to the blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and  
Paul, to the blessed martyr Denys, and to all the Saints, I com-  
mend my cause and that of the Church.

*While the KNIGHTS kill him, we hear the*

CHORUS: Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from  
stone and wash them.

The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves  
defiled with blood.

A rain of blood has blinded my eyes. Where is England? where  
is Kent? where is Canterbury?

O far far far far in the past; and I wander in a land of barren  
boughs: if I break them, they bleed; I wander in a land of  
dry stones: if I touch them they bleed.

How how can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?

Night stay with us, stop sun, hold season, let the day not come,  
let the spring not come.

Can I look again at the day and its common things, and see  
them all smeared with blood, through a curtain of falling  
blood?

We did not wish anything to happen.

We understood the private catastrophe,

The personal loss, the general misery,

Living and partly living;

The terror by night that ends in daily action,

The terror by day that ends in sleep;

But the talk in the market-place, the hand on the broom,

The nighttime heaping of the ashes,

The fuel laid on the fire at daybreak,

These acts marked a limit to our suffering.

Every horror had its definition,

Every sorrow had a kind of end:

In life there is not time to grieve long.

But this, this is out of life, this is out of time,

An instant eternity of evil and wrong.

We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to super-  
natural vermin,

It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is  
defiled,

But the world that is wholly foul.

Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take the stone from  
the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from  
the bone, and wash them. Wash the stone, wash the bone,  
wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them wash them!

[*The KNIGHTS, having completed the murder, advance to the front of the stage and address the audience.*]

FIRST KNIGHT: We beg you to give us your attention for a few moments. We know that you may be disposed to judge unfavourably of our action. You are Englishmen, and therefore you believe in fair play: and when you see one man being set upon by four, then your sympathies are all with the under dog. I respect such feelings, I share them. Nevertheless, I appeal to your sense of honour. You are Englishmen, and therefore will not judge anybody without hearing both sides of the case. That is in accordance with our long established principle of Trial by Jury. I am not myself qualified to put our case to you. I am a man of action and not of words. For that reason I shall do no more than introduce the other speakers, who, with their various abilities, and different points of view, will be able to lay before you the merits of this extremely complex problem. I shall call upon our youngest member to speak first. William de Traci.

SECOND KNIGHT: I am afraid I am not anything like such an experienced speaker as Reginald Fitz Urse would lead you to believe. But there is one thing I should like to say, and I might as well say it at once. It is this: in what we have done, and whatever you may think of it, we have been perfectly disinterested. [*The other KNIGHTS: 'Hear! hear!'*.] *We* are not getting anything out of this. We have much more to lose than to gain. We are four plain Englishmen who put our country first. I dare say that we didn't make a very good impression when we came in. The fact is that we knew we had taken on a pretty stiff job; I'll only speak for myself, but I had drunk a good deal—I am not a drinking man ordinarily—to brace myself up for it. When you come to the point, it does go against the grain to kill an Archbishop, especially when you have been brought up in good Church traditions. So if we seemed a bit rowdy, you will understand why it was; and for my part I am awfully sorry about it. We realised that this was our duty, but all the same we had to work ourselves up to it. And, as I said, *we* are not getting a penny out of this. We know perfectly well how things will turn out. King Henry—God bless him—will have to say, for reasons of state,



that he never meant this to happen; and there is going to be an awful row; and at the best we shall have to spend the rest of our lives abroad. And even when reasonable people come to see that the Archbishop *had* to be put out of the way—and personally I had a tremendous admiration for him—you must have noticed what a good show he put up at the end—they won't give *us* any glory. No, we have done for ourselves, there's no mistake about that. So, as I said at the beginning, please give us at least the credit for being completely disinterested in this business. I think that is about all I have to say.

FIRST KNIGHT: I think we will all agree that William de Traci has spoken well and has made a very important point. The gist of his argument is this: that we have been completely disinterested. But our act itself needs more justification than that; and you must hear our other speakers. I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.

THIRD KNIGHT: I should like first to recur to a point that was very well put by our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse: that you are Englishmen, and therefore your sympathies are always with the under dog. It is the English spirit of fair play. Now the worthy Archbishop, whose good qualities I very much admired, has throughout been presented as the under dog. But is this really the case? I am going to appeal not to your emotions but to your reason. You are hard-headed sensible people, as I can see, and not to be taken in by emotional clap-trap. I therefore ask you to consider soberly: what were the Archbishop's aims? and what are King Henry's aims? In the answer to these questions lies the key to the problem.

The King's aim has been perfectly consistent. During the reign of the late Queen Matilda and the irruption of the unhappy usurper Stephen, the kingdom was very much divided. Our King saw that the one thing needful was to restore order: to curb the excessive powers of local government, which were usually exercised for selfish and often for seditious ends, and to systematise the judiciary. There was utter chaos: there were three kinds of justice and three kinds of court: that of the King, that of the Bishops, and that of the baronage. I must repeat one



point that the last speaker has made. While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, he wholeheartedly supported the King's designs: this is an important point, which, if necessary, I can substantiate. Now the King intended that Becket, who had proved himself an extremely able administrator—no one denies that—should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop. No one would have grudged him that; no one than he was better qualified to fill at once these two most important posts. Had Becket concurred with the King's wishes, we should have had an almost ideal State: a union of spiritual and temporal administration, under the central government. I knew Becket well, in various official relations; and I may say that I have never known a man so well qualified for the highest rank of the Civil Service. And what happened? The moment that Becket, at the King's instance, had been made Archbishop, he resigned the office of Chancellor, he became more priestly than the priests, he ostentatiously and offensively adopted an ascetic manner of life, he openly abandoned every policy that he had heretofore supported; he affirmed immediately that there was a higher order than that which our King, and he as the King's servant, had for so many years striven to establish; and that—God knows why—the two orders were incompatible.

You will agree with me that such interference by an Archbishop offends the instincts of a people like ours. So far, I know that I have your approval: I read it in your faces. It is only with the measures we have had to adopt, in order to set matters to rights, that you take issue. No one regrets the necessity for violence more than we do. Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way in which social justice can be secured. At another time, you would condemn an Archbishop by vote of Parliament and execute him formally as a traitor, and no one would have to bear the burden of being called murderer. And at a later time still, even such temperate measures as these would become unnecessary. But, if you have now arrived at a just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State, remember that it is we who took the first step. We have been instrumental in bringing about the state of affairs

that you approve. We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must share it with us.

FIRST KNIGHT: Morville has given us a great deal to think about. It seems to me that he has said almost the last word, for those who have been able to follow his very subtle reasoning. We have, however, one more speaker, who has I think another point of view to express. If there are any who are still unconvinced, I think that Richard Brito will be able to convince them. Richard Brito.

FOURTH KNIGHT: The speakers who have preceded me, to say nothing of our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse, have all spoken very much to the point. I have nothing to add along their particular lines of argument. What I have to say may be put in the form of a question: *Who killed the Archbishop?* As you have been eye-witnesses of this lamentable scene, you may feel some surprise at my putting it in this way. But consider the course of events. I am obliged, very briefly, to go over the ground traversed by the last speaker. While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, no one, under the King, did more to weld the country together, to give it the unity, the stability, order, tranquillity, and justice that it so badly needed. From the moment he became Archbishop, he completely reversed his policy; he showed himself to be utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be, in fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society. This egotism grew upon him, until it became at last an undoubted mania. Every means that had been tried to conciliate him, to restore him to reason, had failed. Now I have unimpeachable evidence to the effect that before he left France he clearly prophesied, in the presence of numerous witnesses, that he had not long to live, and that he would be killed in England. He used every means of provocation; from his conduct, step by step, there can be no inference except that he had determined upon a death by martyrdom. This man, formerly a great public servant, had become a wrecker. Even at the last, he could have given us reason: you have seen how he evaded our questions. And when he had deliberately exasperated us beyond human endurance, he could still have easily escaped; he could have kept himself from us

long enough to allow our righteous anger to cool. That was just what he did not wish to happen; he insisted, while we were still inflamed with wrath, that the doors should be opened. Need I say more? I think, with these facts before you, you will unhesitatingly render a verdict of Suicide while of Unsound Mind. It is the only charitable verdict you can give, upon one who was, after all, a great man.

FIRST KNIGHT: Thank you, Brito. I think that there is no more to be said; and I suggest that you now disperse quietly to your homes. Please be careful not to loiter in groups at street corners, and do nothing that might provoke any public outbreak.

[*Exeunt* KNIGHTS.]

FIRST PRIEST: O father, father, gone from us, lost to us,  
How shall we find you, from what far place  
Do you look down on us? You now in Heaven,  
Who shall now guide us, protect us, direct us?  
After what journey through what further dread  
Shall we recover your presence? when inherit  
Your strength? The Church lies bereft,  
Alone, desecrated, desolated, and the heathen shall build on  
the ruins,  
Their world without God. I see it. I see it.

THIRD PRIEST: No. For the Church is stronger for this action,  
Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified  
By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.  
Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in earth or heaven.  
Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock  
Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.  
Go venture shipwreck on the sullen coasts  
Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;  
Go to the northern seas confined with ice  
Where the dead breath makes numb the hand, makes dull the  
brain;  
Find an oasis in the desert sun,  
Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,  
To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch  
Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,  
Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;

Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.  
 In the small circle of pain within the skull  
 You still shall tramp and tread one endless round  
 Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,  
 Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,  
 Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe  
 Which never is belief: this is your fate on earth  
 And we must think no further of you. O my lord  
 The glory of whose new state is hidden from us,  
 Pray for us of your charity; now in the sight of God  
 Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs gone before you,  
 Remember us. Let our thanks ascend  
 To God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury.

CHORUS [*while a Te Deum is sung in Latin by a choir in the distance*]:

We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed in all the  
 creatures of the earth,

In the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in the storm; in all of Thy  
 creatures, both the hunters and the hunted.

For all things exist only as seen by Thee, only as known by  
 Thee, all things exist

Only in Thy light, and Thy glory is declared even in that which  
 denies Thee; the darkness declares the glory of light.

Those who deny Thee could not deny, if Thou didst not exist;  
 and their denial is never complete, for if it were so, they  
 would not exist.

They affirm Thee in living; all things affirm Thee in living;  
 the bird in the air, both the hawk and the finch; the beast  
 on the earth, both the wolf and the lamb; the worm in the  
 soil and the worm in the belly.

Therefore man, whom Thou hast made to be conscious of Thee,  
 must consciously praise Thee, in thought and in word and  
 in deed.

Even with the hand to the broom, the back bent in laying the  
 fire, the knee bent in cleaning the hearth, we, the scrubbers  
 and sweepers of Canterbury,

The back bent under toil, the knee bent under sin, the hands  
 to the face under fear, the head bent under grief,

Even in us the voices of seasons, the snuffle of winter, the song of spring, the drone of summer, the voices of beasts and of birds, praise Thee.

We thank Thee for Thy mercies of blood, for Thy redemption by blood. For the blood of Thy martyrs and saints  
Shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places.

For wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever a martyr has given his blood for the blood of Christ,

There is holy ground, and the sanctity shall not depart from it  
Though armies trample over it, though sightseers come with guide-books looking over it;

From where the western seas gnaw at the coast of Iona,

To the death in the desert, the prayer in forgotten places by the broken imperial column,

From such ground springs that which forever renews the earth  
Though it is forever denied. Therefore, O God, we thank Thee  
Who hast given such blessing to Canterbury.

Forgive us, O Lord, we acknowledge ourselves as type of the common man,

Of the men and women who shut the door and sit by the fire;  
Who fear the blessing of God, the loneliness of the night of

God, the surrender required, the deprivation inflicted;

Who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God;

Who fear the hand at the window, the fire in the thatch, the fist in the tavern, the push into the canal,

Less than we fear the love of God.

We acknowledge our trespass, our weakness, our fault; we acknowledge

That the sin of the world is upon our heads; that the blood of the martyrs and the agony of the saints

Is upon our heads.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Blessed Thomas, pray for us.



# The Family Reunion

## PERSONS

AMY, DOWAGER LADY MONCHENSEY

IVY, VIOLET, and AGATHA, *her younger sisters*

COL. THE HON. GERALD PIPER, and THE HON. CHARLES PIPER,  
*brothers of her deceased husband*

MARY, *daughter of a deceased cousin of Lady Monchensey*

DENMAN, *a parlourmaid*

HARRY, LORD MONCHENSEY, *Amy's eldest son*

DOWNING, *his servant and chauffeur*

DR. WARBURTON

SERGEANT WINCHELL

THE EUMENIDES

*The scene is laid in a country house in the North of England*



## Part I

*The Drawing Room, After Tea.  
An Afternoon in Late March*

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### SCENE I

AMY, IVY, VIOLET, AGATHA, GERALD, CHARLES, MARY  
*DENMAN enters to draw the curtains*

AMY: Not yet! I will ring for you. It is still quite light.  
I have nothing to do but watch the days draw out,  
Now that I sit in the house from October to June,  
And the swallow comes too soon and the spring will be over  
And the cuckoo will be gone before I am out again.  
O Sun, that was once so warm, O Light that was taken for granted  
When I was young and strong, and sun and light unsought for  
And the night unfeared and the day expected  
And clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured  
And time would not stop in the dark!  
Put on the lights. But leave the curtains undrawn.  
Make up the fire. Will the spring never come? I am cold.

AGATHA: Wishwood was always a cold place, Amy.

IVY: I have always told Amy she should go south in the winter.  
Were I in Amy's position, I would go south in the winter.  
I would follow the sun, not wait for the sun to come here.  
I would go south in the winter, if I could afford it,  
Not freeze, as I do, in Bayswater, by a gas-fire counting shillings.

VIOLET: Go south! to the English circulating libraries,  
To the military widows and the English chaplains,  
To the chilly deck-chair and the strong cold tea—  
The strong cold stewed bad Indian tea.

CHARLES: That's not Amy's style at all. We are country-bred people.

Amy has been too long used to our ways  
 Living with horses and dogs and guns  
 Ever to want to leave England in the winter.  
 But a single man like me is better off in London:  
 A man can be very cosy at his club  
 Even in an English winter.

GERALD:

Well, as for me,

I'd just as soon be a subaltern again  
 To be back in the East. An incomparable climate  
 For a man who can exercise a little common prudence;  
 And your servants look after you very much better.

AMY: My servants are perfectly competent, Gerald.

I can still see to that.

VIOLET:

Well, as for me,

I would never go south, no, definitely never,  
 Even could I do it as well as Amy:  
 England's bad enough, I would never go south,  
 Simply to see the vulgarest people—  
 You can keep out of their way at home;  
 People with money from heaven knows where—

GERALD:

Dividends from aeroplane shares.

VIOLET: They bathe all day and they dance all night

In the absolute *minimum* of clothes.

CHARLES: It's the cocktail-drinking does the harm:

There's nothing on earth so bad for the young.  
 All that a civilised person needs  
 Is a glass of dry sherry or two before dinner.  
 The modern young people don't know what they're drinking,  
 Modern young people don't care what they're eating;  
 They've lost their sense of taste and smell  
 Because of their cocktails and cigarettes.

[Enter DENMAN with sherry and whisky. CHARLES takes sherry  
 and GERALD whisky.]

That's what it comes to.

[Lights a cigarette.]

IVY:

The younger generation  
 Are undoubtedly decadent.

CHARLES:                               The younger generation  
Are not what we were. Haven't the stamina,  
Haven't the sense of responsibility.

GERALD: You're being very hard on the younger generation.  
I don't come across them very much now, myself;  
But I must say I've met some very decent specimens  
And some first-class shots—better than you were,  
Charles, as I remember. Besides, you've got to make allowances:  
We haven't left them such an easy world to live in.  
Let the younger generation speak for itself:  
It's Mary's generation. What does she think about it?

MARY: Really, Cousin Gerald, if you want information  
About the younger generation, you must ask someone else.  
I'm afraid that I don't deserve the compliment:  
I don't belong to any generation. [Exit.]

VIOLET: Really, Gerald, I must say you're very tactless,  
And I think that Charles might have been more considerate.

GERALD: I'm very sorry: but why was she upset?  
I only meant to draw her into the conversation.

CHARLES: She's a nice girl; but it's a difficult age for her.  
I suppose she must be getting on for thirty?  
She ought to be married, that's what it is.

AMY: So she should have been, if things had gone as I intended.  
Harry's return does not make things easy for her  
At the moment: but life may still go right.  
Meanwhile, let us drop the subject. The less said the better.

GERALD: That reminds me, Amy,  
When are the boys all due to arrive?

AMY: I do not want the clock to stop in the dark.  
If you want to know why I never leave Wishwood  
That is the reason. I keep Wishwood alive  
To keep the family alive, to keep them together,  
To keep me alive, and I live to keep them.  
You none of you understand how old you are  
And death will come to you as a mild surprise,  
A momentary shudder in a vacant room.  
Only Agatha seems to discover some meaning in death  
Which I cannot find.

—I am only certain of Arthur and John,  
Arthur in London, John in Leicestershire:  
They should both be here in good time for dinner.  
Harry telephoned to me from Marseilles,  
He would come by air to Paris, and so to London,  
And hoped to arrive in the course of the evening.

VIOLET: Harry was always the most likely to be late.

AMY: This time, it will not be his fault.

We are very lucky to have Harry at all.

IVY: And when will you have your birthday cake, Amy,  
And open your presents?

AMY: After dinner:

That is the best time.

IVY: It is the first time

You have not had your cake and your presents at tea.

AMY: This is a very particular occasion

As you ought to know. It will be the first time

For eight years that we have all been together.

AGATHA: It is going to be rather painful for Harry

After eight years and all that has happened

To come back to Wishwood.

GERALD: Why, painful?

VIOLET: Gerald! you know what Agatha means.

AGATHA: I mean painful, because everything is irrevocable,

Because the past is irremediable,

Because the future can only be built

Upon the real past. Wandering in the tropics

Or against the painted scene of the Mediterranean,

Harry must often have remembered Wishwood—

The nursery tea, the school holiday,

The daring feats on the old pony,

And thought to creep back through the little door.

He will find a new Wishwood. Adaptation is hard.

AMY: Nothing is changed, Agatha, at Wishwood.

Everything is kept as it was when he left it,

Except the old pony, and the mongrel setter

Which I had to have destroyed.

Nothing has been changed. I have seen to that.

AGATHA: Yes. I mean that at Wishwood he will find another Harry.  
The man who returns will have to meet  
The boy who left. Round by the stables,  
In the coach-house, in the orchard,  
In the plantation, down the corridor  
That led to the nursery, round the corner  
Of the new wing, he will have to face him—  
And it will not be a very *jolly* corner.  
When the loop in time comes—and it does not come for every-  
body—

The hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves.

GERALD: I don't in the least know what you're talking about.  
You seem to be wanting to give us all the hump.  
I must say, this isn't cheerful for Amy's birthday  
Or for Harry's homecoming. Make him feel at home, I say!  
Make him feel that what has happened doesn't matter.  
He's taken his medicine, I've no doubt.  
Let him marry again and carry on at Wishwood.

AMY: Thank you, Gerald. Though Agatha means  
As a rule, a good deal more than she cares to betray,  
I am bound to say that I agree with you.

CHARLES: I never wrote to him when he lost his wife—  
That was just about a year ago, wasn't it?  
Do you think that I ought to mention it now?  
It seems to me too late.

AMY: Much too late.  
If he wants to talk about it, that's another matter;  
But I don't believe he will. He will wish to forget it.  
I do not mince matters in front of the family:  
You can call it nothing but a blessed relief.

VIOLET: I call it providential.

IVY: Yet it must have been shocking,  
Especially to lose anybody in *that* way—  
Swept off the deck in the middle of a storm,  
And never even to recover the body.

CHARLES: "Well-known Peeress Vanishes from Liner."

GERALD: Yes, it's odd to think of her as permanently *missing*.

VIOLET: Had she been drinking?

AMY: I would never ask him.

IVY: These things are much better not enquired into.

She may have done it in a fit of temper.

GERALD: I never met her.

AMY: I am very glad you did not.

I am very glad that none of you ever met her.

It will make the situation very much easier

And is why I was so anxious you should all be here.

She never would have been one of the family,

She never wished to be one of the family,

She only wanted to keep him to herself

To satisfy her vanity. That's why she dragged him

All over Europe and half round the world

To expensive hotels and undesirable society

Which she could choose herself. She never wanted

Harry's relations or Harry's old friends;

She never wanted to fit herself to Harry,

But only to bring Harry down to her own level.

A restless shivering painted shadow

In life, she is less than a shadow in death.

You might as well all of you know the truth

For the sake of the future. There can be no grief

And no regret and no remorse.

I would have prevented it if I could. For the sake of the future:

Harry is to take command at Wishwood

And I hope we can contrive his future happiness.

Do not discuss his absence. Please behave only

As if nothing had happened in the last eight years.

GERALD: That will be a little difficult.

VIOLET: Nonsense, Gerald!

You must see for yourself it's the only thing to do.

AGATHA: Thus with most careful devotion

Thus with precise attention

To detail, interfering preparation

Of that which is already prepared

Men tighten the knot of confusion

Into perfect misunderstanding,

Reflecting a pocket-torch of observation  
 Upon each other's opacity  
 Neglecting all the admonitions  
 From the world around the corner  
 The wind's talk in the dry holly-tree  
 The inclination of the moon  
 The attraction of the dark passage  
 The paw under the door.

CHORUS [IVY, VIOLET, GERALD and CHARLES]: Why do we feel embarrassed, impatient, fretful, ill at ease,  
 Assembled like amateur actors who have not been assigned their parts?

Like amateur actors in a dream when the curtain rises, to find themselves dressed for a different play, or having rehearsed the wrong parts,

Waiting for the rustling in the stalls, the titter in the dress circle, the laughter and catcalls in the gallery?

CHARLES: I might have been in St. James's Street, in a comfortable chair rather nearer the fire.

IVY: I might have been visiting Cousin Lily at Sidmouth, if I had not had to come to this party.

GERALD: I might have been staying with Compton-Smith, down at his place in Dorset.

VIOLET: I should have been helping Lady Bumpus, at the Vicar's American Tea.

CHORUS: Yet we are here at Amy's command, to play an unread part in some monstrous farce, ridiculous in some nightmare pantomime.

AMY: What's that? I thought I saw someone pass the window.  
 What time is it?

CHARLES: Nearly twenty to seven.

AMY: John should be here now, he has the shortest way to come.  
 John at least, if not Arthur. Hark, there is someone coming:  
 Yes, it must be John.

[Enter HARRY.]

Harry!

[HARRY stops suddenly at the door and stares at the window.]



IVY: Welcome, Harry!

GERALD: Well done!

VIOLET: Welcome home to Wishwood!

CHARLES: Why, what's the matter?

AMY: Harry, if you want the curtains drawn you should let me ring for Denman.

HARRY: How can you sit in this blaze of light for all the world to look at?

If you knew how you looked, when I saw you through the window!

Do you like to be stared at by eyes through a window?

AMY: You forget, Harry, that you are at Wishwood,

Not in town, where you have to close the blinds.

There is no one to see you but our servants who belong here,

And who all want to see you back, Harry.

HARRY: Look there, look there: do you see them?

GERALD: No, I don't see anyone about.

HARRY: No, no, not there. Look there!

Can't you see them? *You* don't see them, but I see them,

And they see me. This is the first time that I have seen them.

In the Java Straits, in the Sunda Sea,

In the sweet sickly tropical night, I knew they were coming.

In Italy, from behind the nightingale's thicket,

The eyes stared at me, and corrupted that song.

Behind the palm trees in the Grand Hotel

They were always there. But I did not *see* them.

Why should they wait until I came back to Wishwood?

There were a thousand places where I might have met them!

Why here? why here?

Many happy returns of the day, mother.

Aunt Ivy, Aunt Violet, Uncle Gerald, Uncle Charles, Agatha.

AMY: We are very glad to have you back, Harry.

Now we shall all be together for dinner.

The servants have been looking forward to your coming:

Would you like to have them in after dinner

Or wait till tomorrow? I am sure you must be tired.

You will find everybody here, and everything the same.



Mr. Bevan—you remember—wants to call tomorrow

On some legal business, a question about taxes—

But I think you would rather wait till you are rested.

Your room is all ready for you. Nothing has been changed.

HARRY: Changed? nothing changed? how can you say that nothing is changed?

You all look so withered and young.

GERALD:

We must have a ride tomorrow.

You'll find you know the country as well as ever.

There wasn't an inch of it you didn't know.

But you'll have to see about a couple of new hunters.

CHARLES: And I've a new wine merchant to recommend you;

Your cellar could do with a little attention.

IVY: And you'll really have to find a successor to old Hawkins.

It's really high time the old man was pensioned.

He's let the rock garden go to rack and ruin,

And he's nearly half blind. I've spoken to your mother

Time and time again: she's done nothing about it

Because she preferred to wait for your coming.

VIOLET: And time and time again I have spoken to your mother

About the waste that goes on in the kitchen.

Mrs. Packell is too old to know what she is doing.

It really needs a man in charge of things at Wishwood.

AMY: You see your aunts and uncles are very helpful, Harry.

I have always found them forthcoming with advice

Which I have never taken. Now it is your business.

I have only struggled to keep Wishwood going

And to make no changes before your return.

Now it's for you to manage. I am an old woman.

They can give me no further advice when I'm dead.

IVY: Oh, dear Amy!

No one wants you to die, I'm sure!

Now that Harry's back, is the time to think of living.

HARRY: Time and time and time, and change, no change!

You all of you try to talk as if nothing had happened,

And yet you are talking of nothing else. Why not get to the point

Or if you want to pretend that I am another person—

A person that you have conspired to invent, please do so  
In my absence. I shall be less embarrassing to you. Agatha?

AGATHA: I think, Harry, that having got so far—

If you want no pretences, let us have no pretences:  
And you must try at once to make us understand,  
And we must try to understand you.

HARRY: But how can I explain, how can I explain to you?

You will understand less after I have explained it.

All that I could hope to make you understand

Is only events: not what has happened.

And people to whom nothing has ever happened

Cannot understand the unimportance of events.

GERALD: Well, you can't say that nothing has happened to *me*.

I started as a youngster on the North West Frontier—

Been in tight corners most of my life

And some pretty nasty messes.

CHARLES: And there isn't much would surprise me, Harry;

Or shock me, either.

HARRY: You are all people

To whom nothing has happened, at most a continual impact

Of external events. You have gone through life in sleep,

Never woken to the nightmare. I tell you, life would be unendurable

If you were wide awake. You do not know

The noxious smell untraceable in the drains.

Inaccessible to the plumbers, that has its hour of the night; you  
do not know

## The unspoken voice of sorrow in the ancient bedroom

At three o'clock in the morning. I am not speaking

Of my own experience, but trying to give you

Comparisons in a more familiar medium. I am the old house

With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning,

In which all past is present, all degradation

Is unredeemable. As for what happens—

Of the past you can only see what is past,

Not what is always present. That is what matters.

AGATHA: Nevertheless, Harry, best tell us as you can:

Of course we know what really happened, we read it in the papers—

No need to revert to it. Remember, my boy,  
I understand, your life together made it seem more horrible.  
There's a lot in my own past life that presses on my chest  
When I wake, as I do now, early before morning.  
I understand these feelings better than you know—  
But *you* have no reason to reproach yourself.  
Your conscience can be clear.

HARRY:

It goes a good deal deeper  
That what people call their conscience; it is just the cancer  
That eats away the self. I knew how you would take it.  
First of all, you isolate the single event  
As something so dreadful that it couldn't have happened,  
Because you could not bear it. So you must believe  
That I suffer from delusions. It is not my conscience,  
Not my mind, that is diseased, but the world I have to live in.  
—I lay two days in contented drowsiness;  
Then I recovered. I am afraid of sleep:  
A condition in which one can be caught for the last time.  
And also waking. She is nearer than ever.  
The contamination has reached the marrow  
And *they* are always near. Here, nearer than ever.  
They are very close here. I had not expected that.

AMY: Harry, Harry, you are very tired  
And overwrought. Coming so far  
And making such haste, the change is too sudden for you.  
You are unused to our foggy climate  
And the northern country. When you see Wishwood  
Again by day, all will be the same again.  
I beg you to go now and rest before dinner.  
Get Downing to draw you a hot bath,  
And you will feel better.

AGATHA: There are certain points I do not yet understand:  
They will be clear later. I am also convinced  
That you only hold a fragment of the explanation.  
It is only because of what you do not understand  
That you feel the need to declare what you do.  
There is more to understand: hold fast to that  
As the way to freedom.

HARRY: I think I see what you mean,  
Dimly—as you once explained the sobbing in the chimney  
The evil in the dark closet, which they said was not there,  
Which they explained away, but you explained them  
Or at least, made me cease to be afraid of them.

I will go and have my bath.

[Exit.]

GERALD: God preserve us!

I never thought it would be as bad as this.

VIOLET: There is only one thing to be done:

Harry must see a doctor.

IVY: But I understand—

I have heard of such cases before—that people in his condition  
Often betray the most immoderate resentment  
At such a suggestion. They can be very cunning—  
Their malady makes them so. They do not want to be cured  
And they know what you are thinking.

CHARLES: He has probably let this notion grow in his mind,

Living among strangers, with no one to talk to.

I suspect it is simply that the wish to get rid of her

Makes him believe he did. He cannot trust his good fortune.

I believe that all he needs is someone to talk to,

To get it off his mind. I'll have a talk to him tomorrow.

AMY: Most certainly not, Charles, you are not the right person.

I prefer to believe that a few days at Wishwood

Among his own family, is all that he needs.

GERALD: Nevertheless, Amy, there's something in Violet's suggestion.

Why not ring up Warburton, and ask him to join us?

He's an old friend of the family, it's perfectly natural

That he should be asked. He looked after all the boys

When they were children. I'll have a word with him.

He can talk to Harry, and Harry need have no suspicion.

I'd trust Warburton's opinion.

AMY: If anyone speaks to Dr. Warburton

It should be myself. What does Agatha think?

AGATHA: It seems a necessary move

In an unnecessary action,

Not for the good that it will do

But that nothing may be left undone

On the margin of the impossible.

AMY:

Very well.

I will ring up the doctor myself.

[Exit.]

CHARLES: Meanwhile, I have an idea. Why not question Downing?

He's been with Harry ten years, he's absolutely discreet.

He was with them on the boat. He might be of use.

IVY: Charles! you don't really suppose

That he might have pushed her over?

CHARLES: In any case, I shouldn't blame Harry.

I might have done the same thing once, myself.

Nobody knows what he's likely to do

Until there's somebody he wants to get rid of.

GERALD: Even so, we don't want Downing to know

Any more than he knows already.

And even if he knew, it's very much better

That he shouldn't know that we knew it also.

Why not let sleeping dogs lie?

CHARLES: All the same, there's a question or two

[Rings the bell.]

That I'd like to ask Downing.

He shan't know why I'm asking.

[Enter DENMAN.]

Denman, where is Downing? Is he up with his Lordship?

DENMAN: He's out in the garage, Sir, with his Lordship's car.

CHARLES: Tell him I'd like to have a word with him, please.

[Exit DENMAN.]

VIOLET: Charles, if you are determined upon this investigation,

Which I am convinced is going to lead us nowhere,

And which I am sure Amy would disapprove of—

I only wish to express my emphatic protest

Both against your purpose and the means you are employing.

CHARLES: My purpose is, to find out what's wrong with Harry:

Until we know that, we can do nothing for him.

And as for my means, we can't afford to be squeamish

In taking hold of anything that comes to hand.

If you are interested in helping Harry

You can hardly object to the means.

VIOLET: I do object.

IVY: And I wish to associate myself with my sister  
In her objections—

AGATHA: I have no objection,  
Any more than I object to asking Dr. Warburton:  
I only see that this is all quite irrelevant;  
We had better leave Charles to talk to Downing  
And pursue his own methods.

[Rises.]

VIOLET: I do not agree.  
I think there should be witnesses. I intend to remain.  
And I wish to be present to hear what Downing says.  
I want to know at once, not to be told about it later.

IVY: And I shall stay with Violet.

AGATHA: I shall return  
When Downing has left you.

[Exit.]

CHARLES: Well, I'm very sorry  
You all see it like this: but there simply are times  
When there's nothing to do but take the bull by the horns,  
And this is one.

[Knock: and enter DOWNING.]

CHARLES: Good evening, Downing.  
It's good to see you again, after all these years.  
You're well, I hope?

DOWNING: Thank you, very well indeed, Sir.

CHARLES: I'm sorry to send for you so abruptly,  
But I've a question I'd like to put to you,  
I'm sure you won't mind, it's about his Lordship.  
You've looked after his Lordship for over ten years . . .

DOWNING: Eleven years, Sir, next Lady Day.

CHARLES: Eleven years, and you know him pretty well.  
And I'm sure that you've been a good friend to him, too.  
We haven't seen him for nearly eight years;  
And to tell the truth, now that we've seen him,  
We're a little worried about his health.  
He doesn't seem to be . . . quite himself.

DOWNING: Quite natural, if I may say so, Sir,  
After what happened.



CHARLES: Quite so, quite.

Downing, you were with them on the voyage from New York—  
We didn't learn very much about the circumstances;  
We only knew what we read in the papers—  
Of course, there was a great deal too much in the papers.  
Downing, do you think that it might have been suicide,  
And that his Lordship knew it?

DOWNING: Unlikely, Sir, if I may say so.

Much more likely to have been an accident.  
I mean, knowing her Ladyship,  
I don't think she had the courage.

CHARLES: Did she ever talk of suicide?

DOWNING: Oh, yes, she did, every now and again.

But in my opinion, it is those that talk  
That are the least likely. To my way of thinking  
She only did it to frighten people.  
If you take my meaning—just for the effect.

CHARLES: I understand, Downing. Was she in good spirits?

DOWNING: Well, always about the same, Sir.

What I mean is, always up and down.  
Down in the morning, and up in the evening,  
And *then* she used to get rather excited,  
And, in a way, irresponsible, Sir.  
If I may make so bold, Sir,  
I always thought that a very few cocktails  
Went a long way with her Ladyship.  
She wasn't one of those that are *designed* for drinking:  
It's natural for some and unnatural for others.

CHARLES: And how was his Lordship, during the voyage?

DOWNING: Well, you might say depressed, Sir.

But you know his Lordship was always very quiet:  
Very uncommon that I saw him in high spirits.  
For what my judgment's worth, I always said his Lordship  
Suffered from what they call a kind of repression.  
But what struck me . . . more nervous than usual;  
I mean to say, you could see that he was nervous.  
He behaved as if he thought something might happen.

CHARLES: What sort of thing?



DOWNING: Well, I don't know, Sir.

But he seemed very anxious about my Lady.  
Tried to keep her in when the weather was rough,  
Didn't like to see her lean over the rail.  
He was in a rare fright, once or twice.  
But you know, it is just my opinion, Sir,  
That his Lordship is rather psychic, as they say.

CHARLES: Were they always together?

DOWNING: Always, Sir.

That was just my complaint against my Lady.  
It's my opinion that man and wife  
Shouldn't see too much of each other, Sir.  
Quite the contrary of the usual opinion,  
I dare say. She wouldn't leave him alone.  
And there's my complaint against these ocean liners  
With all their swimming baths and gymnasiums  
There's not even a place where a man can go  
For a quiet smoke, where the women can't follow him.  
She wouldn't leave him out of her sight.

CHARLES: During that evening, did you see him?

DOWNING: Oh, yes, Sir, I'm sure I saw him.

I don't mean to say that he had any orders—  
His Lordship is always most considerate  
About keeping me up. But when I say I saw him,  
I mean that I saw him accidental.  
You see, Sir, I was down in the Tourist,  
And I took a bit of air before I went to bed,  
And you could see the corner of the upper deck.  
And I remember, there I saw his Lordship  
Leaning over the rail, looking at the water—  
There wasn't a moon, but I was sure it was him.  
While I took my turn about, for near half an hour  
He stayed there alone, looking over the rail.  
Her Ladyship must have been all right then,  
Mustn't she, Sir? or else he'd have known it.

CHARLES: Oh, yes . . . quite so. Thank you, Downing,

I don't think we need you any more.

GERALD: Oh, Downing,

Is there anything wrong with his Lordship's car?

DOWNING: Oh, no, Sir, she's in good running order:

I see to that.

GERALD: I only wondered

Why you've been busy about it tonight.

DOWNING: Nothing wrong, Sir:

Only I like to have her always ready.

Would there be anything more, Sir?

GERALD:

Thank you, Downing;

Nothing more.

[Exit DOWNING.]

VIOLET: Well, Charles, I must say, with your investigations,

You seem to have left matters much as they were—

Except for having brought Downing into it:

Of which I disapprove.

CHARLES:

Of which you disapprove.

But I believe that an unconscious accomplice is desirable.

CHORUS: Why should we stand here like guilty conspirators, waiting  
for some revelation

When the hidden shall be exposed, and the newsboy shall shout  
in the street?

When the private shall be made public, the common photog-  
rapher

Flashlight for the picture papers: why do we huddle together

In a horrid amity of misfortune? why should we be implicated,  
brought in and brought together?

IVY: I do not trust Charles with his confident vulgarity, acquired  
from worldly associates.

GERALD: Ivy is only concerned for herself, and her credit among her  
shabby genteel acquaintance.

VIOLET: Gerald is certain to make some blunder, he is useless out of  
the army.

CHARLES: Violet is afraid that her status as Amy's sister will be  
diminished.

CHORUS: We all of us make the pretension

To be the uncommon exception

To the universal bondage.

We like to appear in the newspapers

So long as we are in the right column.

We know about the railway accident  
We know about the sudden thrombosis  
And the slowly hardening artery.  
We like to be thought well of by others  
So that we may think well of ourselves.  
And any explanation will satisfy:  
We only ask to be reassured  
About the noises in the cellar  
And the window that should not have been open.

Why do we all behave as if the door might suddenly open, the  
curtains be drawn,  
The cellar make some dreadful disclosure, the roof disappear,  
And we should cease to be sure of what is real or unreal?  
Hold tight, hold tight, we must insist that the world is what we  
have always taken it to be.

AMY'S VOICE: Ivy! Violet! has Arthur or John come yet?

IVY: There is no news of Arthur or John.

[*Enter AMY and AGATHA.*]

AMY: It is very annoying. They both promised to be here

In good time for dinner. It is very annoying.

Now they can hardly arrive in time to dress.

I do not understand what could have gone wrong

With both of them, coming from different directions.

Well, we must go and dress, I suppose. I hope Harry will feel  
better

After his rest upstairs.

[*Exeunt, except AGATHA.*]

## SCENE II

AGATHA

*[Enter MARY with flowers.]*

MARY: The spring is very late in this northern country,  
Late and uncertain, clings to the south wall.

The gardener had no garden-flowers to give me for this evening.

AGATHA: I always forget how late the spring is, here.

MARY: I had rather wait for our windblown blossoms,  
Such as they are, than have these greenhouse flowers  
Which do not belong here, which do not know  
The wind and rain, as I know them.

AGATHA: I wonder how many we shall be for dinner.

MARY: Seven . . . nine . . . ten surely.

I hear that Harry has arrived already  
And he was the only one that was uncertain.  
Arthur or John may be late, of course.

We may have to keep the dinner back . . .

AGATHA: And also Dr. Warburton. At least, Amy has invited him.

MARY: Dr. Warburton? I think she might have told me;

It is very difficult, having to plan  
For uncertain numbers. Why did she ask him?

AGATHA: She only thought of asking him, a little while ago.

MARY: Well, there's something to be said for having an outsider;

For what is more formal than a family dinner?

An official occasion of uncomfortable people  
Who meet very seldom, making conversation.

I am very glad if Dr. Warburton is coming.

I shall have to sit between Arthur and John.

Which is worse, thinking of what to say to John,

Or having to listen to Arthur's chatter

When he thinks he is behaving like a man of the world?

Cousin Agatha, I want your advice.

AGATHA: I should have thought  
You had more than you wanted of that, when at college.

MARY: I might have known you'd throw that up against me.

I know I wasn't one of your favourite students:

I only saw you as the principal

Who knew the way of dominating timid girls.

I don't see you any differently now;

But I really wish that I'd taken your advice

And tried for a fellowship, seven years ago.

Now I want your advice, because there's no one else to ask,

And because you are strong, and because you don't belong here

Any more than I do. I want to get away.

AGATHA: After seven years?

MARY: Oh, you don't understand!

But you do understand. You only want to know

Whether I understand. You know perfectly well,

What Cousin Amy wants, she usually gets.

Why do *you* so seldom come here? *You're* not afraid of her,

But I think you must have wanted to avoid collision.

I suppose I could have gone, if I'd had the moral courage,

Even against a will like hers. I know very well

Why she wanted to keep me. She didn't need me:

She would have done just as well with a hired servant

Or with none. She only wanted me for Harry—

Not such a compliment: she only wanted

To have a tame daughter-in-law with very little money,

A housekeeper-companion for her and Harry.

Even when he married, she still held on to me

Because she couldn't bear to let any project go;

And even when *she* died: I believed that Cousin Amy—

I almost believed it—had killed her by willing.

Doesn't that sound awful? I know that it does.

Did you ever meet her? What was she like?

AGATHA: I am the only one who ever met her,

The only one Harry asked to his wedding:

Amy did not know that. I was sorry for her;

I could see that she distrusted me—she was frightened of the family,

She wanted to fight them—with the weapons of the weak,

Which are too violent. And it could not have been easy,  
 Living with Harry. It's not what she did to Harry,  
 That's important, I think, but what he did to himself.

MARY: But it wasn't till I knew that Harry had returned  
 That I felt the strength to go. I know I must go.  
 But where? I want a job: and you can help me.

AGATHA: I am very sorry, Mary, I am very sorry for you;  
 Though you may not think me capable of such a feeling.  
 I would like to help you: but you must not run away.  
 Any time before now, it would have shown courage  
 And would have been right. Now, the courage is only the  
 moment

And the moment is only fear and pride. I see more than this,  
 More than I can tell you, more than there are words for.  
 At this moment, there is no decision to be made;  
 The decision will be made by powers beyond us  
 Which now and then emerge. You and I, Mary,  
 Are only watchers and waiters: not the easiest rôle.  
 I must go and change for dinner. [Exit.]

MARY: So you will not help me!  
 Waiting, waiting, always waiting.  
 I think this house *means* to keep us waiting.  
[Enter HARRY.]

HARRY: Waiting? For what?

MARY: How do you do, Harry.  
 You are down very early. I thought you had just arrived.  
 Did you have a comfortable journey?

HARRY: Not very.  
 But, at least, it did not last long. How are you, Mary?

MARY: Oh, very well. What are you looking for?

HARRY: I had only just noticed that this room is quite unchanged:  
 The same hangings . . . the same pictures . . . even the table,  
 The chairs, the sofa . . . all in the same positions.  
 I was looking to see if anything was changed,  
 But if so, I can't find it.

MARY: Your mother insisted  
 On everything being kept the same as when you left it.

HARRY: I wish she had not done that. It's very unnatural,  
 This arresting of the normal change of things:  
 But it's very like her. What I might have expected.  
 It only makes the changing of people  
 All the more manifest.

MARY: Yes, nothing changes here,  
 And we just go on . . . drying up, I suppose,  
 Not noticing the change. But to you, I am sure,  
 We must seem very altered.

HARRY: You have hardly changed at all—  
 And I haven't seen you since you came down from Oxford.

MARY: Well, I must go and change for dinner.  
 We do change—to that extent.

HARRY: No, don't go just yet.

MARY: Are you glad to be at home?

HARRY: There was something  
 I wanted to ask you. I don't know yet.  
 All these years I'd been longing to get back  
 Because I thought I never should. I thought it was a place  
 Where life was substantial and simplified—  
 But the simplification took place in my memory,  
 I think. It seems I shall get rid of nothing,  
 Of none of the shadows that I wanted to escape;  
 And at the same time, other memories,  
 Earlier, forgotten, begin to return  
 Out of my childhood. I can't explain.  
 But I thought I might escape from one life to another,  
 And it may be all one life, with no escape. Tell me,  
 Were you ever happy here, as a child at Wishwood?

MARY: Happy? not really, though I never knew why:  
 It always seemed that it must be my own fault,  
 And never to be happy was always to be naughty.  
 But there were reasons: I was only a cousin  
 Kept here because there was nothing else to do with me.  
 I didn't belong here. It was different for you.  
 And you seemed so much older. We were rather in awe of you—  
 At least, I was.



HARRY:                   Why were we not happy?

MARY: Well, it all seemed to be imposed upon us;

Even the nice things were laid out ready,

And the treats were always so carefully prepared;

There was never any time to invent our own enjoyments.

But perhaps it was all designed for you, not for us.

HARRY: No, it didn't seem like that. I was part of the design

As well as you. But what was the design?

It never came off. But do you remember

MARY: The hollow tree in what we called the wilderness

HARRY: Down near the river. That was the block house

From which we fought the Indians. Arthur and John.

MARY: It was the cave where we met by moonlight

To raise the evil spirits.

HARRY:                   Arthur and John.

Of course we were punished for being out at night

After being put to bed. But at least they never knew

Where we had been.

MARY:                   They never found the secret.

HARRY: Not then. But later, coming back from school

For the holidays, after the formal reception

And the family festivities, I made my escape

As soon as I could, and slipped down to the river

To find the old hiding place. The wilderness was gone,

The tree had been felled, and a neat summer-house

Had been erected, 'to please the children.'

It's absurd that one's only memory of freedom

Should be a hollow tree in a wood by the river.

MARY: But when I was a child I took everything for granted,

Including the stupidity of older people—

They lived in another world, which did not touch me.

Just now, I find them very difficult to bear.

They are always assured that you ought to be happy

At the very moment when you are wholly conscious

Of being a misfit, of being superfluous.

But why should I talk about my commonplace troubles?

They must seem very trivial indeed to you.



It's just ordinary hopelessness.

HARRY: One thing you cannot know:  
The sudden extinction of every alternative,  
The unexpected crash of the iron cataract.  
You do not know what hope is, until you have lost it.  
You only know what it is not to hope:  
You do not know what it is to have hope taken from you,  
Or to fling it away, to join the legion of the hopeless  
Unrecognised by other men, though sometimes by each other.

MARY: I know what you mean. That is an experience I have not had. Nevertheless, however real, However cruel, it may be a deception.

HARRY:

What I see

May be one dream or another; if there is nothing else  
The most real is what I fear. The bright colour fades  
Together with the unrecapturable emotion,  
The glow upon the world, that never found its object;  
And the eye adjusts itself to a twilight  
Where the dead stone is seen to be batrachian,  
The aphyllous branch ophidian.

MARY: You bring your own landscape  
No more real than the other. And in a way you contradict  
yourself:  
That sudden comprehension of the death of hope  
Of which you speak, I know you have experienced it,  
And I can well imagine how awful it must be.  
But in this world another hope keeps springing  
In an unexpected place, while we are unconscious of it.  
You hoped for something, in coming back to Wishwood,  
Or you would not have come.

HARRY:                                 Whatever I hoped for  
Now that I am here I know I shall not find it.  
The instinct to return to the point of departure  
And start again as if nothing had happened,  
Isn't that all folly? It's like the hollow tree,  
Not there.

MARY: But surely, what you say

Only proves that you expected Wishwood  
To be your real self, to do something for you  
That you can only do for yourself.  
What you need to alter is something inside you  
Which you can change anywhere—here, as well as elsewhere.

HARRY: Something inside me, you think, that can be altered!  
And here, indeed! where I have felt them near me,  
Here and here and here—wherever I am not looking,  
Always flickering at the corner of my eye,  
Almost whispering just out of earshot—  
And inside too, in the nightly panic  
Of dreaming dissolution. You do not know,  
You cannot know, you cannot understand.

MARY: I think I could understand, but you would have to be patient  
With me, and with people who have not had your experience.

HARRY: If I tried to explain, you could never understand:  
Explaining would only make a worse misunderstanding;  
Explaining would only set me farther away from you.  
There is only one way for you to understand  
And that is by seeing. They are much too clever  
To admit you into *our* world. Yours is no better.  
They have seen to that: it is part of the torment.

MARY: If you think I am incapable of understanding you—  
But in any case, I must get ready for dinner.

HARRY: No, no, don't go! Please don't leave me  
Just at this moment. I feel it is important.  
Something should have come of this conversation.

MARY: I am not a wise person,  
And in the ordinary sense I don't know you very well,  
Although I remember you better than you think,  
And what is the real you. I haven't much experience,  
But I see something now which doesn't come from tutors  
Or from books, or from thinking, or from observation:  
Something which I did not know I knew.  
Even if, as you say, Wishwood is a cheat,  
Your family a delusion—then it's *all* a delusion,  
Everything you feel—I don't mean what you think,  
But what you feel. You attach yourself to loathing

As others do to loving: an infatuation  
That's wrong, a good that's misdirected. You deceive yourself  
Like the man convinced that he is paralysed  
Or like the man who believes that he is blind  
While he still sees the sunlight. I know that this is true.

HARRY: I have spent many years in useless travel;  
You have staid in England, yet you seem  
Like someone who comes from a very long distance,  
Or the distant waterfall in the forest,  
Inaccessible, half-heard.  
And I hear your voice as in the silence  
Between two storms, one hears the moderate usual noises  
In the grass and leaves, of life persisting,  
Which ordinarily pass unnoticed.  
Perhaps you are right, though I do not know  
How you should know it. Is the cold spring  
Is the spring not an evil time, that excites us with lying voices?

MARY: The cold spring now is the time  
For the ache in the moving root  
The agony in the dark  
The slow flow throbbing the trunk  
The pain of the breaking bud.  
These are the ones that suffer least:  
The aconite under the snow  
And the snowdrop crying for a moment in the wood.

HARRY: Spring is an issue of blood  
A season of sacrifice  
And the wail of the new full tide  
Returning the ghosts of the dead  
Those whom the winter drowned  
Do not the ghosts of the drowned  
Return to land in the spring?  
Do the dead want to return?

MARY: Pain is the opposite of joy  
But joy is a kind of pain  
I believe the moment of birth  
Is when we have knowledge of death  
I believe the season of birth

Is the season of sacrifice  
For the tree and the beast, and the fish  
Thrashing itself upstream:  
And what of the terrified spirit  
Compelled to be reborn  
To rise toward the violent sun  
Wet wings into the rain cloud  
Harefoot over the moon?

HARRY: What have we been saying? I think I was saying  
That it seemed as if I had been always here  
And you were someone who had come from a long distance.  
Whether I know what I am saying, or why I say it,  
That does not matter. You bring me news  
Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor,  
Sunlight and singing; when I had felt sure  
That every corridor only led to another,  
Or to a blank wall; that I kept moving  
Only so as not to stay still. Singing and light.  
Stop!  
What is that? do you feel it?

MARY: What, Harry?

HARRY: That apprehension deeper than all sense,  
Deeper than the sense of smell, but like a smell  
In that it is indescribable, a sweet and bitter smell  
From another world. I know it, I know it!  
More potent than ever before, a vapour dissolving  
All other worlds, and me into it. O Mary!  
Don't look at me like that! Stop! Try to stop it!  
I am going. Oh, why, now? Come out!  
Come out! Where are you? Let me see you,  
Since I know you are there, I know you are spying on me.  
Why do you play with me, why do you let me go,  
Only to surround me?—When I remember them  
They leave me alone: when I forget them  
Only for an instant of inattention  
They are roused again, the sleepless hunters

That will not let me sleep. At the moment before sleep  
I always see their claws distended  
Quietly, as if they had never stirred.  
It was only a moment, it was only one moment  
That I stood in sunlight, and thought I might stay there.

MARY: Look at me. You can depend on me.

Harry! Harry! It's all *right*, I tell you.

If you will depend on me, it will be all right.

HARRY: Come out!

*[The curtains part, revealing the Eumenides in the window embrasure.]*

Why do you show yourselves now for the first time?  
When I knew her, I was not the same person.  
I was not any person. Nothing that I did  
Has to do with me. The accident of a dreaming moment,  
Of a dreaming age, when I was someone else  
Thinking of something else, puts me among you.  
I tell you, it is not me you are looking at,  
Not me you are grinning at, not me your confidential looks  
Incriminate, but that other person, if person,  
You thought I was: let your necrophily  
Feed upon that carcase. They will not go.

MARY: Harry! There is no one here.

*[She goes to the window and pulls the curtains across.]*

HARRY: They were here, I tell you. They are here.

Are you so imperceptive, have you such dull senses  
That you could not see them? If I had realised  
That you were so obtuse, I would not have listened  
To your nonsense. Can't you help me?  
You're of no use to me. I must face them.  
I must fight them. But they are stupid.  
How can one fight with stupidity?  
Yet I must speak to them.  
*[He rushes forward and tears apart the curtains: but the embrasure is empty.]*

MARY:

Oh, Harry!

## SCENE III

HARRY, MARY, IVY, VIOLET, GERALD, CHARLES

VIOLET: Good evening, Mary: aren't you dressed yet?  
How do you think that Harry is looking?  
Why, who could have pulled those curtains apart?  
*[Pulls them together.]*

Very well, I think, after such a long journey;  
You know what a rush he had to be here in time  
For his mother's birthday.

IVY: Mary, my dear,  
Did you arrange these flowers? Just let me change them.  
You don't mind, do you? I know so much about flowers;  
Flowers have always been my passion.  
You know I had my own garden once, in Cornwall,  
When I could afford a garden; and I took several prizes  
With my delphiniums. In fact, I was rather an authority.

GERALD: Good evening, Mary. You've seen Harry, I see.  
It's good to have him back again, isn't it?  
We must make him feel at home. And most auspicious  
That he could be here for his mother's birthday.

MARY: I must go and change. I came in very late. *[Exit.]*

CHARLES: Now we only want Arthur and John.  
I am glad that you'll all be together, Harry;  
They need the influence of their elder brother.  
Arthur's a bit irresponsible, you know;  
You should have a sobering effect upon him.  
After all, you're the head of the family.

AMY'S VOICE: Violet! Has Arthur or John come yet?

VIOLET: Neither of them is here yet, Amy.

*[Enter AMY with DR. Warburton.]*

AMY: It is most vexing. What can have happened?  
I suppose it's the fog that is holding them up,  
So it's no use to telephone anywhere. Harry!  
Haven't you seen Dr. Warburton?  
You know he's the oldest friend of the family,

And he's known you longer than anybody, Harry.  
When he heard that you were going to be here for dinner  
He broke an important engagement to come.

WARBURTON: I dare say we've both changed a good deal, Harry.  
A country practitioner doesn't get younger.  
It takes me back longer than you can remember  
To see you again. But you can't have forgotten  
The day when you came back from school with measles  
And we had such a time to keep you in bed.  
You didn't like being ill in the holidays.

IVY: It *was* unpleasant, coming home to have an illness.

VIOLET: It was always the same with your minor ailments  
And children's epidemics: you would never stay in bed  
Because you were convinced that you would never get well.

HARRY: Not, I think, without some justification:  
For what you call restoration to health  
Is only incubation of another malady.

WARBURTON: You mustn't take such a pessimistic view  
Which is hardly complimentary to my profession.  
But I remember, when I was a student at Cambridge,  
I used to dream of making some great discovery  
To do away with one disease or another.  
Now I've had forty years' experience  
I've left off thinking in terms of the laboratory.  
We're all of us ill in one way or another:  
We call it health when we find no symptom  
Of illness. Health is a relative term.

IVY: You must have had a very rich experience, Doctor,  
In forty years.

WARBURTON: Indeed, yes.  
Even in a country practice. My first patient, now—  
You wouldn't believe it, ladies—was a murderer,  
Who suffered from an incurable cancer.  
How he fought against it! I never saw a man  
More anxious to live.

HARRY: Not at all extraordinary.  
It is really harder to believe in murder  
Than to believe in cancer. Cancer is here:



The lump, the dull pain, the occasional sickness:  
 Murder a reversal of sleep and waking.  
 Murder was there. Your ordinary murderer  
 Regards himself as an innocent victim.  
 To himself he is still what he used to be  
 Or what he would be. He cannot realise  
 That everything is irrevocable,  
 The past unredeemable. But cancer, now,  
 That is something real.

WARBURTON: Well, let's not talk of such matters.  
 How did we get onto the subject of cancer?  
 I really don't know.—But now you're all grown up  
 I haven't a patient left at Wishwood.  
 Wishwood was always a cold place, but healthy.  
 It's only when I get an invitation to dinner  
 That I ever see your mother.

VIOLET: Yes, look at your mother!  
 Except that she can't get about now in winter  
 You wouldn't think that she was a day older  
 Than on her birthday ten years ago.

GERALD: Is there any use in waiting for Arthur and John?

AMY: We might as well go in to dinner.

They may come before we finish. Will you take me in, Doctor?  
 I think we are very much the oldest present—  
 In fact we are the oldest inhabitants.  
 As we came first, we will go first, in to dinner.

WARBURTON: With pleasure, Lady Monchensey,  
 And I hope that next year will bring me the same honour.

[*Exeunt* AMY, DR. WARBURTON, HARRY.]

CHORUS: I am afraid of all that has happened, and of all that is to  
 come;

Of the things to come that sit at the door, as if they had been  
 there always.

And the past is about to happen, and the future was long since  
 settled.

And the wings of the future darken the past, the beak and claws  
 have desecrated

History. Shamed



The first cry in the bedroom, the noise in the nursery, mutilated  
The family album, rendered ludicrous  
The tenants' dinner, the family pic-nic on the moors. Have torn  
The roof from the house, or perhaps it was never there.  
And the bird sits on the broken chimney. I am afraid.

IVY: This is a most undignified terror, and I must struggle against it.

GERALD: I am used to tangible danger, but only to what I can understand.

VIOLET: It is the obtuseness of Gerald and Charles and that doctor, that gets on my nerves.

CHARLES: If the matter were left in my hands, I think I could manage the situation. [Exeunt.]

[Enter MARY, and passes through to dinner. Enter AGATHA.]

AGATHA: The eye is on this house  
The eye covers it  
There are three together  
May the three be separated  
May the knot that was tied  
Become unknotted  
May the crossed bones  
In the filled-up well  
Be at last straightened  
May the weasel and the otter  
Be about their proper business  
The eye of the day time  
And the eye of the night time  
Be diverted from this house  
Till the knot is unknotted  
The crossed is uncrossed  
And the crooked is made straight.

[Exit to dinner.]

## Part II

### *The Library, After Dinner*

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#### SCENE I

HARRY, WARBURTON

WARBURTON: I'm glad of a few minutes alone with you, Harry.  
In fact, I had another reason for coming this evening  
Than simply in honour of your mother's birthday.  
I wanted a private conversation with you  
On a confidential matter.

HARRY: I can imagine—  
Though I think it is probably going to be useless,  
Or if anything, make matters rather more difficult.  
But talk about it, if you like.

WARBURTON: You don't understand me.  
I'm sure you cannot know what is on my mind;  
And as for making matters more difficult—  
It is much more difficult not to be prepared  
For something that is very likely to happen.

HARRY: O God, man, the things that are going to happen  
Have already happened.

WARBURTON: That is in a sense true,  
But without your knowing it, and what you know  
Or do not know, at any moment  
May make an endless difference to the future.  
It's about your mother . . .

HARRY: What about my mother?  
Everything has always been referred back to mother.  
When we were children, before we went to school,  
The rule of conduct was simply pleasing mother;

Misconduct was simply being unkind to mother;  
What was wrong was whatever made her suffer,  
And whatever made her happy was what was virtuous—  
Though never very happy, I remember. That was why  
We all felt like failures, before we had begun.  
When we came back, for the school holidays,  
They were not holidays, but simply a time  
In which we were supposed to make up to mother  
For all the weeks during which she had not seen us  
Except at half-term, and seeing us then  
Only seemed to make her more unhappy, and made us  
Feel more guilty, and so we misbehaved  
Next day at school, in order to be punished,  
For punishment made us feel less guilty. Mother  
Never punished us, but made us feel guilty.  
I think that the things that are taken for granted  
At home, make a deeper impression upon children  
Than what they are told.

WARBURTON: Stop, Harry, you're mistaken.  
I mean, you don't know what I want to tell you.  
You may be quite right, but what we are concerned with  
Now, is your mother's happiness in the future,  
For the time she has to live: not with the past.

HARRY: Oh, is there any difference!  
How can we be concerned with the past  
And not with the future? or with the future  
And not with the past? What I'm telling you  
Is very important. Very important.  
You must let me explain, and then you can talk.  
I don't know why, but just this evening  
I feel an overwhelming need for explanation—  
But perhaps I only dream that I am talking  
And shall wake to find that I have been silent  
Or talked to the stone deaf: and the others  
Seem to hear something else than what I am saying.  
But if you want to talk, at least you can tell me  
Something useful. Do you remember my father?

WARBURTON: Why, yes, of course, Harry, but I really don't see  
What that has to do with the present occasion  
Or with what I have to tell you.

HARRY: What you have to tell me  
Is either something that I know already  
Or unimportant, or else untrue.  
But I want to know more about my father.  
I hardly remember him, and I know very well  
That I was kept apart from him, till he went away.  
We never heard him mentioned, but in some way or another  
We felt that he was always here.  
But when we would have grasped for him, there was only a  
vacuum  
Surrounded by whispering aunts: Ivy and Violet—  
Agatha never came then. Where was my father?

WARBURTON: Harry, there's no good probing for misery.  
There was enough once: but what festered  
Then, has only left a cautery.  
Leave it alone. You know that your mother  
And your father were never very happy together:  
They separated by mutual consent  
And he went to live abroad. You were only a boy  
When he died. You would not remember.

HARRY: But now I do remember. Not Arthur or John,  
They were too young. But now I remember  
A summer day of unusual heat,  
The day I lost my butterfly net;  
I remember the silence, and the hushed excitement  
And the low conversation of triumphant aunts.  
It is the conversations not overheard,  
Not intended to be heard, with the sidewise looks,  
That bring death into the heart of a child.  
*That* was the day he died. Of course.  
I mean, I suppose, the day on which the news arrived.

WARBURTON: You overinterpret.  
I am sure that your mother always loved him;  
There was never the slightest suspicion of scandal.

HARRY: Scandal? who said scandal? I did not.

Yes, I see now. That night, when she kissed me,

I felt the trap close. If you won't tell me,

I must ask Agatha. I never dared before.

WARBURTON: I advise you strongly, not to ask your aunt—

I mean, there is nothing she could tell you. But, Harry,

We can't sit here all the evening, you know;

You will have to have the birthday celebration,

And your brothers will be here. Won't you let me tell you

What I had to say?

HARRY: Very well, tell me.

WARBURTON: It's about your mother's health that I wanted to talk to you.

I must tell you, Harry, that although your mother

Is still so alert, so vigorous of mind,

Although she seems as vital as ever—

It is only the force of her personality,

Her indomitable will, that keeps her alive.

I needn't go into technicalities

At the present moment. The whole machine is weak

And running down. Her heart's very feeble.

With care, and avoiding all excitement

She may live several years. A sudden shock

Might send her off at any moment.

If she had been another woman

She would not have lived until now.

Her determination has kept her going:

She has only lived for your return to Wishwood,

For you to take command at Wishwood,

And for that reason, it is most essential

That nothing should disturb or excite her.

HARRY: Well!

WARBURTON: I'm very sorry for you, Harry.

I should have liked to spare you this,

Just now. But there were two reasons

Why you had to know. One is your mother,

To make her happy for the time she has to live.

The other is yourself: the future of Wishwood  
 Depends on you. I don't like to say this;  
 But you know that I am a very old friend,  
 And have always been a party to the family secrets—  
 You know as well as I do that Arthur and John  
 Have been a great disappointment to your mother.  
 John's very steady—but he's not exactly brilliant;  
 And Arthur has always been rather irresponsible.  
 Your mother's hopes are all centred on you.

HARRY: Hopes? . . . Tell me

Did you know my father at about my present age?

WARBURTON: Why, yes, Harry, of course I did.

HARRY: What did he look like then? Did he look at all like me?

WARBURTON: Very much like you. Of course there are differences:

But, allowing for the changes in fashion

And your being clean-shaven, very much like you.

And now, Harry, let's talk about yourself.

HARRY: I never saw a photograph. There is no portrait.

WARBURTON: What I want to know is, whether you've been sleeping . . .

[Enter DENMAN.]

DENMAN: It's Sergeant Winchell is here, my Lord,

And wants to see your Lordship very urgent,

And Dr. Warburton. He says it's very urgent

Or he wouldn't have troubled you.

HARRY: I'll see him.

[Exit DENMAN.]

WARBURTON: I wonder what he wants. I hope nothing has happened

To either of your brothers.

HARRY: Nothing can have happened

To either of my brothers. Nothing can happen—

If Sergeant Winchell is real. But Denman saw him.

But what if Denman saw him, and yet he was not real?

That would be worse than anything that has happened.

What if *you* saw him, and . . .

WARBURTON: Harry! Pull yourself together.

Something may have happened to one of your brothers.

[Enter WINCHELL.]

WINCHELL: Good evening, my Lord. Good evening, Doctor.

Many happy . . . Oh, I'm sorry, my Lord,

I was thinking it was your birthday, not her Ladyship's.

HARRY: Her Ladyship's!

*[He darts at WINCHELL and seizes him by the shoulders.]*

He is real, Doctor.

So let us resume the conversation. You and I

And Winchell. Sit down, Winchell,

And have a glass of port. We were talking of my father.

WINCHELL: Always at your jokes, I see. You don't look a year older

Than when I saw you last, my Lord. But a country sergeant

Doesn't get younger. Thank you, no, my Lord;

I don't find port agrees with the rheumatism.

WARBURTON: For God's sake, Winchell, tell us your business.

His Lordship isn't very well this evening.

WINCHELL:

I understand, Sir.

It'd be the same if it was my birthday—

I beg pardon, I'm forgetting.

If it was my mother's. God rest her soul,

She's been dead these ten years. How is her Ladyship,

If I may ask, my Lord?

HARRY:

Why do you keep asking

About her Ladyship? Do you know or don't you?

I'm not afraid of you.

WINCHELL:

I should hope not, my Lord.

I didn't mean to put myself forward.

But you see, my Lord, I had good reason for asking . . .

HARRY: Well, do you want me to produce her for you?

WINCHELL: Oh, no, indeed, my Lord, I'd much rather not . . .

HARRY: You mean you think I can't. But I might surprise you;

I think I might be able to give you a shock.

WINCHELL: There's been shock enough for one evening, my Lord:

That's what I've come about.

WARBURTON:

For Heaven's sake, Winchell,

Tell us your business.

WINCHELL:

It's about Mr John.

HARRY: John!



WINCHELL: Yes, my Lord, I'm sorry.

I thought I'd better have a word with you quiet,  
 Rather than phone and perhaps disturb her Ladyship.  
 So I slipped along on my bike. Mostly walking,  
 What with the fog so thick, or I'd have been here sooner.  
 I'd telephoned to Dr. Warburton's,  
 And they told me he was here, and that you'd arrived.  
 Mr. John's had a bit of an accident  
 On the West Road, in the fog, coming along  
 At a pretty smart pace, I fancy, ran into a lorry  
 Drawn up round the bend. We'll have the driver up for this:  
 Says he doesn't know this part of the country  
 And stopped to take his bearings. We've got him at the Arms—  
 Mr. John, I mean. By a bit of luck  
 Dr. Owen was there, and looked him over;  
 Says there's nothing wrong but some nasty cuts  
 And a bad concussion; says he'll come round  
 In the morning, most likely, but he mustn't be moved.  
 But Dr. Owen was anxious that you should have a look at him.

WARBURTON: Quite right, quite right. I'll go and have a look at him.

We must explain to your mother . . .

AMY'S VOICE:

Harry! Harry!

Who's there with you? Is it Arthur or John?

[*Enter AMY, followed severally by VIOLET, IVY, GERALD, AGATHA,  
 and CHARLES*]

Winchell! what are you here for?

WINCHELL: I'm sorry, my Lady, but I've just told the doctor,  
 It's really nothing but a minor accident.

WARBURTON: It's John has had the accident, Lady Monchensey;  
 And Winchell tells me Dr. Owen has seen him  
 And says it's nothing but a slight concussion,  
 But he mustn't be moved tonight. I'd trust Owen  
 On a matter like this. You can trust Owen.  
 We'll bring him up tomorrow; and a few days' rest,  
 I've no doubt, will be all that he needs.

AMY: Accident? What sort of an accident?

WINCHELL: Coming along in the fog, my Lady,  
 And he must have been in rather a hurry.



There was a lorry drawn up where it shouldn't be,  
Outside of the village, on the West Road.

AMY: Where is he?

WINCHELL: At the Arms, my Lady;  
Of course, he hasn't come round yet.  
Dr. Owen was there, by a bit of luck.

GERALD: I'll go down and see him, Amy, and come back and report  
to you.

AMY: I must see for myself. Order the car at once.

WARBURTON: I forbid it, Lady Monchensey.  
As your doctor, I forbid you to leave the house tonight.  
There is nothing you could do, and out in this weather  
At this time of night, I would not answer for the consequences.  
I am going myself. I will come back and report to you.

AMY: I must see for myself. I do not believe you.

CHARLES: Much better leave it to Warburton, Amy.  
Extremely fortunate for us that he's here.  
We must put ourselves under Warburton's orders.

WARBURTON: I repeat, Lady Monchensey, that you must not go out.  
If you do, I must decline to continue to treat you.  
You are only delaying me. I shall return at once.

AMY: Well, I suppose you are right. But can I trust you?

WARBURTON: You have trusted me a good many years, Lady Mon-  
chensey;  
-This is not the time to begin to doubt me.  
Come, Winchell. We can put your bicycle  
On the back of my car.

[*Exeunt WARBURTON and WINCHELL.*]

VIOLET: Well, Harry,  
I think that you might have had something to say.  
Aren't you sorry for your brother? Aren't you aware  
Of what is going on? and what it means to your mother?  
HARRY: Oh, of course I'm sorry. But from what Winchell says  
I don't think the matter can be very serious.  
A minor trouble like a concussion  
Cannot make very much difference to John.  
A brief vacation from the kind of consciousness  
That John enjoys, can't make very much difference

To him or to anyone else. If he was ever really conscious,  
I should be glad for him to have a breathing spell:  
But John's ordinary day isn't much more than breathing.

IVY: Really, Harry! how can you be so callous?

I always thought you were so fond of John.

VIOLET: And if you don't care what happens to John,  
You might show some consideration to your mother.

AMY: I do not know very much:

And as I get older, I am coming to think

How little I have ever known.

But I think your remarks are much more inappropriate  
Than Harry's.

HARRY:                   It's only when they see nothing

That people can always show the suitable emotions—

And so far as they feel at all, their emotions are suitable.

They don't understand what it is to be awake,

To be living on several planes at once

Though one cannot speak with several voices at once.

I have all of the rightminded feeling about John

That you consider appropriate. Only, that's not the language

That I choose to be talking. I will not talk yours.

AMY: You looked like your father

When you said that.

HARRY:                   I think, mother,

I shall make you lie down. You must be very tired.

[*Exeunt HARRY and AMY.*]

VIOLET: I really do not understand Harry's behaviour.

AGATHA: I think it is as well to leave Harry to establish

If he can, some communication with his mother.

VIOLET: I do not seem to be very popular tonight.

CHARLES: Well, there's no sort of use in any of us going—

On a night like this—it's a good three miles;

There's nothing we could do that Warburton can't.

If he's worse than Winchell said, then he'll let us know at once.

GERALD: I am really more afraid of the shock for Amy;

But I think that Warburton understands *that*.

IVY: You are quite right, Gerald, the one thing that matters

Is not to let her see that anyone is worried.  
We must carry on as if nothing had happened,  
And have the cake and presents.

GERALD: But I'm worried about Arthur:  
He's much more apt than John to get into trouble.

CHARLES: Oh, but Arthur's a brilliant driver.  
After all the experience he's had at Brooklands,  
He's not likely to get into trouble.

GERALD: A brilliant driver, but more reckless.

IVY: Yet I remember, when they were boys,  
Arthur was always the more adventurous  
But John was the one that had the accidents,  
Somehow, just because he *was* the slow one.  
He was always the one to fall off the pony,  
Or out of a tree—and always on his head.

VIOLET: But a year ago, Arthur took me out in his car,  
And I told him I would never go out with him again.  
Not that I wanted to go with him at all—  
Though of course he meant well—but I think an open car  
Is so undignified: you're blown about so,  
And you feel so conspicuous, lolling back  
And so near the street, and everyone staring;  
And the pace he went at was simply terrifying.  
I said I would rather walk: and I did.

GERALD: Walk? where to?

VIOLET: He started out to take me to Cheltenham;  
But I stopped him somewhere in Chiswick, I think.  
Anyway, the district was unfamiliar  
And I had the greatest trouble in getting home.  
I am sure he meant well. But I do think he is reckless.

GERALD: I wonder how much Amy knows about Arthur?

CHARLES: More than she cares to mention, I imagine.

[Enter HARRY.]

HARRY: Mother is asleep, I think: it's strange how the old  
Can drop off to sleep in the middle of calamity  
Like children, or like hardened campaigners. She looked  
Very much as she must have looked when she was a child.

You've been holding a meeting—the usual family inquest  
On the characters of all the junior members?  
Or engaged in predicting the minor event,  
Engaged in foreseeing the minor disaster?  
You go on trying to think of each thing separately,  
Making small things important, so that everything  
May be unimportant, a slight deviation  
From some imaginary course that life ought to take,  
That you call normal. What you call the normal  
Is merely the unreal and the unimportant.  
I was like that in a way, so long as I could think  
Even of my own life as an isolated ruin,  
A casual bit of waste in an orderly universe.  
But it begins to seem just part of some huge disaster,  
Some monstrous mistake and aberration  
Of all men, of the world, which I cannot put in order.  
If you only knew the years that I have had to live  
Since I came home, a few hours ago, to Wishwood.

VIOLET: I will make no observation on what you say, Harry;  
My comments are not always welcome in this family.

[*Enter DENMAN.*]

DENMAN: Excuse me, Miss Ivy. There's a trunk call for you.

IVY: A trunk call? for me? why, who can want me?

DENMAN: He wouldn't give his name, Miss; but it's Mr. Arthur.

IVY: Arthur! Oh, dear, I'm afraid *he's* had an accident.

[*Exeunt IVY and DENMAN.*]

VIOLET: When it's Ivy that he's asking for, I expect the worst.

AGATHA: Whatever you have learned, Harry, you must remember

That there is always more: we cannot rest in being

The impatient spectators of malice or stupidity.

We must try to penetrate the other private worlds

Of make-believe and fear. To rest in our own suffering

Is evasion of suffering. We must learn to suffer more.

VIOLET: Agatha's remarks are invariably pointed.

HARRY: Do you think that I believe what I said just now?

That was only what I should like to believe.

I was talking in abstractions: and you answered in abstractions.

I have a private puzzle. Were they simply outside,  
I might escape somewhere, perhaps. Were they simply inside  
I could cheat them perhaps with the aid of Dr. Warburton—  
Or any other doctor, who would be another Warburton,  
If you decided to set another doctor on me.  
But this is too real for your words to alter.  
Oh, there *must* be another way of talking  
That would get us somewhere. You don't understand me.  
You can't understand me. It's not being alone  
That is the horror, to be alone with the horror.  
What matters is the filthiness. I can clean my skin,  
Purify my life, void my mind,  
But always the filthiness, that lies a little deeper . . .  
[Enter IVY.]

IVY: Where is there an evening paper?

GERALD: Why, what's the matter?

IVY: Somebody, look for Arthur in the evening paper.

That was Arthur, ringing up from London:

The connection was so bad, I could hardly hear him,  
And his voice was very queer. It seems that Arthur too  
Has had an accident. I don't think he's hurt,  
But he says that he hasn't got the use of his car,  
And he missed the last train, so he's coming up tomorrow;  
And he said there was something about it in the paper,  
But it's all a mistake. And not to tell his mother.

VIOLET: What's the use of asking for an evening paper?

You know as well as I do, at this distance from London  
Nobody's likely to have this evening's paper.

CHARLES: Stop, I think I bought a lunch edition

Before I left St. Pancras. If I did, it's in my overcoat.

I'll see if it's there. There might be something in that. [Exit.]

GERALD: Well, I said that Arthur was every bit as likely

To have an accident as John. And it wasn't John's fault,  
I don't believe. John is unlucky,  
But Arthur is definitely reckless.

VIOLET: I think these racing cars ought to be prohibited.

[Re-enter CHARLES, with a newspaper.]

CHARLES: Yes, there is a paragraph . . . I'm glad to say  
It's not very conspicuous. . .

GERALD: There'll have been more in the later editions.  
You'd better read it to us.

CHARLES [*reads*]:

*'Peer's Brother in Motor Smash'*

'The Hon. Arthur Gerald Charles Piper, younger brother of  
Lord Monchensey, who ran into and demolished a rounds-  
man's cart in Ebury Street early on the morning of January  
1st, was fined £50 and costs today, and forbidden to drive a  
car for the next twelve months.

While trying to extricate his car from the collision, Mr. Piper  
reversed into a shop-window. When challenged, Mr. Piper  
said: "I thought it was all open country about here"—'

GERALD: Where?

CHARLES: In Ebury Street. 'The police stated that at the time of the  
accident Mr. Piper was being pursued by a patrol, and was  
travelling at the rate of 66 miles an hour. When asked why  
he did not stop when signalled by the police car, he said: "I  
thought you were having a game with me."'

GERALD: This is what the Communists make capital out of.

CHARLES: There's a little more. 'The Piper family . . .' no, we needn't  
read that.

VIOLET: This is just what I expected. But if Agatha  
Is going to moralise about it, I shall scream.

GERALD: It's going to be awkward, explaining this to Amy.

IVY: Poor Arthur! I'm sure that you're being much too hard on him.

CHARLES: In my time, these affairs were kept out of the papers;  
But nowadays, there's no such thing as privacy.

CHORUS: In an old house there is always listening, and more is heard  
than is spoken.

And what is spoken remains in the room, waiting for the future  
to hear it.

And whatever happens began in the past, and presses hard on  
the future.

The agony in the curtained bedroom, whether of birth or of  
dying,

Gathers in to itself all the voices of the past, and projects them  
into the future.

The treble voices on the lawn  
The mowing of hay in summer  
The dogs and the old pony  
The stumble and the wail of little pain  
The chopping of wood in autumn  
And the singing in the kitchen  
And the steps at night in the corridor  
The moment of sudden loathing  
And the season of stifled sorrow  
The whisper, the transparent deception  
The keeping up of appearances  
The making the best of a bad job  
All twined and tangled together, all are recorded.  
There is no avoiding these things  
And we know nothing of exorcism  
And whether in Argos or England  
There are certain inflexible laws  
Unalterable, in the nature of music.  
There is nothing at all to be done about it,  
There is nothing to do about anything,  
And now it is nearly time for the news  
We must listen to the weather report  
And the international catastrophes.

[*Exeunt* CHORUS.]

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## SCENE II

HARRY, AGATHA

HARRY: John will recover, be what he always was;  
Arthur again be sober, though not for very long;  
And everything will go on as before. These mild surprises  
Should be in the routine of normal life at Wishwood.



John is the only one of us I can conceive  
 As settling down to make himself at home at Wishwood,  
 Make a dull marriage, marry some woman stupider—  
 Stupider than himself. He can resist the influence  
 Of Wishwood, being unconscious, living in gentle motion  
 Of horses, and right visits to the right neighbours  
 At the right times; and be an excellent landlord.

AGATHA: What is in your mind, Harry?

I can guess about the past and what you mean about the future;  
 But a present is missing, needed to connect them.  
 You may be afraid that I would not understand you,  
 You may also be afraid of being understood,  
 Try not to regard it as an explanation.

HARRY: I still have to learn exactly what their meaning is.

At the beginning, eight years ago,  
 I felt, at first, that sense of separation,  
 Of isolation unredeemable, irrevocable—  
 It's eternal, or gives a knowledge of eternity,  
 Because it feels eternal while it lasts. That is one hell.  
 Then the numbness came to cover it—that is another—  
 That was the second hell of not being there,  
 The degradation of being parted from my self,  
 From the self which persisted only as an eye, seeing.  
 All this last year, I could not fit myself together:  
 When I was inside the old dream, I felt all the same emotion  
 Or lack of emotion, as before: the same loathing  
 Diffused, I not a person, in a world not of persons  
 But only of contaminating presences.  
 And then I had no horror of my action,  
 I only felt the repetition of it  
 Over and over. When I was outside,  
 I could associate nothing of it with myself,  
 Though nothing else was real. I thought foolishly  
 That when I got back to Wishwood, as I had left it,  
 Everything would fall into place. But *they* prevent it.  
 I still have to find out what their meaning is.  
 Here I have been finding  
 A misery long forgotten, and a new torture,



The shadow of something behind our meagre childhood,  
Some origin of wretchedness. Is that what they would show me?  
And now I want you to tell me about my father.

AGATHA: What do you want to know about your father?

HARRY: If I knew, then I should not have to ask.

*You know what I want to know, and that is enough:*  
Warburton told me that, though he did not mean to.  
What I want to know is something I need to know,  
And only you can tell me. I know that much.

AGATHA: I had to fight for many years to win my dispossession,  
And many years to keep it. What people know me as,  
The efficient principal of a women's college—  
That is the surface. There is a deeper  
Organisation, which your question disturbs.

HARRY: When I know, I know that in some way I shall find  
That I have always known it. And that will be better.

AGATHA: I will try to tell you. I hope I have the strength.

HARRY: I have thought of you as the completely strong,  
The liberated from the human wheel.  
So I looked to you for strength. Now I think it is  
A common pursuit of liberation.

AGATHA: Your father might have lived—or so I see him—  
An exceptionally cultivated country squire,  
Reading, sketching, playing on the flute,  
Something of an oddity to his county neighbours,  
But not neglecting public duties.  
He hid his strength beneath unusual weakness,  
The diffidence of a solitary man:  
Where he was weak he recognised your mother's power,  
And yielded to it.

HARRY:                               There was no ecstasy.

Tell me now, who were my parents?

AGATHA: Your father and your mother.

HARRY:                               You tell me nothing.

AGATHA: The dead man whom you have assumed to be your father,  
And my sister whom you acknowledge as your mother:  
There is no mystery here.

HARRY:                               What then?

AGATHA: You see your mother as identified with this house—

It was not always so. There were many years  
Before she succeeded in making terms with Wishwood,  
Until she took your father's place, and reached the point where  
Wishwood supported her, and she supported Wishwood.  
At first it was a vacancy. A man and a woman  
Married, alone in a lonely country house together,  
For three years childless, learning the meaning  
Of loneliness. Your mother wanted a sister here  
Always. I was the youngest: I was then  
An undergraduate at Oxford. I came  
Once for a long vacation. I remember  
A summer day of unusual heat  
For this cold country.

HARRY: And then?

AGATHA: There are hours when there seems to be no past or future,  
Only a present moment of pointed light  
When you want to burn. When you stretch out your hand  
To the flames. They only come once,  
Thank God, that kind. Perhaps there is another kind,  
I believe, across a whole Thibet of broken stones  
That lie, fang up, a lifetime's march. I have believed this.

HARRY: I have known neither.

AGATHA: The autumn came too soon, not soon enough.  
The rain and wind had not shaken your father  
Awake yet. I found him thinking  
How to get rid of your mother. What simple plots!  
He was not suited to the rôle of murderer.

HARRY: In what way did he wish to murder her?

AGATHA: Oh, a dozen foolish ways, each one abandoned  
For something more ingenious. You were due in three months  
time;  
You would not have been born in that event: I stopped him.  
I can take no credit for a little common sense,  
He would have bungled it.

I did not want to kill *you*!  
You to be killed! What were you then? only a thing called 'life'—  
Something that should have been *mine*, as I felt then.

AGATHA: And a beginning. Harry, my dear,

I feel very tired, as only the old feel.  
 The young feel tired at the end of an action,—  
 The old, at the beginning. It is as if  
 I had been living all these years upon my capital,  
 Instead of earning my spiritual income daily:  
 And I am old, to start again to make my living.

HARRY: But you are not unhappy, just now?

AGATHA: What does the word mean?

There's relief from a burden that I carried,  
 And exhaustion at the moment of relief.  
 The burden's yours now, yours  
 The burden of all the family. And I am a little frightened.

HARRY: You, frightened! I can hardly imagine it.  
 I wish I had known—but that was impossible.  
 I only now begin to have some understanding  
 Of you, and of all of us. Family affection  
 Was a kind of formal obligation, a duty  
 Only noticed by its neglect. One had that part to play.  
 After such training, I could endure, these ten years,  
 Playing a part that had been imposed upon me;  
 And I returned to find another one made ready—  
 The book laid out, lines underscored, and the costume  
 Ready to be put on. But it is very odd:  
 When other people seemed so strong, their apparent strength  
 Stifled my decision. Now I see  
 I might even become fonder of my mother—  
 More compassionate at least—by understanding.  
 But she would not like that. Now I see  
 I have been wounded in a war of phantoms.  
 Not by human beings—they have no more power than I.  
 The things I thought were real are shadows, and the real  
 Are what I thought were private shadows. O that awful privacy  
 Of the insane mind! Now I can live in public.  
 Liberty is a different kind of pain from prison.

AGATHA: I only looked through the little door  
 When the sun was shining on the rose-garden:  
 And heard in the distance tiny voices  
 And then a black raven flew over.

And then I was only my own feet walking  
Away, down a concrete corridor  
In a dead air. Only feet walking  
And sharp heels scraping. Over and under  
Echo and noise of feet.

I was only the feet, and the eye  
Seeing the feet: the unwinking eye  
Fixing the movement. Over and under.

HARRY: In and out, in an endless drift  
Of shrieking forms in a circular desert  
Weaving with contagion of putrescent embraces  
On dissolving bone. In and out, the movement  
Until the chain broke, and I was left  
Under the single eye above the desert.

AGATHA: Up and down, through the stone passages  
Of an immense and empty hospital  
Pervaded by a smell of disinfectant,  
Looking straight ahead, passing barred windows.  
Up and down. Until the chain breaks.

HARRY: To and fro, dragging my feet  
Among inner shadows in the smoky wilderness,  
Trying to avoid the clasping branches  
And the giant lizard. To and fro.  
Until the chain breaks.

The chain breaks,  
The wheel stops, and the noise of machinery,  
And the desert is cleared, under the judicial sun  
Of the final eye, and the awful evacuation  
Cleanses.

I was not there, you were not there, only our phantasms  
And what did not happen is as true as what did happen,  
O my dear, and you walked through the little door  
And I ran to meet you in the rose-garden.

AGATHA: This is the next moment. This is the beginning.  
We do not pass twice through the same door  
Or return to the door through which we did not pass.  
I have seen the first stage: relief from what happened  
Is also relief from that unfulfilled craving

Flattered in sleep, and deceived in waking.

You have a long journey.

HARRY: Not yet! not yet! this is the first time that I have been free  
From the ring of ghosts with joined hands, from the pursuers,  
And come into a quiet place.

Why is it so quiet?

Do you feel a kind of stirring underneath the air?

Do you? don't you? a communication, a scent

Direct to the brain . . . but not just as before,

Not quite like, not the same . . .

[*The EUMENIDES appear.*]

and this time

You cannot think that I am surprised to see you.

And you shall not think that I am afraid to see you.

This time, you are real, this time, you are outside me,

And just endurable. I know that you are ready,

Ready to leave Wishwood, and I am going with you.

You followed me here, where I thought I should escape you—

No! you were already here before I arrived.

Now I see at last that I am following you,

And I know that there can be only one itinerary

And one destination. Let us lose no time. I will follow.

[*The curtains close. AGATHA goes to the window, in a somnambular fashion, and opens the curtains, disclosing the empty embrasure. She steps into the place which the EUMENIDES had occupied.*]

AGATHA: A curse comes to being

As a child is formed.

In both, the incredible

Becomes the actual

Without our intention

Knowing what is intended.

A curse is like a child, formed

In a moment of unconsciousness

In an accidental bed

Or under an elder tree

According to the phase

[She moves back into the room.]

HARRY: Shall we ever meet again?

And who will meet again? Meeting is for strangers.  
Meeting is for those who do not know each other.

AGATHA: You must go.

AMY: What are you saying to Harry? He has only arrived,  
And you tell him to go?

AGATHA: He shall go.



AMY: He shall go? and who are you to say he shall go?

I think I know well enough why you wish him to go.

AGATHA: I wish nothing. I only say what I know must happen.

AMY: You only say what you intended to happen.

HARRY: Oh, mother,

This is not to do with Agatha, any more than with the rest of you.

My advice has come from quite a different quarter,  
But I cannot explain that to you now. Only be sure  
That I know what I am doing, and what I must do,  
And that it is the best thing for everybody.

But at present, I cannot explain it to anyone:

I do not know the words in which to explain it—

That is what makes it harder. You must just believe me,  
Until I come again.

AMY: But why are you going?

HARRY: I can only speak

And you cannot hear me. I can only speak

So you may not think I conceal an explanation,

And to tell you that I would have liked to explain.

AMY: Why should Agatha know, and I not be allowed to?

HARRY: I do not know whether Agatha knows

Or how much she knows. Any knowledge she may have—

It was not I who told her . . . All this year,

This last year, I have been in flight

But always in ignorance of invisible pursuers.

Now I know that all my life has been a flight

And phantoms fed upon me while I fled. Now I know

That the last apparent refuge, the safe shelter,

That is where one meets them. That is the way of spectres . . .

AMY: There is no one here.

No one, but your family!

HARRY: And now I know

That my business is not to run away, but to pursue,  
Not to avoid being found, but to seek.

I would not have chosen this way, had there been any other!  
It is at once the hardest thing, and the only thing possible.



Now they will lead me. I shall be safe with them;  
I am not safe here.

AMY:                       So you *will* run away.

AGATHA: In a world of fugitives  
The person taking the opposite direction  
Will appear to run away.

AMY:                       I was speaking to Harry.

HARRY: It is very hard, when one has just recovered sanity,  
And not yet assured in possession, that is when  
One begins to seem the maddest to other people.  
It is hard for you too, mother, it is indeed harder,  
Not to understand.

AMY:                       Where are you going?

HARRY: I shall have to learn. That is still unsettled.  
I have not yet had the precise directions.  
Where does one go from a world of insanity?  
Somewhere on the other side of despair.  
To the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,  
A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,  
The heat of the sun and the icy vigil,  
A care over lives of humble people,  
The lesson of ignorance, of incurable diseases.  
Such things are possible. It is love and terror  
Of what waits and wants me, and will not let me fall.  
Let the cricket chirp. John shall be the master.  
All I have is his. No harm can come to him.  
What would destroy me will be life for John,  
I am responsible for him. Why I have this election  
I do not understand. It must have been preparing always,  
And I see it was what I always wanted. Strength demanded  
That seems too much, is just strength enough given.  
I must follow the bright angels.

[Exit.]

## SCENE III

AMY, AGATHA

AMY: I was a fool, to ask you again to Wishwood;  
But I thought, thirty-five years is long, and death is an end,  
And I thought that time might have made a change in Agatha—  
It has made enough in *me*. Thirty-five years ago  
You took my husband from me. Now you take my son.

AGATHA: What did I take? nothing that you ever had.  
What did I get? thirty years of solitude,  
Alone, among women, in a women's college,  
Trying not to dislike women. Thirty years in which to think.  
Do you suppose that I wanted to return to Wishwood?

AMY: The more rapacious, to take what I never had;  
The more unpardonable, to taunt me with not having it.  
Had you taken what I had, you would have left me at least a  
memory  
Of something to live upon. You knew that you took everything  
Except the walls, the furniture, the acres;  
Leaving nothing—but what I could breed for myself,  
What I could plant here. Seven years I kept him,  
For the sake of the future, a discontented ghost,  
In his own house. What of the humiliation,  
Of the chilly pretences in the silent bedroom,  
Forcing sons upon an unwilling father?  
Dare you think what that does to one? Try to think of it.  
I *would* have sons, if I could not have a husband:  
Then I let him go. I abased myself.  
Did I show any weakness, any self-pity?  
I forced myself to the purposes of Wishwood;  
I even asked you back, for visits, after he was gone,  
So that there might be no ugly rumours.  
You thought I did not know!  
You may be close, but I always saw through *him*.  
And now it is my son.

AGATHA: I know one thing, Amy:  
 That you have never changed. And perhaps I have not.  
 I thought that I had, until this evening.  
 But at least I wanted to. Now I must begin.  
 There is nothing more difficult. But you are just the same:  
 Just as voracious for what you cannot have  
 Because you repel it.

AMY: I prepared the situation  
 For us to be reconciled, because of Harry,  
 Because of his mistakes, because of his unhappiness,  
 Because of the misery that he has left behind him,  
 Because of the waste. I wanted to obliterate  
 His past life, and have nothing except to remind him  
 Of the years when he had been a happy boy at Wishwood;  
 For his future success.

AGATHA: Success is relative:  
 It is what we can make of the mess we have made of things,  
 It is what he can make, not what you would make for him.

AMY: Success is one thing, what you would make for him  
 Is another. I call it failure. Your fury for possession  
 Is only the stronger for all these years of abstinence.  
 Thirty-five years ago you took my husband from me  
 And now you take my son.

AGATHA: Why should we quarrel for what neither can have?  
 If neither has ever had a husband or a son  
 We have no ground for argument.

AMY: Who set you up to judge? what, if you please,  
 Gives *you* the power to know what is best for Harry?  
 What gave you this influence to persuade him  
 To abandon his duty, his family and his happiness?  
 Who has planned his good? is it you or I?  
 Thirty-five years designing his life,  
 Eight years watching, without him, at Wishwood,  
 Years of bitterness and disappointment.  
 What share had you in this? what have you given?  
 And now at the moment of success against failure,  
 When I felt assured of his settlement and happiness,

You who took my husband, now you take my son.  
You take him from Wishwood, you take him from me,  
You take him . . .

[Enter MARY.]

MARY: Excuse me, Cousin Amy. I have just seen Denman.  
She came to tell me that Harry is leaving:  
Downing told her. He has got the car out.  
What is the matter?

AMY:                               That woman there,  
She has persuaded him: I do not know how.  
I have been always trying to make myself believe  
That he was not such a weakling as his father  
In the hands of any unscrupulous woman.  
I have no influence over him; *you* can try,  
But you will not succeed: she has some spell  
That works from generation to generation.

MARY: Is Harry really going?

AGATHA:                               He is going.  
But that is not my spell, it is none of my doing:  
I have only watched and waited. In this world  
It is inexplicable, the resolution is in another.

MARY: Oh, but it is the danger comes from another!  
Can you not stop him? Cousin Agatha, stop him!  
You do not know what I have seen and what I know!  
He is in great danger, I know that, don't ask me,  
You would not believe me, but I tell you I know.  
You must keep him here, you must not let him leave.  
I do not know what must be done, what can be done,  
Even here, but elsewhere, everywhere, he is in danger.  
I will stay or I will go, whichever is better;  
I do not care what happens to me,  
But Harry must not go. Cousin Agatha!

AGATHA: Here the danger, here the death, here, not elsewhere;  
Elsewhere no doubt is agony, renunciation,  
But birth and life. Harry has crossed the frontier  
Beyond which safety and danger have a different meaning.  
And he cannot return. That is his privilege.

For those who live in this world, this world only,  
Do you think that I would take the responsibility  
Of tempting them over the border? No one could, no one who  
knows.

No one who has the least suspicion of what is to be found there.  
But Harry has been led across the frontier: he must follow;  
For him the death is now only on this side,  
For him, danger and safety have another meaning.  
*They* have made this clear. And I who have seen them must be-  
lieve them.

MARY: Oh! . . . so . . . *you* have seen them too!

AGATHA: We must all go, each in his own direction,  
You, and I, and Harry. You and I,  
My dear, may very likely meet again  
In our wanderings in the neutral territory  
Between two worlds.

MARY: Then you *will* help me!  
You remember what I said to you this evening?  
I knew that I was right: you made me wait for this—  
Only for this. I suppose I did not really mean it  
Then, but I mean it now. Of course it was much too late  
Then, for anything to come for me: I should have known it;  
It was all over, I believe, before it began;  
But I deceived myself. It takes so many years  
To learn that one is dead! So you must help me.  
I will go. But I suppose it is much too late  
Now, to try to get a fellowship?

AMY: So you will all leave me!  
An old woman alone in a damned house.  
I will let the walls crumble. Why should I worry  
To keep the tiles on the roof, combat the endless weather,  
Resist the wind? fight with increasing taxes  
And unpaid rents and tithes? nourish investments  
With wakeful nights and patient calculations  
With the solicitor, the broker, agent? Why should I?  
It is no concern of the body in the tomb  
To bother about the upkeep. Let the wind and rain do that.

[While AMY has been speaking, HARRY has entered, dressed for departure.]

HARRY: But, mother, you will always have Arthur and John  
To worry about: not that John is any worry—  
The destined and the perfect master of Wishwood,  
The satisfactory son. And as for me,  
I am the last you need to worry about;  
I have my course to pursue, and I am safe from normal dangers  
If I pursue it. I cannot account for this  
But it is so, mother. Until I come again.

AMY: If you go now, I shall never see you again.

[Meanwhile VIOLET, GERALD and CHARLES have entered.]

CHARLES: Where is Harry going? What is the matter?

AMY: Ask Agatha.

GERALD: Why, what's the matter? Where is he going?

AMY: Ask Agatha.

VIOLET: I cannot understand at all. Why is he leaving?

AMY: Ask Agatha.

VIOLET: Really, it sometimes seems to me

That I am the only sane person in this house.

Your behaviour all seems to me quite unaccountable.

What *has* happened, Amy?

AMY: Harry is going away—to become a missionary.

HARRY: But . . . !

CHARLES: A missionary! that's never happened in our family!

And why in such a hurry? Before you make up your mind . . .

VIOLET: You can't really think of *living* in a tropical climate!

GERALD: There's nothing wrong with a tropical climate—

But you have to go in for some sort of training;

The medical knowledge is the first thing.

I've met with missionaries, often enough—

Some of them very decent fellows. A maligned profession.

They're sometimes very useful, knowing the natives,

Though occasionally troublesome. But you'll have to learn the  
language

And several dialects. It means a lot of preparation.

VIOLET: And you need some religious qualification!

I think you should consult the vicar . . .

GERALD: And don't forget  
That you'll need various inoculations—  
That depends on where you're going.

CHARLES: Such a thing  
Has never happened in our family.

VIOLET: I cannot understand it.

HARRY: I never said that I was going to be a missionary.  
I would explain, but you would none of you believe it;  
If you believed it, still you would not understand.  
You can't know why I'm going. You have not seen  
What I have seen. Oh, why should you make it so ridiculous  
Just now? I only want, please,  
As little fuss as possible. You must get used to it;  
Meanwhile, I apologise for my bad manners.  
But if you *could* understand you would be quite happy about it,  
So I shall say good-bye, until we meet again.

GERALD: Well, if you are determined, Harry, we must accept it;  
But it's a bad night, and you will have to be careful.  
You're taking Downing with you?

HARRY: Oh, yes, I'm taking Downing.  
You need not fear that I am in any danger  
Of such accidents as happen to Arthur and John:  
Take care of *them*. My address, mother,  
Will be care of the bank in London until you hear from me.  
Good-bye, mother.

AMY: Good-bye, Harry.

HARRY: Good-bye.

AGATHA: Good-bye.

HARRY: Good-bye, Mary.

MARY: Good-bye, Harry. Take care of yourself. [Exit HARRY.]

AMY: At my age, I only just begin to apprehend the truth  
About things too late to mend: and that is to be old.  
Nevertheless, I am glad if I can come to know them.  
I always wanted too much for my children,  
More than life can give. And now I am punished for it.  
Gerald! you are the stupidest person in this room,  
Violet, you are the most malicious in a harmless way;  
I prefer your company to that of any of the others



Just to help me to the next room. Where I can lie down.  
Then you can leave me.

GERALD: Oh, certainly, Amy.

VIOLET: I do not understand

A single thing that's happened. [*Exeunt AMY, VIOLET, GERALD.*]

CHARLES: It's very odd,

But I am beginning to feel, just beginning to feel  
That there is something I *could* understand, if I were told it.  
But I'm not sure that I want to know. I suppose I'm getting old:  
Old age came softly up to now. I felt safe enough;  
And now I don't feel safe. As if the earth should open  
Right to the centre, as I was about to cross Pall Mall.  
I thought that life could bring no further surprises;  
But I remember now, that I am always surprised  
By the bull-dog in the Burlington Arcade.  
What if every moment were like that, if one were awake?  
You both seem to know more about this than I do.  
[*Enter DOWNING, hurriedly, in chauffeur's costume.*]

DOWNING: Oh, excuse me, Miss, excuse me, Mr. Charles:

His Lordship sent me back because he remembered  
He thinks he left his cigarette-case on the table.

Oh, there it is. Thank you. Good night, Miss; good night,  
Miss Mary; good night, Sir.

MARY: Downing, will you promise never to leave his Lordship  
While you are away?

DOWNING: Oh, certainly, Miss;

I'll never leave him so long as he requires me.

MARY: But he will need you. You must never leave him.

DOWNING: You may think it laughable, what I'm going to say—

But it's not really strange, Miss, when you come to look at it:  
After all these years that I've been with him  
I think I understand his Lordship better than anybody;  
And I have a kind of feeling that his Lordship won't need me  
Very long now. I can't give you any reasons.  
But to show you what I mean, though you'd hardly credit it,  
I've always said, whatever happened to his Lordship  
Was just a kind of preparation for something else.



I've no gift of language, but I'm sure of what I mean:  
We most of us seem to live according to circumstance,  
But with people like him, there's something inside them  
That accounts for what happens to them. You get a feeling of it.  
So I seem to know beforehand, when something's going to  
happen,

And it seems quite natural, being his Lordship.

And that's why I say now, I have a feeling

That he won't want me long, and he won't want anybody.

AGATHA: And, Downing, if his behaviour seems unaccountable  
At times, you mustn't worry about that.

He is every bit as sane as you or I,

He sees the world as clearly as you or I see it,

It is only that he has seen a great deal more than that,

And we have seen them too—Miss Mary and I.

DOWNING: I understand you, Miss. And if I may say so,

Now that you've raised the subject, I'm most relieved—

If you understand my meaning. I thought that was the reason

We was off tonight. In fact, I half expected it,

So I had the car all ready. You mean them ghosts, Miss!

I wondered when his Lordship would get round to seeing them—

And so you've seen them too! They must have given you a turn!

They did me, at first. You soon get used to them.

Of course, I knew they was to do with his Lordship,

And not with me, so I could see them cheerful-like,

In a manner of speaking. There's no harm in *them*,

I'll take my oath. Will that be all, Miss?

AGATHA: That will be all, thank you, Downing. We mustn't keep  
you;

His Lordship will be wondering why you've been so long.

[Exit DOWNING. Enter IVY.]

IVY: Where is Downing going? where is Harry?

Look. Here's a telegram come from Arthur;

[Enter GERALD and VIOLET.]

I wonder why he sent it, after telephoning.

Shall I read it to you? I was wondering

Whether to show it to Amy or not.

[Reads.]

'Regret delayed business in town many happy returns see you  
tomorrow many happy returns hurrah love Arthur.'

I mean, after what we know of what did happen,

Do you think Amy ought to see it?

VIOLET: No, certainly not.

You do not know what has been going on, Ivy.

And if you did, you would not understand it.

I do not understand, so how could you? Amy is not well;

And she is resting.

IVY: Oh, I'm sorry. But can't you explain?

Why do you all look so peculiar? I think I might be allowed

To know what has happened.

AMY'S VOICE: Agatha! Mary! come!

The clock has stopped in the dark!

[Exeunt AGATHA and MARY. Pause.

Enter Warburton.]

WARBURTON: Well! it's a filthy night to be out in.

That's why I've been so long, going and coming.

But I'm glad to say that John is getting on nicely;

It wasn't so serious as Winchell made out,

And we'll have him up here in the morning.

I hope Lady Monchensey hasn't been worrying?

I'm anxious to relieve her mind. Why, what's the trouble?

[Enter MARY.]

MARY: Dr. Warburton!

WARBURTON: Excuse me. [Exeunt MARY and Warburton.]

CHORUS: We do not like to look out of the same window, and see  
quite a different landscape.

We do not like to climb a stair, and find that it takes us down.

We do not like to walk out of a door, and find ourselves back in  
the same room.

We do not like the maze in the garden, because it too closely  
resembles the maze in the brain.

We do not like what happens when we are awake, because it too  
closely resembles what happens when we are asleep.

We understand the ordinary business of living,

We know how to work the machine,

We can usually avoid accidents,  
We are insured against fire,  
Against larceny and illness,  
Against defective plumbing,  
But not against the act of God.  
We know various spells and enchantments,  
And minor forms of sorcery,  
Divination and chiromancy,  
Specifics against insomnia,  
Lumbago, and the loss of money.  
But the circle of our understanding  
Is a very restricted area.  
Except for a limited number  
Of strictly practical purposes  
We do not know what we are doing;  
And even, when you think of it,  
We do not know much about thinking.  
What is happening outside of the circle?  
And what is the meaning of happening?  
What ambush lies beyond the heather  
And behind the Standing Stones?  
Beyond the Heaviside Layer  
And behind the smiling moon?  
And what is being done to us?  
And what are we, and what are we doing?  
To each and all of these questions  
There is no conceivable answer.  
We have suffered far more than a personal loss—  
We have lost our way in the dark.

IVY: I shall have to stay till after the funeral: will my ticket to London still be valid?

GERALD: I do not look forward with pleasure to dealing with Arthur and John in the morning.

VIOLET: We must wait for the will to be read. I shall send a wire in the morning.

CHARLES: I fear that my mind is not what it was—or was it?—and yet I think that I might understand.

ALL: But we must adjust ourselves to the moment: we must do the right thing. [Exeunt.]

[Enter, from one door, AGATHA and MARY, and set a small portable table. From another door, enter DENMAN carrying a birthday cake with lighted candles, which she sets on the table. Exit DENMAN. AGATHA and MARY walk slowly in single file round and round the table, clockwise. At each revolution they blow out a few candles, so that their last words are spoken in the dark.]

AGATHA: A curse is slow in coming  
To complete fruition  
It cannot be hurried  
And it cannot be delayed

MARY: It cannot be diverted  
An attempt to divert it  
Only implicates others  
At the day of consummation

AGATHA: A curse is a power  
Not subject to reason  
Each curse has its course  
Its own way of expiation  
Follow follow

MARY: Not in the day time  
And in the hither world  
Where we know what we are doing  
There is not its operation  
Follow follow

AGATHA: But in the night time  
And in the nether world  
Where the meshes we have woven  
Bind us to each other  
Follow follow

MARY: A curse is written  
On the under side of things  
Behind the smiling mirror  
And behind the smiling moon  
Follow follow

AGATHA: This way the pilgrimage  
Of expiation  
Round and round the circle  
Completing the charm  
So the knot be unknotted  
The cross be uncrossed  
The crooked be made straight  
And the curse be ended  
By intercession  
By pilgrimage  
By those who depart  
In several directions  
For their own redemption  
And that of the departed—  
May they rest in peace.



# The Cocktail Party

A COMEDY

## PERSONS

EDWARD CHAMBERLAYNE

JULIA (MRS. SHUTTLETHWAITE)

CELIA COPLESTONE

ALEXANDER MACCOLGIE GIBBS

PETER QUILPE

AN UNIDENTIFIED GUEST, *later identified as*

SIR HENRY HARCOURT-REILLY

LAVINIA CHAMBERLAYNE

A NURSE-SECRETARY

CATERER'S MAN

*The scene is laid in London*



# Act I

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## SCENE 1

*The drawing room of the Chamberlaynes' London flat. Early evening. EDWARD CHAMBERLAYNE, JULIA SHUTTLETHWAITE, CELIA COPLESTONE, PETER QUILPE, ALEXANDER MACCOLGIE GIBBS, and an UNIDENTIFIED GUEST.*

ALEX: You've missed the point completely, Julia:  
There *were* no tigers. *That* was the point.

JULIA: Then what were you doing, up in a tree:  
You and the Maharaja?

ALEX: My dear Julia!  
It's perfectly hopeless. You haven't been listening.

PETER: You'll have to tell us all over again, Alex.

ALEX: I never tell the same story twice.

JULIA: But I'm still waiting to know what happened.  
I know it started as a story about tigers.

ALEX: I said there were no tigers.

CELIA: Oh do stop wrangling,  
Both of you. It's your turn, Julia.  
Do tell us that story you told the other day, about Lady Klootz  
and the wedding cake.

PETER: And how the butler found her in the pantry, rinsing her  
mouth out with champagne.  
I like that story.

CELIA: I love that story.

ALEX: I'm never tired of hearing that story.

JULIA: Well, you all seem to know it.

CELIA: Do we all know it?  
But we're never tired of hearing *you* tell it.  
I don't believe everyone here knows it.

[*To the UNIDENTIFIED GUEST*]

You don't know it, do you?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No, I've never heard it.

CELIA: Here's one new listener for you, Julia;

And I don't believe that Edward knows it.

EDWARD: I may have heard it, but I don't remember it.

CELIA: And Julia's the only person to tell it.

She's such a good mimic.

JULIA: Am I a good mimic?

PETER: You *are* a good mimic. You never miss anything.

ALEX: She never misses anything unless she wants to.

CELIA: Especially the Lithuanian accent.

JULIA: Lithuanian? Lady Klootz?

PETER: I thought she was Belgian.

PETER: I thought she was Belgian.

ALEX: Her father belonged to a Baltic family—

One of the *oldest* Baltic families

With a branch in Sweden and one in Denmark.

There were several very lovely daughters:

I wonder what's become of them now.

JULIA: Lady Klootz was very lovely, once upon a time.

What a life she led! I used to say to her: 'Greta!

You have too much vitality.' But she enjoyed herself.

[*To the UNIDENTIFIED GUEST*]

Did *you* know Lady Klootz?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No, I never met her.

CELIA: Go on with the story about the wedding cake.

JULIA: Well, but it really isn't my story.

I heard it first from Delia Verinder

Who was there when it happened.

[*To the UNIDENTIFIED GUEST*]

Do you know Delia Verinder?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No, I don't know her.

JULIA: Well, one can't be too careful

Before one tells a story.

ALEX: Delia Verinder?

Was she the one who had three brothers?

JULIA: How many brothers? Two, I think.

ALEX: No, there were three, but you wouldn't know the third one:  
They kept him rather quiet.

JULIA: Oh, you mean *that* one.

ALEX: He was feeble-minded.

JULIA: Oh, not feeble-minded:

He was only harmless.

ALEX: Well then, harmless.

JULIA: He was very clever at repairing clocks;

And he had a remarkable sense of hearing—

The only man I ever met who could hear the cry of bats.

PETER: Hear the cry of bats?

JULIA: He could hear the cry of bats.

CELIA: But how do you know he could hear the cry of bats?

JULIA: Because he said so. And I believed him.

CELIA: But if he was so . . . harmless, how could you believe him?  
He might have imagined it.

JULIA: My darling Celia,

You needn't be so sceptical. I stayed there once

At their castle in the North. How he suffered!

They had to find an island for him

Where there were no bats.

ALEX: And is he still there?

Julia is really a mine of information.

CELIA: There isn't much that Julia doesn't know.

PETER: Go on with the story about the wedding cake.

[EDWARD *leaves the room.*]

JULIA: No, we'll wait until Edward comes back into the room.

Now I want to relax. Are there any more cocktails?

PETER: But do go on. Edward wasn't listening anyway.

JULIA: No, he wasn't listening, but he's such a strain—

Edward without Lavinia! He's quite impossible!

Leaving it to me to keep things going.

What a host! And nothing fit to eat!

The only reason for a cocktail party

For a gluttonous old woman like me

Is a really nice tit-bit. I can drink at home.

[EDWARD *returns with a tray.*]

Edward, give me another of those delicious olives.

What's that? Potato crisps? No, I can't endure them.

Well, I started to tell you about Lady Klootz.

It was at the Vincewell wedding. Oh, so many years ago!

[*To the UNIDENTIFIED GUEST*].

Did *you* know the Vincewells?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No, I don't know the Vincewells.

JULIA: Oh, they're both dead now. But I wanted to know.

If they'd been friends of yours, I couldn't tell the story.

PETER: Were they the parents of Tony Vincewell?

JULIA: Yes. Tony was the product, but not the solution.

He only made the situation more difficult.

You know Tony Vincewell? You knew him at Oxford?

PETER: No, I never knew him at Oxford:

I came across him last year in California.

JULIA: I've always wanted to go to California.

Do tell us what you were doing in California.

CELIA: Making a film.

PETER: Trying to make a film.

JULIA: Oh, what film was it? I wonder if I've seen it.

PETER: No, you wouldn't have seen it. As a matter of fact

It was never produced. They did a film

But they used a different scenario.

JULIA: Not the one you wrote?

PETER: Not the one I wrote:

But I had a very enjoyable time.

CELIA: Go on with the story about the wedding cake.

JULIA: Edward, do sit down for a moment:

I know you're always the perfect host,

But just try to pretend you're another guest

At Lavinia's party. There are so many questions

I want to ask you. It's a golden opportunity

Now Lavinia's away. I've always said:

'If I could only get Edward alone

And have a really *serious* conversation!'

I said so to Lavinia. She agreed with me.

She said: 'I wish you'd try.' And this is the first time

I've ever seen you without Lavinia

Except for the time she got locked in the lavatory

And couldn't get out. I know what you're thinking!  
I know you think I'm a silly old woman  
But I'm really very serious. Lavinia takes me seriously.  
I believe that's the reason why she went way—  
So that I could make you talk. Perhaps she's in the pantry  
Listening to all we say!

EDWARD: No, she's not in the pantry.

CELIA: Will she be away for some time, Edward?

EDWARD: I really don't know until I hear from her.

If her aunt is very ill, she may be gone some time.

CELIA: And how will you manage while she is away?

EDWARD: I really don't know. I may go away myself.

CELIA: Go away yourself!

JULIA: Have you an aunt too?

EDWARD: No, I haven't any aunt. But I might go away.

CELIA: But, Edward . . . what was I going to say?

It's dreadful for old ladies alone in the country,

And almost impossible to get a nurse.

JULIA: Is that her Aunt Laura?

EDWARD: No; another aunt

Whom you wouldn't know. Her mother's sister

And rather a recluse.

JULIA: Her favourite aunt?

EDWARD: Her aunt's favourite niece. And she's rather difficult.

When she's ill, she insists on having Lavinia.

JULIA: I never heard of her being ill before.

EDWARD: No, she's always very strong. That's why when she's ill

She gets into a panic.

JULIA: And sends for Lavinia.

I quite understand. Are there any prospects?

EDWARD: No, I think she put it all into an annuity.

JULIA: So it's very unselfish of Lavinia

Yet very like her. But really, Edward,

Lavinia may be away for weeks,

Or she may come back and be called away again.

I understand these tough old women—

I'm one myself: I feel as if I knew

All about that aunt in Hampshire.

EDWARD: Hampshire?

JULIA: Didn't you say Hampshire?

EDWARD: No, I didn't say Hampshire.

JULIA: Did you say Hampstead?

EDWARD: No, I didn't say Hampstead.

JULIA: But she must live somewhere,

EDWARD: She lives in Essex.

JULIA: Anywhere near Colchester? Lavinia loves oysters.

EDWARD: No. In the *depths* of Essex.

JULIA: Well, we won't probe into it.

You have the address, and the telephone number?

I might run down and see Lavinia

On my way to Cornwall. But let's be sensible:

Now you must let me be *your* maiden aunt—

Living on an annuity, of course.

I am going to make you dine alone with me

On Friday, and talk to me about everything.

EDWARD: Everything?

JULIA: Oh, you know what I mean.

The next election. And the secrets of your cases.

EDWARD: Most of my secrets are quite uninteresting.

JULIA: Well, you shan't escape. You dine with me on Friday.

I've already chosen the people you're to meet.

EDWARD: But you asked me to dine with you alone.

JULIA: Yes, alone!

Without Lavinia! You'll like the other people—

But you're to talk to me. So that's all settled.

And now I must be going.

EDWARD: Must you be going?

PETER: But won't you tell the story about Lady Klootz?

JULIA: What Lady Klootz?

CELIA: And the wedding cake.

JULIA: Wedding cake? I wasn't at her wedding.

Edward, it's been a delightful evening:

The potato crisps were really excellent.

Now let me see. Have I got everything?

It's such a nice party, I hate to leave it.

It's such a nice party, I'd like to repeat it.

Why don't you *all* come to dinner on Friday?  
 No, I'm afraid my good Mrs. Batten  
 Would give me notice. And now I must be going.

ALEX: I'm afraid *I* ought to be going.

PETER: Celia—

May I walk along with you?

CELIA: No, I'm sorry, Peter;

I've got to take a taxi.

JULIA: You come with me, Peter:

You can get *me* a taxi, and then I can drop you.

I expect you on Friday, Edward. And Celia—

I must see you very soon. Now don't all go

Just because I'm going. Good-bye, Edward.

EDWARD: Good-bye, Julia. [Exeunt JULIA and PETER.]

CELIA: Good-bye, Edward.

Shall I see you soon?

EDWARD: Perhaps. I don't know.

CELIA: Perhaps you don't know? Very well, good-bye.

EDWARD: Good-bye, Celia.

ALEX: Good-bye, Edward. I do hope

You'll have better news of Lavinia's aunt.

EDWARD: Oh . . . yes . . . thank you. Good-bye, Alex,

It was nice of you to come. [Exeunt ALEX and CELIA.]

[To the UNIDENTIFIED GUEST]

Don't go yet.

Don't go yet. We'll finish the cocktails.

Or would you rather have whisky?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Gin.

EDWARD: Anything in it?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: A drop of water.

EDWARD: I want to apologise for this evening.

The fact is, I tried to put off this party:

These were only the people I couldn't put off

Because I couldn't get at them in time;

And I didn't know that *you* were coming.

I thought that Lavinia had told me the names

Of all the people she said she'd invited.

But it's only that dreadful old woman who mattered—



I shouldn't have minded anyone else,  
     [*The bell rings. EDWARD goes to the door, saying:*]  
 But she always turns up when she's least wanted.  
                             [*Opens the door*]

Julia!

[*Enter JULIA.*]

JULIA: Edward! How lucky that it's raining!  
 It made me remember my umbrella,  
 And there it is! Now what are you two plotting?  
 How very lucky it was my umbrella,  
 And not Alexander's—*he's* so inquisitive!  
 But *I* never poke into other people's business.  
 Well, good-bye again. I'm off at last.

[*Exit.*]

EDWARD: I'm sorry. I'm afraid I don't know your name.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: I ought to be going.

EDWARD: Don't go yet.

I very much want to talk to somebody;  
 And it's easier to talk to a person you don't know.  
 The fact is, that Lavinia has left me.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Your wife has left you?

EDWARD: Without warning, of course;

Just when she'd arranged a cocktail party.  
 She'd gone when I came in, this afternoon.  
 She left a note to say that she was leaving me;  
 But I don't know where she's gone.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: This is an occasion.

May I take another drink?

EDWARD: Whisky?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Gin.

EDWARD: Anything in it?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Nothing but water.

And I recommend you the same prescription . . .  
 Let me prepare it for you, if I may . . .  
 Strong . . . but sip it slowly . . . and drink it sitting down.  
 Breathe deeply, and adopt a relaxed position.  
 There we are. Now for a few questions.  
 How long married?



EDWARD: Five years.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Children?

EDWARD: No.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Then look at the brighter side.  
You say you don't know where she's gone?

EDWARD: No, I do not.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Do you know who the man is?

EDWARD: There was no other man—  
None that I know of.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Or another woman

Of whom she thought she had cause to be jealous?

EDWARD: She had nothing to complain of in my behaviour.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Then no doubt it's all for the best.

With another man, she might have made a mistake  
And want to come back to you. If another woman,  
She might decide to be forgiving  
And gain an advantage. If there's no other woman  
And no other man, then the reason may be deeper  
And you've ground for hope that she won't come back at all.  
If another man, then you'd want to re-marry  
To prove to the world that somebody wanted you;  
If another woman, you might have to marry her—  
You might even imagine that you wanted to marry her.

EDWARD: But I want my wife back.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: That's the natural reaction.

It's embarrassing, and inconvenient.

It was inconvenient, having to lie about it

Because you can't tell the truth on the telephone.

It will all take time that you can't well spare;

But I put it to you . . .

EDWARD: Don't put it to me.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Then I suggest . . .

EDWARD: And please don't suggest.

I have often used these terms in examining witnesses,

So I don't like them. May I put it to *you*?

I know that I invited this conversation:

But I don't know who you are. This is not what I expected.

I only wanted to relieve my mind

By telling someone what I'd been concealing.  
I don't think I want to know who you are;  
But, at the same time, unless you know my wife  
A good deal better than I thought, or unless you know  
A good deal more about us than appears—  
I think your speculations rather offensive.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: I know you as well as I know your wife;  
And I knew that all you wanted was the luxury  
Of an intimate disclosure to a stranger.  
Let me, therefore, remain the stranger.  
But let me tell you, that to approach the stranger  
Is to invite the unexpected, release a new force,  
Or let the genie out of the bottle.  
It is to start a train of events  
Beyond your control. So let me continue.  
I will say then, you experience some relief  
Of which you're not aware. It will come to you slowly:  
When you wake in the morning, when you go to bed at night,  
That you are beginning to enjoy your independence;  
Finding your life becoming cosier and cosier  
Without the consistent critic, the patient misunderstander  
Arranging life a little better than you like it,  
Preferring not quite the same friends as yourself,  
Or making your friends like her better than you;  
And, turning the past over and over,  
You'll wonder only that you endured it for so long.  
And perhaps at times you will feel a little jealous  
That she saw it first, and had the courage to break it—  
Thus giving herself a permanent advantage.

EDWARD: It might turn out so, yet . . .

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Are you going to say, you love her?

EDWARD: Why, I thought we took each other for granted.

I never thought I should be any happier  
With another person. Why speak of love?  
We were used to each other. So her going away  
At a moment's notice, without explanation,  
Only a note to say that she had gone  
And was not coming back—well, I can't understand it.

Nobody likes to be left with a mystery:

It's so . . . unfinished.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST:

Yes, it's unfinished;

And nobody likes to be left with a mystery.

But there's more to it than that. There's a loss of personality;

Or rather, you've lost touch with the person

You thought you were. You no longer feel quite human.

You're suddenly reduced to the status of an object—

A living object, but no longer a person.

It's always happening, because one is an object

As well as a person. But we forget about it

As quickly as we can. When you've dressed for a party

And are going downstairs, with everything about you

Arranged to support you in the role you have chosen,

Then sometimes, when you come to the bottom step

There is one step more than your feet expected

And you come down with a jolt. Just for a moment

You have the experience of being an object

At the mercy of a malevolent staircase.

Or, take a surgical operation.

In consultation with the doctor and the surgeon,

In going to bed in the nursing home,

In talking to the matron, you are still the subject,

The centre of reality. But, stretched on the table,

You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop

For those who surround you, the masked actors;

All there is of you is your body

And the 'you' is withdrawn. May I replenish?

EDWARD: Oh, I'm sorry. What were you drinking?

Whisky?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Gin.

EDWARD:

Anything with it?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST:

Water.

EDWARD: To what does this lead?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST:

To finding out

What you really are. What you really feel.

What you really are among other people.

Most of the time we take ourselves for granted,

As we have to, and live on a little knowledge  
About ourselves as we were. Who are you now?  
You don't know any more than I do,  
But rather less. You are nothing but a set  
Of obsolete responses. The one thing to do  
Is to do nothing. Wait.

EDWARD: Wait!

But waiting is the one thing impossible.  
Besides, don't you see that it makes me ridiculous?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: It will do you no harm to find yourself ridiculous.

Resign yourself to be the fool you are.

That's the best advice that *I* can give you.

EDWARD: But how can I wait, not knowing what I'm waiting for?  
Shall I say to my friends, 'My wife has gone away'?  
And they answer 'Where?' and I say 'I don't know';  
And they say 'But when will she be back?'  
And I reply 'I don't know that she *is* coming back.'  
And they ask 'But what are you going to do?'  
And I answer 'Nothing.' They will think me mad  
Or simply contemptible.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: All to the good.

You will find that you survive humiliation.

And that's an experience of incalculable value.

EDWARD: Stop! I agree that much of what you've said  
Is true enough. But that is not all.  
Since I saw her this morning when we had breakfast  
I no longer remember what my wife is like.  
I am not quite sure that I could describe her  
If I had to ask the police to search for her.  
I'm sure I don't know what she was wearing  
When I saw her last. And yet I want her back.  
And I *must* get her back, to find out what has happened  
During the five years that we've been married.  
I must find out who she is, to find out who I am.  
And what is the use of all your analysis  
If I am to remain always lost in the dark?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: There is certainly no purpose in remaining in the dark

Except long enough to clear from the mind  
The illusion of having ever been in the light.  
The fact that you can't give a reason for wanting her  
Is the best reason for believing that you want her.

EDWARD: I want to see her again—here.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: You shall see her again—here.

EDWARD: Do you mean to say that you know where she is?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: That question is not worth the trouble of an answer.

But if I bring her back it must be on one condition:  
That you promise to ask her no questions  
Of where she has been.

EDWARD: I will not ask them.

And yet—it seems to me—when we began to talk  
I was not sure I wanted her; and now I want her.  
Do I want her? Or is it merely your suggestion?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: We do not know yet. In twenty-four hours  
She will come to you here. You will be here to meet her.

[*The doorbell rings.*]

EDWARD: I must answer the door.

[*EDWARD goes to the door.*]

So it's you again, Julia!

[*Enter JULIA and PETER.*]

JULIA: Edward, I'm so glad to find you.

Do you know, I must have left my glasses here,  
And I simply can't see a thing without them.  
I've been dragging Peter all over town  
Looking for them everywhere I've been.  
Has anybody found them? You can tell if they're mine—  
Some kind of a plastic sort of frame—  
I'm afraid I don't remember the colour,  
But I'd know them, because one lens is missing.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST [*Sings*]:

*As I was drinkin' gin and water,  
And me bein' the One Eyed Riley,*

*Who came in but the landlord's daughter  
And she took my heart entirely.*

You will keep our appointment?

EDWARD:

I shall keep it.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST [*Sings*]:

*Tooryooly toory-iley*

*What's the matter with One Eyed Riley?*

[*Exit.*]

JULIA: Edward, who is that dreadful man?

I've never been so insulted in my life.

It's very lucky that I left my spectacles:

*This* is what I call an adventure!

Tell me about him. You've been *drinking* together!

So this is the kind of friend you have

When Lavinia is out of the way! Who is he?

EDWARD: *I don't know.*

JULIA: *You don't know?*

EDWARD: I never saw him before in my life.

JULIA: But how did he come here?

EDWARD: *I don't know.*

JULIA: *You don't know!* And what's his name?

Did I hear him say his name was Riley?

EDWARD: I don't know his name.

JULIA: *You don't know his name?*

EDWARD: I tell you I've no idea who he is

Or how he got here.

JULIA: *But what did you talk about?*

Or were you singing songs all the time?

There's altogether too much mystery

About this place today.

EDWARD: *I'm very sorry.*

JULIA: No, I love it. But that reminds me

About my glasses. That's the greatest mystery.

Peter! why aren't you looking for them?

Look on the mantelpiece. Where was I sitting?

Just turn out the bottom of that sofa—

No, this chair. Look under the cushion.

EDWARD: Are you quite sure they're not in your bag?

JULIA: Why no, of course not: that's where I keep them.

Oh, here they are! Thank you, Edward;

That really was very *cléver* of you;

I'd never have found them but for you.

The next time I lose *anything*, Edward,

I'll come straight to you, instead of to St. Anthony.

And now I must fly. I've kept the taxi waiting.

Come along, Peter.

PETER: I hope you won't mind

If I don't come with you, Julia? On the way back

I remembered something I had to say to Edward . . .

JULIA: Oh, about Lavinia?

PETER: No, not about Lavinia.

It's something I want to consult him about,

And I could do it now.

JULIA: Of course I don't mind.

PETER: Well, at least you must let me take you down in the lift.

JULIA: No, you stop and talk to Edward. I'm not helpless yet.

And besides, I like to manage the machine myself—

In a lift I can meditate. Good-bye then.

And thank you—both of you—very much.

[*Exit.*]

PETER: I hope I'm not disturbing you, Edward.

EDWARD: I seem to have been disturbed already;

And I did rather want to be alone.

But what's it all about?

PETER: I want your help.

I was going to telephone and try to see you later;

But this seemed an opportunity.

EDWARD: And what's your trouble?

PETER: This evening I felt I could bear it no longer.

That awful party! I'm sorry, Edward;

Of course it was really a very nice party

For everyone but me. And that wasn't your fault.

I don't suppose you noticed the situation.

EDWARD: I did think I noticed one or two things;

But I don't pretend I was aware of everything.

PETER: Oh, I'm very glad that you didn't notice:

I must have behaved rather better than I thought.



If you didn't notice, I don't suppose the others did,  
Though I'm rather afraid of Julia Shuttlethwaite.

EDWARD: Julia is certainly observant,

But I think she had some other matter on her mind.

PETER: It's about Celia. Myself and Celia.

EDWARD: Why, what could there be about yourself and Celia?

Have you anything in common, do you think?

PETER: It seemed to me we had a great deal in common.

We're both of us artists.

EDWARD: I never thought of that.

What arts do you practise?

PETER: You won't have seen my novel

Though it had some very good reviews.

But it's more the cinema that interests both of us.

EDWARD: A common interest in the moving pictures

Frequently brings young people together.

PETER: Now you're only being sarcastic:

Celia was interested in the art of the film.

EDWARD: As a possible profession?

PETER: She might make it a profession;

Though she had her poetry.

EDWARD: Yes, I've seen her poetry—

Interesting if one is interested in Celia.

Apart, of course, from its literary merit

Which I don't pretend to judge.

PETER: Well, I can judge it,

And I think it's very good. But that's not the point.

The point is, I thought we had a great deal in common

And I think she thought so too.

EDWARD: How did you come to know her?

[Enter ALEX.]

ALEX: Ah, there you are, Edward! Do you know why I've looked in?

EDWARD: I'd like to know first how you got in, Alex.

ALEX: Why, I came and found that the door was open

And so I thought I'd slip in and see if anyone was with you.

PETER: Julia must have left it open.

EDWARD: Never mind;

So long as you both shut it when you go out.



ALEX: Ah, but you're coming with me, Edward.

I thought, Edward may be all alone this evening,  
And I know that he hates to spend an evening alone,  
So you're going to come out and have dinner with me.

EDWARD: That's very thoughtful of you, Alex, I'm sure;

But I rather *want* to be alone, this evening.

ALEX: But you've got to have some dinner. Are you going out?

Is there anyone here to get dinner for you?

EDWARD: No, I shan't want much, and I'll get it myself.

ALEX: Ah, in that case I know what I'll do.

I'm going to give you a little surprise:  
You know, I'm rather a famous cook.  
I'm going straight to your kitchen now  
And I shall prepare you a nice little dinner  
Which you can have alone. And then we'll leave you.  
Meanwhile, you and Peter can go on talking  
And I shan't disturb you.

EDWARD: My dear Alex,

There'll be nothing in the larder worthy of your cooking.  
I couldn't think of it.

ALEX: Ah, but that's my special gift—

Concocting a toothsome meal out of nothing.  
Any scraps you have will do. I learned that in the East.  
With a handful of rice and a little dried fish  
I can make half a dozen dishes. Don't say a word.  
I shall begin at once. [Exit to kitchen.]

EDWARD: Well, where did you leave off?

PETER: You asked me how I came to know Celia.

I met her here, about a year ago.

EDWARD: At one of Lavinia's amateur Thursdays?

PETER: A Thursday. Why do you say amateur?

EDWARD: Lavinia's attempts at starting a salon.

Where I entertained the minor guests  
And dealt with the misfits, Lavinia's mistakes.  
But you were one of the minor successes  
For a time at least.

PETER: I wouldn't say that.

But Lavinia was awfully kind to me

And I owe her a great deal. And then I met Celia.  
She was different from any girl I'd ever known  
And not easy to talk to, on that occasion.

EDWARD: Did you see her often?

ALEX'S VOICE: Edward, have you a double boiler?

EDWARD: I suppose there must be a double boiler:

Isn't there one in every kitchen?

ALEX'S VOICE: I can't find it.

There goes *that* surprise. I must think of another.

PETER: Not very often.

And when I did, I got no chance to talk to her.

EDWARD: You and Celia were asked for different purposes.

Your role was to be one of Lavinia's discoveries;

Celia's, to provide society and fashion.

Lavinia always had the ambition

To establish herself in two worlds at once—

But she herself had to be the link between them.

That is why, I think, her Thursdays were a failure.

PETER: You speak as if everything was finished.

EDWARD: Oh no, no, everything is left unfinished.

But you haven't told me how you came to know Celia.

PETER: I saw her again a few days later

Alone at a concert. And I was alone.

I've always gone to concerts alone—

At first, because I knew no one to go with,

And later, I found I preferred to go alone.

But a girl like Celia, it seemed very strange,

Because I had thought of her merely as a name

In a society column, to find her there alone.

Anyway, we got into conversation

And I found that she went to concerts alone

And to look at pictures. So we often met

In the same way, and sometimes went together.

And to be with Celia, that was something different

From company or solitude. And we sometimes had tea

And once or twice dined together.

EDWARD: And after that

Did she ever introduce you to her family  
Or to any of her friends?

PETER: No, but once or twice she spoke of them  
And about their lack of intellectual interests.

EDWARD: And what happened after that?

PETER: Oh, nothing happened.  
But I thought that she really cared about me.  
And I was so happy when we were together—  
So . . . contented, so . . . at peace: I can't express it;  
I had never imagined such quiet happiness.  
I had only experienced excitement, delirium,  
Desire for possession. It was not like that at all.  
It was something very strange. There was such . . .  
tranquillity . . .

EDWARD: And what interrupted this interesting affair?

[*Enter ALEX in shirtsleeves and an apron.*]

ALEX: Edward, I can't find any curry powder.

EDWARD: There isn't any curry powder. Lavinia hates curry.

ALEX: There goes another surprise, then. I must think.

I didn't expect to find any mangoes,

But I *did* count upon curry powder.

[*Exit.*]

PETER: That is exactly what I want to know.

She has simply faded—into some other picture—

Like a film effect. She doesn't want to see me;

Makes excuses, not very plausible,

And when I do see her, she seems preoccupied

With some secret excitement which I cannot share.

EDWARD: Do you think she has simply lost interest in you?

PETER: You put it just wrong. I think of it differently.

It is not her interest in *me* that I miss—

But those moments in which we seemed to share some percep-  
tion,

Some feeling, some indefinable experience

In which we were both unaware of ourselves.

In your terms, perhaps, she's lost interest in me.

EDWARD: That is all very normal. If you could only know  
How lucky you are. In a little while

This might have become an ordinary affair  
 Like any other. As the fever cooled  
 You would have found that she was another woman  
 And that you were another man. I congratulate you  
 On a timely escape.

PETER: I should prefer to be spared  
 Your congratulations. I had to talk to someone.  
 And I have been telling you of something real—  
 My first experience of reality  
 And perhaps it is the last. And you don't understand.

EDWARD: My dear Peter, I have only been telling you  
 What would have happened to you with Celia  
 In another six months' time. There it is.  
 You can take it or leave it.

PETER: But what am I to do?

EDWARD: Nothing. Wait. Go back to California.

PETER: But I must see Celia.

EDWARD: Will it be the same Celia?  
 Better be content with the Celia you remember.  
 Remember! I say it's already a memory.

PETER: But I must see Celia at least to make her tell me  
 What has happened, in her terms. Until I know that  
 I shan't know the truth about even the memory.  
 Did we really share these interests? Did we really feel the same  
 When we heard certain music? Or looked at certain pictures?  
 There was something real. But what is the reality . . .

*[The telephone rings.]*

EDWARD: Excuse me a moment.

*[Into telephone]* Hello! . . . I can't talk now . . .  
 Yes, there is . . . Well then, I'll ring you  
 As soon as I can.

I'm sorry. You were saying?

PETER: I was saying, what is the reality  
 Of experience between two unreal people?  
 If I can only hold to the memory  
 I can bear any future. But I must find out  
 The truth about the past, for the sake of the memory.

EDWARD: There's no memory you can wrap in camphor

But the moths will get in. So you want to see Celia.  
I don't know why I should be taking all this trouble  
To protect you from the fool you are.  
What do you want me to do?

PETER: See Celia for me.  
You know her in a different way from me  
And you are so much older.

EDWARD: So much older?

PETER: Yes, I'm sure that she would listen to you  
As someone disinterested.

EDWARD: Well, I will see Celia.

PETER: Thank you, Edward. It's very good of you.

[*Enter ALEX, with his jacket on.*]

ALEX: Oh, Edward! I've prepared you such a treat!  
I really think that of all my triumphs  
This is the greatest. To make something out of nothing!  
Never, even when travelling in Albania,  
Have I made such a supper out of so few materials  
As I found in your refrigerator. But of course  
I was lucky to find half-a-dozen eggs.

EDWARD: What! You used all those eggs! Lavinia's aunt  
Has just sent them from the country.

ALEX: Ah, so the aunt  
Really exists. A substantial proof.

EDWARD: No, no . . . I mean, this is another aunt.

ALEX: I understand. The real aunt. But you'll be grateful.  
There are very few peasants in Montenegro  
Who can have the dish that you'll be eating, nowadays.

EDWARD: But what about my breakfast?

ALEX: Don't worry about breakfast.

All you should want is a cup of black coffee  
And a little dry toast. I've left it simmering.  
Don't leave it longer than another ten minutes.  
Now I'll be going, and I'll take Peter with me.

PETER: Edward, I've taken too much of your time,  
And you want to be alone. Give my love to Lavinia  
When she comes back . . . but, if you don't mind,  
I'd rather you didn't tell *her* what I've told you.

EDWARD: I shall not say anything about it to Lavinia.

PETER: Thank you, Edward. Good night.

EDWARD: Good night, Peter,  
And good night, Alex. Oh, and if you don't mind,  
Please *shut the door after you*, so it latches.

ALEX: Remember, Edward, not more than ten minutes,  
Twenty minutes, and my work will be ruined.

[*Exeunt ALEX and PETER.*]

[EDWARD *picks up the telephone, and dials a number.*]

EDWARD: Is Miss Celia Coplestone in? . . . How long ago? . . .  
No, it doesn't matter.

CURTAIN

## SCENE 2

*The same room a quarter of an hour later. EDWARD is alone, playing Patience. The doorbell rings, and he answers it.*

CELIA'S VOICE: Are you alone?

[EDWARD *returns with CELIA.*]

EDWARD: Celial Why have you come back?

I said I would telephone as soon as I could:

And I tried to get you a short while ago.

CELIA: If there had happened to be anyone with you

I was going to say I'd come back for my umbrella. . . .

I must say you don't seem very pleased to see me.

Edward, I understand what has happened

But I could not understand your manner on the telephone.

It did not seem like you. So I felt I must see you.

Tell me it's all right, and then I'll go.

EDWARD: But how can you say you understand what has happened?

I don't know what has happened, or what is going to happen;

And to try to understand it, I want to be alone.

CELIA: I should have thought it was perfectly simple.

Lavinia has left you.

EDWARD: Yes, that *was* the situation.

I suppose it was pretty obvious to everyone.

CELIA: It was obvious that the aunt was a pure invention  
 On the spur of the moment, and not a very good one.  
 You should have been prepared with something better, for Julia;  
 But it doesn't really matter. They will know soon enough.  
 Doesn't that settle all our difficulties?

EDWARD: It has only brought to light the real difficulties.

CELIA: But surely, these are only temporary.  
 You know I accepted the situation  
 Because a divorce would ruin your career;  
 And we thought that Lavinia would never want to leave you.  
 Surely you don't hold to that silly convention  
 That the husband must always be the one to be divorced?  
 And if she chooses to give *you* the grounds . . .

EDWARD: I see. But it is not like that at all.  
 Lavinia is coming back.

CELIA: Lavinia coming back!  
 Do you mean to say that she's laid a trap for us?

EDWARD: No. If there is a trap, we are all in the trap,  
 We have set it for ourselves. But I do not know  
 What kind of a trap it is.

CELIA: Then what has happened?  
*[The telephone rings.]*

EDWARD: Damn the telephone. I suppose I must answer it.  
 Hello . . . oh, hello! . . . No. I mean yes, Alex;  
 Yes, of course . . . it was marvellous.  
 I've never tasted anything like it . . .  
 Yes, that's very interesting. But I just wondered  
 Whether it mightn't be rather indigestible? . . .  
 Oh, no, Alex, don't bring me any cheese;  
 I've got some cheese . . . No, not Norwegian;  
 But I don't really want cheese . . . Slipper what? . . .  
 Oh, from Jugoslavia . . . prunes and alcohol?  
 No, really, Alex, I don't want anything.  
 I'm very tired. Thanks awfully, Alex.  
 Good night.

CELIA: What on earth was that about?

EDWARD: That was Alex.

CELIA: I know it was Alex.



But what was he talking of?

EDWARD: I had quite forgotten.

He made his way in, a little while ago,  
And insisted on cooking me something for supper;  
And he said I must eat it within ten minutes.

I suppose it's still cooking.

CELIA: You suppose it's still cooking!

I thought I noticed a peculiar smell:  
Of course it's still cooking—or doing *something*.  
I must go and investigate.

[Starts to leave the room]

EDWARD: For heaven's sake, don't bother!

[Exit CELIA.]

Suppose someone came and found you in the kitchen?

[EDWARD goes over to the table and inspects his game of Patience.

He moves a card. The doorbell rings repeatedly. Re-enter  
CELIA, in an apron.]

CELIA: You'd better answer the door, Edward.

It's the best thing to do. Don't lose your head.  
You see, I really did leave my umbrella;  
And I'll say I found you here starving and helpless  
And had to do something. Anyway, I'm *staying*  
And I'm not going to hide.

[Returns to kitchen. The bell rings again.]

EDWARD [Goes to front door, and is heard to say:] Julia!

What have you come back for?

[Enter JULIA.]

JULIA: I've had an inspiration!

[Enter CELIA with saucepan.]

CELIA: Edward, it's ruined!

EDWARD: What a good thing.

CELIA: But it's ruined the saucepan too.

EDWARD: And half a dozen eggs.

I wanted one for breakfast. A boiled egg.

It's the only thing I know how to cook.

JULIA: Celia! I see you've had the same inspiration

That I had. Edward must be fed.

He's under such a strain. We must keep his strength up.



Edward! Don't you realize how lucky you are  
To have *two* Good Samaritans? I never heard of that before.

EDWARD: The man who fell among thieves was luckier than I:  
He was left at an inn.

JULIA: Edward, how ungratefull  
What's in that saucepan?

CELIA: Nobody knows.

EDWARD: It's something that Alex came and prepared for me.  
He *would* do it. Three Good Samaritans.  
I forgot all about it.

JULIA: But you mustn't touch it.

EDWARD: Of course I shan't touch it.

JULIA: My dear, I should have warned you:  
Anything that Alex makes is absolutely deadly.  
I could tell such tales of his poisoning people.  
Now, my dear, you give me that apron  
And we'll see what I can do. You stay and talk to Edward.  
[Exit JULIA.]

CELIA: But what has happened, Edward? What has happened?

EDWARD: Lavinia is coming back, I think.

CELIA: You think! don't you know?

EDWARD: No, but I believe it. That man who was here—

CELIA: Yes, who was that man? I was rather afraid of him;  
He has some sort of power.

EDWARD: I don't know who he is.  
But I had some talk with him, when the rest of you had left,  
And he said he would bring Lavinia back, tomorrow.

CELIA: But why should that man want to bring her back—  
Unless he is the Devil! I could believe he was.

EDWARD: Because I asked him to.

CELIA: Because you asked him to!  
Then he *must* be the Devil! He must have bewitched you.  
How did he persuade you to want her back?

[A *popping noise* is heard from the kitchen]

EDWARD: What the devil's that?

[Re-enter JULIA, in apron, with a tray and three glasses.]

JULIA: I've had an inspiration!  
There's nothing in the place fit to eat:

I've looked high and low. But I found some champagne—  
Only a half bottle, to be sure,  
And of course it isn't chilled. But it's so refreshing;  
And I thought, we are all in need of a stimulant  
After this disaster. Now I'll propose a health.

Can you guess whose health I'm going to propose?

EDWARD: No, I can't. But I won't drink to Alex's.

JULIA: Oh, it isn't Alex's. Come, I give you

Lavinia's aunt! You might have guessed it.

EDWARD AND CELIA: Lavinia's aunt.

JULIA: Now, the next question

Is, what's to be done. That's very simple.

It's too late, or too early, to go to a restaurant.

You must both come home with me.

EDWARD: No, I'm sorry, Julia.

I'm too tired to go out, and I'm not at all hungry.

I shall have a few biscuits.

JULIA: But you, Celia?

You must come and have a light supper with me—

Something very light.

CELIA: Thank you, Julia.

I think I will, if I may follow you

In about ten minutes? Before I go, there's something

I want to say to Edward.

JULIA: About Lavinia?

Well, come on quickly. And take a taxi.

You know, you're looking absolutely famished.

Good night, Edward.

[Exit JULIA.]

CELIA: Well, how did he persuade you?

EDWARD: How did he persuade me? Did he persuade me?

I have a very clear impression

That he tried to persuade me it was all for the best

That Lavinia had gone; that I ought to be thankful.

And yet, the effect of all his argument

Was to make me see that I wanted her back.

CELIA: That's the Devil's method! So you want Lavinia back!

Lavinia! So the one thing you care about

Is to avoid a break—anything unpleasant!

No, it can't be that. I won't think it's that.  
I think it is just a moment of surrender  
To fatigue. And panic. You can't face the trouble.

EDWARD: No, it is not that. It is not only that.

CELIA: It cannot be simply a question of vanity:  
That you think the world will laugh at you  
Because your wife has left you for another man?  
I shall soon put that right, Edward,  
When you are free.

EDWARD: No, it is not that.  
And all these reasons were suggested to me  
By the man I call Riley—though his name is not Riley;  
It was just a name in a song he sang . . .

CELIA: He sang you a song about a man named Riley!  
Really, Edward, I think you are mad—  
I mean, you're on the edge of a nervous breakdown.  
Edward, if I go away now  
Will you promise me to see a very great doctor  
Whom I have heard of—and his name is Reilly!

EDWARD: It would need someone greater than the greatest doctor  
To cure *this* illness.

CELIA: Edward, if I go now,  
Will you assure me that everything is right,  
That you do not mean to have Lavinia back  
And that you do mean to gain your freedom,  
And that everything is all right between us?  
That's all that matters. Truly, Edward,  
If that is right, everything else will be,  
I promise you.

EDWARD: No, Celia.  
It has been very wonderful, and I'm very grateful,  
And I think you are a very rare person.  
But it was too late. And I should have known  
That it wasn't fair to you.

CELIA: It wasn't fair to *me*!  
You can stand there and talk about being fair to *me*!

EDWARD: But for Lavinia leaving, this would never have arisen.  
What future had you ever thought there could be?

CELIA: What had I thought that the future could be?  
I abandoned the future before we began,  
And after that I lived in a present  
Where time was meaningless, a private world of *ours*,  
Where the word 'happiness' had a different meaning  
Or so it seemed.

EDWARD: I have heard of that experience.

CELIA: A dream. I was happy in it till today,  
And then, when Julia asked about Lavinia  
And it came to me that Lavinia had left you  
And that you would be free—then I suddenly discovered  
That the dream was not enough; that I wanted something more  
And I waited, and wanted to run to tell you.  
Perhaps the dream was better. It seemed the real reality,  
And if this is reality, it is very like a dream.  
Perhaps it was I who betrayed my own dream  
All the while; and to find I wanted  
This world as well as that . . . well, it's humiliating.

EDWARD: There is no reason why you should feel humiliated . . .

CELIA: Oh, don't think that *you* can humiliate me!  
Humiliation—it's something I've done to myself.  
I am not sure even that you seem real enough  
To humiliate me. I suppose that most women  
Would feel degraded to find that a man  
With whom they thought they had shared something wonderful  
Had taken them only as a passing diversion.  
Oh, I dare say that you deceived yourself;  
But that's what it was, no doubt.

EDWARD: I *didn't* take you as a passing diversion!  
If you want to speak of passing diversions  
How did you take Peter?

CELIA: Peter? Peter who?

EDWARD: Peter Quilpe, who was here this evening. *He* was in a dream  
And now he is simply unhappy and bewildered.

CELIA: I simply don't know what you are talking about.  
Edward, this is really too crude a subterfuge  
To justify yourself. There was never anything  
Between me and Peter.

CELIA: But this is ridiculous! I never gave Peter  
Any reason to suppose I cared for him.  
I thought he had talent; I saw that he was lonely;  
I thought that I could help him. I took him to concerts.  
But then, as he came to make more acquaintances,  
I found him less interesting, and rather conceited.  
But why should we talk about Peter? All that matters  
Is, that you think you want Lavinia.  
And if that is the sort of person you are—  
Well, you had better have her.

CELIA: I don't think I care for advice from you, Edward.  
You are not entitled to take any interest  
Now, in *my* future. I only hope you're competent  
To manage your own. But if you are not in love  
And never have been in love with Lavinia,  
What is it that you want?

EDWARD: I am not sure.  
The one thing of which I am relatively certain  
Is, that only since this morning  
I have met myself as a middle-aged man  
Beginning to know what it is to feel old.  
That is the worst moment, when you feel that you have lost  
The desire for all that was most desirable,  
And before you are contented with what you can desire;  
Before you know what is left to be desired;  
And you go on wishing that you could desire  
What desire has left behind. But you cannot understand.  
How could *you* understand what it is to feel old?

CELIA: But I want to understand you. I could understand.

And, Edward, please believe that whatever happens

I shall not loathe you. I shall only feel sorry for you.

It's only myself I am in danger of hating.

But what will your life be? I cannot bear to think of it.

Oh, Edward! Can you be happy with Lavinia?

EDWARD: No—not happy: or, if there is any happiness,

Only the happiness of knowing

That the misery does not feed on the ruin of loveliness,

That the tedium is not the residue of ecstasy.

I see that my life was determined long ago

And that the struggle to escape from it

Is only a make-believe, a pretence

That what is, is not, or could be changed.

The self that can say 'I want this—or want that'—

The self that wills—he is a feeble creature;

He has to come to terms in the end

With the obstinate, the tougher self; who does not speak,

Who never talks, who cannot argue;

And who in some men may be the *guardian*—

But in men like me, the dull, the implacable,

The indomitable spirit of mediocrity.

The willing self can contrive the disaster

Of this unwilling partnership—but can only flourish

In submission to the rule of the stronger partner.

CELIA: I am not sure, Edward, that I understand you;

And yet I understand as I never did before.

I think—I believe—you are being yourself

As you never were before, with me.

Twice you have changed since I have been looking at you.

I looked at your face: and I thought that I knew

And loved every contour; and as I looked

It withered, as if I had unwrapped a mummy.

I listened to your voice, that had always thrilled me,

And it became another voice—no, not a voice:

What I heard was only the noise of an insect,

Dry, endless, meaningless, inhuman—

You might have made it by scraping your legs together—

Or however grasshoppers do it. I looked,  
And listened for your heart, your blood;  
And saw only a beetle the size of a man  
With nothing more inside it than what comes out  
When you tread on a beetle.

EDWARD: Perhaps that is what I am.  
Tread on me, if you like.

CELIA: No, I won't tread on you.  
That is not what you are. It is only what was left  
Of what I had thought you were. I see another person,  
I see you as a person whom I never saw before.  
The man I saw before, he was only a projection—  
I see that now—of something that I wanted—  
No, not *wanted*—something I aspired to—  
Something that I desperately wanted to exist.  
It must happen somewhere—but what, and where is it?  
And I ask you to forgive me.

EDWARD: You . . . ask me to forgive you!

CELIA: Yes, for two things. First . . .  
[*The telephone rings.*]

EDWARD: Damn the telephone.  
I suppose I had better answer it.

CELIA: Yes, better answer it.

EDWARD: Hello! . . . Oh, Julia: what is it now?  
Your spectacles again . . . where did you leave them?  
Or have we . . . have I got to hunt all over?  
Have you looked in your bag? . . . Well, don't snap my head  
off . . .  
You're sure, in the kitchen? Beside the champagne bottle?  
You're quite sure? . . . Very well, hold on if you like;  
We . . . I'll look for them.

CELIA: Yes, you look for them.  
I shall never go into your kitchen again.

[*Exit EDWARD. He returns with the spectacles and a bottle.*]

EDWARD: She was right for once.

CELIA: She is always right.

But why bring an empty champagne bottle?

EDWARD: It isn't empty. It may be a little flat—



But why did she say that it was a half bottle?

It's one of my best: and I have no half bottles.

Well, I hoped that you would drink a final glass with me.

CELIA: What should we drink to?

EDWARD:

Whom shall we drink to?

CELIA: To the Guardians.

EDWARD:

To the Guardians?

CELIA: To the Guardians. It was you who spoke of guardians.

[*They drink.*]

It may be that even Julia is a guardian.

Perhaps she is *my* guardian. Give me the spectacles.

Good night, Edward.

EDWARD:

Good night . . . Celia.

[*Exit CELIA.*]

Oh!

[*He snatches up the receiver.*]

Hello, Julia! are you there? . . .

Well, I'm awfully sorry to have kept you waiting;

But we . . . I had to hunt for them . . . No, I found them.

. . . Yes, she's bringing them now . . . Good night.

CURTAIN

### SCENE 3

*The same room: late afternoon of the next day. EDWARD alone.*

*He goes to the door.*

EDWARD: Oh . . . good evening.

[*Enter the UNIDENTIFIED GUEST.*]

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST:

Good evening, Mr. Chamberlayne.

EDWARD: Well. May I offer you some gin and water?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No, thank you. This is a different occasion.

EDWARD: I take it that as you have come alone

You have been unsuccessful.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST:

Not at all.

I have come to remind you—you have made a decision.

EDWARD: Are you thinking that I may have changed my mind?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No. You will not be ready to change your mind



Until you recover from having made a decision.

No. I have come to tell you that you will change your mind,

But that it will not matter. It will be too late.

EDWARD: I have half a mind to change my mind now

To show you that I am free to change it.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: You will change your mind, but you are not free.

Your moment of freedom was yesterday.

You made a decision. You set in motion

Forces in your life and in the lives of others

Which cannot be reversed. That is one consideration.

And another is this: it is a serious matter

To bring someone back from the dead.

EDWARD: From the dead?

That figure of speech is somewhat . . . dramatic,

As it was only yesterday that my wife left me.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Ah, but we die to each other daily.

What we know of other people

Is only our memory of the moments

During which we knew them. And they have changed since then.

To pretend that they and we are the same

Is a useful and convenient social convention

Which must sometimes be broken. We must also remember

That at every meeting we are meeting a stranger.

EDWARD: So you want me to greet my wife as a stranger?

That will not be easy.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: It is very difficult.

But it is perhaps still more difficult

To keep up the pretence that you are not strangers.

The affectionate ghosts: the grandmother,

The lively bachelor uncle at the Christmas party,

The beloved nursemaid—those who enfolded

Your childhood years in comfort, mirth, security—

If they returned, would it not be embarrassing?

What would you say to them, or they to you

After the first ten minutes? You would find it difficult

To treat them as strangers, but still more difficult

To pretend that you were not strange to each other.

EDWARD: You can hardly expect me to obliterate  
The last five years.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: I ask you to forget nothing.  
To try to forget is to try to conceal.

EDWARD: There are certainly things I should like to forget.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: And persons also. But you must not forget  
them.

You must face them all, but meet them as strangers.

EDWARD: Then I myself must also be a stranger.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: And to yourself as well. But remember,  
When you see your wife, you must ask no questions  
And give no explanations. I have said the same to her.  
Don't strangle each other with knotted memories.  
Now I shall go.

EDWARD: Stop! Will you come back with her?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: No, I shall not come with her.

EDWARD: I don't know why,  
But I think I should like you to bring her yourself.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Yes, I know you would. And for definite reasons

Which I am not prepared to explain to you  
I must ask you not to speak of me to her;  
And she will not mention me to you.

EDWARD: I promise.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: And now you must await your visitors.

EDWARD: Visitors? What visitors?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Whoever comes. The strangers.  
As for myself, I shall take the precaution  
Of leaving by the service staircase.

EDWARD: May I ask one question?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: You may ask it.

EDWARD: Who are you?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: I also am a stranger.

[Exit. A pause. EDWARD moves about restlessly. The bell rings,  
and he goes to the front door.]

EDWARD: Celia!

CELIA: Has Lavinia arrived?

EDWARD: Celia! Why have you come?

I expect Lavinia at any moment.

You must not be here. Why have you come here?

CELIA: Because Lavinia asked me.

EDWARD: Because Lavinia asked you!

CELIA: Well, not directly. Julia had a telegram

Asking her to come, and to bring me with her.

Julia was delayed, and sent me on ahead.

EDWARD: It seems very odd. And not like Lavinia.

I suppose there is nothing to do but wait.

Won't you sit down?

CELIA: Thank you.

[Pause]

EDWARD: Oh, my God, what shall we talk about?

We can't sit here in silence.

CELIA: Oh, I could.

Just looking at you. Edward, forgive my laughing.

You look like a little boy who's been sent for

To the headmaster's study; and is not quite sure

What he's been found out in. I never saw you so before.

This is really a ludicrous situation.

EDWARD: I'm afraid I can't see the humorous side of it.

CELIA: I'm not really laughing at you, Edward.

I couldn't have laughed at anything, yesterday;

But I've learnt a lot in twenty-four hours.

It wasn't a very pleasant experience.

Oh, I'm glad I came!

I can see you at last as a human being.

Can't you see me that way too, and laugh about it?

EDWARD: I wish I could. I wish I understood anything.

I'm completely in the dark.

CELIA: But it's all so simple.

Can't you see that . . .

[The doorbell rings.]

EDWARD: There's Lavinia.

[Goes to front door.]

Peter!

[Enter PETER.]

PETER: Where's Lavinia?

EDWARD: Don't tell me that Lavinia  
Sent you a telegram . . .

PETER: No, not to me,  
But to Alex. She told him to come here  
And to bring me with him. He'll be here in a minute.  
Celia! Have you heard from Lavinia too?  
Or am I interrupting?

CELIA: I've just explained to Edward—  
I only got here this moment myself—  
That she telegraphed to Julia to come and bring me with her.

EDWARD: I wonder whom else Lavinia has invited.

PETER: Why, I got the impression that Lavinia intended  
To have yesterday's cocktail party today.  
So I don't suppose her aunt can have died.

EDWARD: What aunt?

PETER: The aunt you told us about.  
But Edward—you remember our conversation yesterday?

EDWARD: Of course.

PETER: I hope you've done nothing about it.

EDWARD: No, I've done nothing.

PETER: I'm so glad.  
Because I've changed my mind. I mean, I've decided  
That it's all no use. I'm going to California.

CELIA: You're going to California!

PETER: Yes, I have a new job.

EDWARD: And how did that happen, overnight?

PETER: Why, it's a man Alex put me in touch with  
And we settled everything this morning.  
Alex is a wonderful person to know,  
Because, you see, he knows everybody, everywhere.  
So what I've really come for is to say good-bye.

CELIA: Well, Peter, I'm awfully glad, for your sake,  
Though of course we . . . I shall miss you;  
You know how I depended on you for concerts,  
And picture exhibitions—more than you realised.  
It *was* fun, wasn't it! But now you'll have a chance,  
I hope, to realise your ambitions.  
I shall miss you.

PETER: It's nice of you to say so;

But you'll find someone better, to go about with.

CELIA: I don't think that I shall be going to concerts.

I am going away too.

[LAVINIA *lets herself in with a latch-key.*]

PETER: You're going abroad?

CELIA: I don't know. Perhaps.

EDWARD: You're both going away!

[*Enter LAVINIA.*]

LAVINIA: Who's going away? Well, Celia. Well, Peter.

I didn't expect to find either of you here.

PETER *and* CELIA: But the telegram!

LAVINIA: What telegram?

CELIA: The one you sent to Julia.

PETER: And the one you sent to Alex.

LAVINIA: I don't know what you mean.

Edward, have you been sending telegrams?

EDWARD: Of course I haven't sent any telegrams.

LAVINIA: This is some of Julia's mischief.

And is *she* coming?

PETER: Yes, and Alex.

LAVINIA: Then I shall ask *them* for an explanation.

Meanwhile, I suppose we might as well sit down.

What shall we talk about?

EDWARD: Peter's going to America.

PETER: Yes, and I would have rung you up tomorrow

And come in to say good-bye before I left.

LAVINIA: And Celia's going too? Was that what I heard?

I congratulate you both. To Hollywood, of course?

How exciting for you, Celia! Now you'll have a chance

At last, to realise your ambitions.

You're going together?

PETER: We're not going together.

Celia told us she was going away,

But I don't know where.

LAVINIA: You don't know where?

And do you know where you are going, yourself?

PETER: Yes, of course, I'm going to California.

LAVINIA: Well, Celia, why don't *you* go to California?

Everyone says it's a wonderful climate:

The people who go there never want to leave it.

CELIA: Lavinia, I think I understand about Peter . . .

LAVINIA: I have no doubt you do.

CELIA: And why he is going . . .

LAVINIA: I don't doubt that either.

CELIA: And I believe he is right to go.

LAVINIA: Oh, so you advised him?

PETER: She knew nothing about it.

CELIA: But now that I may be going away—somewhere—

I should like to say good-bye—as friends.

LAVINIA: Why, Celia, but haven't we always been friends?

I thought you were one of my dearest friends—

At least, in so far as a girl *can* be a friend

Of a woman so much older than herself.

CELIA: Lavinia,

Don't put me off. I may not see you again.

What I want to say is this: I should like you to remember me

As someone who wants you and Edward to be happy.

LAVINIA: You are very kind, but very mysterious.

I'm sure that we shall manage somehow, thank you,

As we have in the past.

CELIA: Oh, not as in the past!

[*The doorbell rings, and EDWARD goes to answer it.*]

Oh, I'm afraid that all this sounds rather silly!

But . . .

[*EDWARD re-enters with JULIA.*]

JULIA: There you are, Lavinia! I'm sorry to be late,

But your telegram was a bit unexpected.

I dropped everything to come. And how is the dear aunt?

LAVINIA: So far as I know, she is very well, thank you.

JULIA: She must have made a marvellous recovery.

I said so to myself, when I got your telegram.

LAVINIA: But where, may I ask, was this telegram sent from?

JULIA: Why, from Essex, of course.

LAVINIA: And why from Essex?

JULIA: Because you've been in Essex.

LAVINIA: Because I've been in Essex!

JULIA: Lavinia! Don't say you've had a lapse of memory!

Then that accounts for the aunt—and the telegram.

LAVINIA: Well, perhaps I was in Essex. I really don't know.

JULIA: You don't know where you were? Lavinia!

Don't tell me you were abducted! Tell us;

I'm thrilled . . .

[*The doorbell rings. EDWARD goes to answer it. Enter ALEX.*]

ALEX: Has Lavinia arrived?

EDWARD: Yes.

ALEX: Welcome back, Lavinia!

When I got your telegram . . .

LAVINIA: Where from?

ALEX: Dedham.

LAVINIA: Dedham is in Essex. So it was from Dedham.

Edward, have *you* any friends in Dedham?

EDWARD: No, *I* have no connections in Dedham.

JULIA: Well, it's all delightfully mysterious.

ALEX: But what is the mystery?

JULIA: Alex, *don't* be inquisitive.

Lavinia has had a lapse of memory,

And so, of course, she sent us telegrams:

And now I don't believe she really wants us.

I can see that she is quite worn out

After her anxiety about her aunt—

Who you'll be glad to hear, has quite recovered, Alex—

And after that long journey on the old Great Eastern,

Waiting at junctions. And I suppose she's famished.

ALEX: Ah, in that case I know what I'll do . . .

JULIA: No, Alex.

We must leave them alone, and let Lavinia rest.

Now we'll all go back to *my* house. Peter, call a taxi.

[*Exit PETER.*]

We'll have a cocktail party at *my* house today.

CELIA: Well, I'll go now. Good-bye, Lavinia.

Good-bye, Edward.

EDWARD: Good-bye, Celia.

CELIA: Good-bye, Lavinia.



LAVINIA: Good-bye, Celia. [Exit CELIA.]

JULIA: And now, Alex, you and I should be going.

EDWARD: Are you sure you haven't left anything, Julia?

JULIA: Left anything? Oh, you mean my spectacles.

No, they're here. Besides, they're no use to me.

I'm not coming back again *this* evening.

LAVINIA: Stop! I want you to explain the telegram.

JULIA: Explain the telegram? What do you think, Alex?

ALEX: No, Julia, *we* can't explain the telegram.

LAVINIA: I am sure that you could explain the telegram.

I don't know why. But it seems to me that yesterday

I started some machine, that goes on working,

And I cannot stop it; no, it's not like a machine—

Or if it's a machine, someone else is running it.

But who? Somebody is always interfering . . .

I don't feel free . . . and yet I started it . . .

JULIA: Alex, do you think we could explain *anything*?

ALEX: I think not, Julia. She must find out for herself:

That's the only way.

JULIA: How right you are!

Well, my dears, I shall see you very soon.

EDWARD: *When* shall we see you?

JULIA: Did I say you'd see me?

Good-bye. I believe . . . I haven't left anything.

[Enter PETER.]

PETER: I've got a taxi, Julia.

JULIA: Splendid! Good-bye!

[Exeunt JULIA, ALEX and PETER.]

LAVINIA: I must say, you don't seem very pleased to see me.

EDWARD: I can't say that I've had much opportunity

To seem anything. But of course I'm glad to see you.

LAVINIA: Yes, that was a silly thing to say.

Like a schoolgirl. Like Celia. I don't know why I said it.

Well, here I am.

EDWARD: I am to ask no questions.

LAVINIA: And I know I am to give no explanations.

EDWARD: And I am to give no explanations.

LAVINIA: And I am to ask no questions. And yet . . . why not?



EDWARD: I don't know why not. So what are we to talk about?

LAVINIA: There is one thing I ought to know, because of other people

And what to do about them. It's about that party.

I suppose you won't believe I forgot all about it!

I let you down badly. What did you do about it?

I only remembered after I had left.

EDWARD: I telephoned to everyone I knew was coming

But I couldn't get everyone. And so a few came.

LAVINIA: Who came?

EDWARD: Just those who were here this evening . . .

LAVINIA: That's odd.

EDWARD: . . . and one other. I don't know who he was,  
But *you* ought to know.

LAVINIA: Yes, I think I know.

But I'm puzzled by Julia. That woman is the devil.

She knows by instinct when something's going to happen.

Trust her not to miss any awkward situation!

And what did you tell them!

EDWARD: I invented an aunt

Who was ill in the country, and had sent for you.

LAVINIA: Really, Edward! You had better have told the truth:

Nothing less than the truth could deceive Julia.

But how did the aunt come to live in Essex?

EDWARD: Julia compelled me to make her live somewhere.

LAVINIA: I see. So Julia made her live in Essex;

And made the telegrams come from Essex.

Well, I shall have to tell Julia the truth.

I shall always tell the truth now.

We have wasted such a lot of time in lying.

EDWARD: I don't quite know what you mean.

LAVINIA: Oh, Edward!

The point is, that since I've been away

I see that I've taken you much too seriously.

And now I can see how absurd you are.

EDWARD: That is a very serious conclusion

To have arrived at in . . . how many? . . . thirty-two hours.

LAVINIA: Yes, a very important discovery,

Finding that you've spent five years of your life  
 With a man who has no sense of humour;  
 And that the effect upon me was  
 That I lost all sense of humour myself.  
 That's what came of always giving in to *you*.

EDWARD: I was unaware that you'd always given in to me.  
 It struck me very differently. As we're on the subject,  
 I thought that it was I who had given in to *you*.

LAVINIA: I know what you mean by giving in to *me*:  
 You mean, leaving all the practical decisions  
 That you should have made yourself. I remember—  
 Oh, I ought to have realised what was coming—  
 When we were planning our honeymoon,  
 I couldn't make you say where you wanted to go . . .

EDWARD: But I wanted *you* to make that decision.

LAVINIA: But how could I tell where I wanted to go  
 Unless you suggested some other place first?  
 And I remember that finally in desperation  
 I said: 'I suppose you'd as soon go to Peacehaven'—  
 And you said 'I don't mind.'

EDWARD: Of course I didn't mind.  
 I meant it as a compliment.

LAVINIA: You meant it as a compliment!

EDWARD: It's just that way of taking things that makes you so exasperating.

LAVINIA: You were so considerate, people said;  
 And you thought you were unselfish. It was only passivity;  
 You only wanted to be bolstered, encouraged . . .

EDWARD: Encouraged? To what?

LAVINIA: To think well of yourself.  
 You know it was I who made you work at the Bar . . .

EDWARD: You nagged me because I didn't get enough work  
 And said that I ought to meet more people:  
 But when the briefs began to come in—  
 And they didn't come through any of *your* friends—  
 You suddenly found it inconvenient  
 That I should be always too busy or too tired  
 To be of use to you socially . . .

LAVINIA: I *never* complained.

EDWARD: No; and it was perfectly infuriating,

The way you *didn't* complain . . .

LAVINIA: It was you who complained

Of seeing nobody but solicitors and clients . . .

EDWARD: And you were never very sympathetic.

LAVINIA: Well, but I tried to do something about it.

That was why I took so much trouble

To have those Thursdays, to give you the chance

Of talking to intellectual people . . .

EDWARD: You would have given me about as much opportunity

If you had hired me as your butler:

Some of your guests may have thought I *was* the butler.

LAVINIA: And on several occasions, when somebody was coming

Whom I particularly wanted you to meet,

You didn't arrive until just as they were leaving.

EDWARD: Well, at least, *they* can't have thought I was the butler.

LAVINIA: Everything I tried only made matters worse,

And the moment you were offered something that you wanted

You wanted something else. I shall treat you very differently

In future.

EDWARD: Thank you for the warning. But tell me,

Since this is how you see me, why did you come back?

LAVINIA: Frankly, I don't know. I was warned of the danger,

Yet something, or somebody, compelled me to come.

And why did you want me?

EDWARD: I don't know either.

You say you were trying to 'encourage' me:

Then why did you always make me feel insignificant?

I may not have known what life I wanted,

But it wasn't the life you chose for me.

You wanted your husband to be successful,

You wanted me to supply a public background

For your kind of public life. You wished to be a hostess

For whom my career would be a support.

Well, I tried to be accommodating. But in future,

I shall behave, I assure you, very differently.

LAVINIA: Bravo! This is surprising.

Now who could have taught you to answer back like that?

EDWARD: I have had quite enough humiliation

Lately, to bring me to the point

At which humiliation ceases to humiliate.

You get to the point at which you cease to feel

And then you speak your mind.

LAVINIA: That will be a novelty

To find that you have a mind to speak.

Anyway, I'm prepared to take you as you are.

EDWARD: You mean, you are prepared to take me

As I was, or as you think I am.

But what do you think I am?

LAVINIA: Oh, what you always were.

As for me, I'm rather a different person

Whom you must get to know.

EDWARD: This is very interesting:

But you seem to assume that you've done all the changing--

Though I haven't yet found it a change for the better.

But doesn't it occur to you that possibly

I may have changed too?

LAVINIA: Oh, Edward, when you were a little boy,

I'm sure you were always getting yourself measured

To prove how you had grown since the last holidays.

You were always intensely concerned with yourself;

And if other people grow, well, you want to grow too.

In what way have you changed?

EDWARD: The change that comes

From seeing oneself through the eyes of other people.

LAVINIA: That must have been very shattering for you.

But never mind, you'll soon get over it

And find yourself another little part to play,

With another face, to take people in.

EDWARD: One of the most infuriating things about you

Has always been your perfect assurance

That you understood me better than I understood myself.

LAVINIA: And the most infuriating thing about you

Has always been your placid assumption

That I wasn't worth the trouble of understanding.

EDWARD: So here we are again. Back in the trap,  
With only one difference, perhaps—we can fight each other,  
Instead of each taking his corner of the cage.  
Well, it's a better way of passing the evening  
Than listening to the gramophone.

LAVINIA: We have very good records;  
But I always suspected that you really hated music  
And that the gramophone was only your escape  
From talking to me when we had to be alone.

EDWARD: I've often wondered why you married me.

LAVINIA: Well, you really were rather attractive, you know;  
And you kept on *saying* that you were in love with me—  
I believe you were trying to persuade yourself you were.  
I seemed always on the verge of some wonderful experience  
And then it never happened. I wonder now  
How you could have thought you were in love with me.

EDWARD: Everybody told me that I was;  
And they told me how well suited we were.

LAVINIA: It's a pity you had no opinion of your own.  
Oh, Edward, I should like to be good to you—  
Or if that's impossible, at least be horrid to you—  
Anything but nothing, which is all you seem to want of me.  
But I'm sorry for you . . .

EDWARD: Don't say you are sorry for me!  
I have had enough of people being sorry for me.

LAVINIA: Yes, because they can never be so sorry for you  
As you are for yourself. And that's hard to bear.  
I thought that there might be some way out for you  
If I went away. I thought that if I died  
To you, I who had been only a ghost to you,  
You might be able to find the road back  
To a time when you were real—for you must have been real  
At some time or other, before you ever knew me.  
Perhaps only when you were a child.

EDWARD: I don't want you to make yourself responsible for me:  
It's only another kind of contempt.  
And I do not want you to explain me to myself.  
You're still trying to invent a personality for me

Which will only keep me away from myself.

LAVINIA: You're complicating what is in fact very simple.

But there is one point which I see clearly:

We are not to relapse into the kind of life we led

Until yesterday morning.

EDWARD:

There was a door

And I could not open it. I could not touch the handle.

Why could I not walk out of my prison?

What is hell? Hell is oneself,

Hell is alone, the other figures in it

Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from

And nothing to escape to. One is always alone.

LAVINIA: Edward, what *are* you talking about?

Talking to yourself. Could you bear, for a moment,

To think about *me*?

EDWARD:

It was only yesterday

That damnation took place. And now I must live with it

Day by day, hour by hour, forever and ever.

LAVINIA: I think you're on the edge of a nervous breakdown!

EDWARD: Don't say that!

LAVINIA:

I must say it.

I know . . . of a doctor who I think could help you.

EDWARD: If I go to a doctor, I shall make my own choice;

Not take one whom you choose. How do I know

That you wouldn't see him first, and tell him all about *me*

From *your* point of view? But I don't need a doctor.

I am simply in hell. Where there are no doctors—

At least, not in a professional capacity.

LAVINIA: One can be practical, even in hell:

And you know I am much more practical than you are.

EDWARD: I ought to know by now what you consider practical.

Practical! I remember, on our honeymoon,

You were always wrapping things up in tissue paper

And then had to unwrap everything again

To find what you wanted. And I never could teach you

How to put the cap on a tube of tooth-paste.

LAVINIA: Very well then, I shall not try to press you.

You're much too divided to know what you want.

But, being divided, you will tend to compromise,  
And your sort of compromise will be the old one.

EDWARD: You don't understand me. Have I not made it clear  
That in future you will find me a different person?

LAVINIA: Indeed. And has the difference nothing to do  
With Celia going off to California?

EDWARD: Celia? Going to California?

LAVINIA: Yes, with Peter.

Really, Edward, if you were human  
You would burst out laughing. But you won't.

EDWARD: O God, O God, if I could return to yesterday  
Before I thought that I had made a decision.  
What devil left the door on the latch  
For these doubts to enter? And then you came back, you  
The angel of destruction—just as I felt sure.  
In a moment, at your touch, there is nothing but ruin.  
O God, what have I done? The python. The octopus.  
Must I become after all what you would make me?

LAVINIA: Well, Edward, as I am unable to make you laugh,  
And as I can't persuade you to see a doctor,  
There's nothing else at present that I can do about it.  
I ought to go and have a look in the kitchen.  
I know there are some eggs. But we must go out for dinner.  
Meanwhile, my luggage is in the hall downstairs:  
Will you get the porter to fetch it up for me?

CURTAIN



## Act Two

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SIR HENRY HARCOURT-REILLY's consulting room in London.  
*Morning: several weeks later. SIR HENRY alone at his desk.  
He presses an electric button. The NURSE-SECRETARY enters,  
with Appointment Book.*

REILLY: About those three appointments this morning, Miss Barra-  
way:

I should like to run over my instructions again.  
You understand, of course, that it is important  
To avoid any meeting?

NURSE-SECRETARY: You made that clear, Sir Henry:  
The first appointment at eleven o'clock.  
He is to be shown into the small waiting room;  
And you will see him almost at once.

REILLY: I shall see him at once. And the second?

NURSE-SECRETARY: The second to be shown into the other room  
Just as usual. She arrives at a quarter past;  
But you may keep her waiting.

REILLY: Or she may keep me waiting;  
But I think she will be punctual.

NURSE-SECRETARY: I telephone through  
The moment she arrives. I leave her there  
Until you ring three times.

REILLY: And the third patient?

NURSE-SECRETARY: The third one to be shown into the small room;  
And I need not let you know that she has arrived.  
Then, when you ring, I show the others out;  
And only after they have left the house . . .

REILLY: Quite right, Miss Barraway. That's all for the moment.



NURSE-SECRETARY: Mr. Gibbs is here, Sir Henry.

REILLY: Ask him to come straight in.  
[Exit NURSE-SECRETARY.]

[ALEX enters almost immediately.]

ALEX: When is Chamberlayne's appointment?

REILLY: At eleven o'clock,  
The conventional hour. We have not much time.

Tell me now, did you have any difficulty

In convincing him I was the man for his case?

ALEX: Difficulty? No! He was only impatient

At having to wait four days for the appointment.

REILLY: It was necessary to delay his appointment

To lower his resistance. But what I mean is,

Does he trust your judgment?

ALEX: Yes, implicitly.

It's not that he regards me as very intelligent,

But he thinks I'm well informed: the sort of person

Who would know the right doctor, as well as the right shops.

Besides, he was ready to consult any doctor

Recommended by anyone except his wife.

REILLY: I had already impressed upon her

That she was not to mention my name to him.

ALEX: With your usual foresight. Now, he's quite triumphant

Because he thinks he's stolen a march on her.

And when you've sent him to a sanatorium

Where she can't get at him—then, he believes,

She will be very penitent. He's enjoying his illness.

REILLY: Illness offers him a double advantage:

To escape from himself—and get the better of his wife.

ALEX: Not to escape from her?

REILLY: He doesn't want to escape from her.

ALEX: He is staying at his club.

REILLY: Yes, that is where he wrote from.

[The house-telephone rings.]

Hello! yes, show him up.

ALEX: You will have a busy morning!

I will go out by the service staircase

And come back when they've gone.

REILLY:

Yes, when they've gone.

[Exit ALEX by side door.]

[EDWARD is shown in by NURSE-SECRETARY.]

EDWARD: Sir Harcourt-Reilly—

[Stops and stares at REILLY]

REILLY: [Without looking up from his papers.] Good morning, Mr. Chamberlayne.

Please sit down. I won't keep you a moment.

—Now, Mr. Chamberlayne?

EDWARD:

It came into my mind

Before I entered the door, that you might be the same person:

And I dismissed that as just another symptom.

Well, I should have known better than to come here

On the recommendation of a man who did not know you.

But Alex is so plausible. And his recommendations

Of shops have always been satisfactory.

I beg your pardon. But he is a blunderer.

I should like to know . . . but what is the use!

I suppose I might as well go away at once.

REILLY: No. If you please, sit down, Mr. Chamberlayne.

You are not going away, so you might as well sit down.

You were going to ask a question.

EDWARD:

When you came to my flat

Had you been invited by my wife as a guest

As I supposed? . . . Or did she *send* you?

REILLY: I cannot say that I had been invited,

And Mrs. Chamberlayne did not know that I was coming.

But I knew you would be there, and whom I should find with you.

EDWARD: But you had seen my wife?

REILLY:

Oh yes, I had seen her.

EDWARD: So this is a trap!

REILLY:

Let's not call it a trap.

But if it is a trap, then you cannot escape from it:

And so . . . you might as well sit down.

I think you will find that chair comfortable.

EDWARD:

You knew,

Before I began to tell you, what had happened?

REILLY: That is so, that is so. But all in good time.

Let us dismiss that question for the moment.

Tell me first, about the difficulties

On which you want my professional opinion.

EDWARD: It's not for me to blame you for bringing my wife back,

I suppose. You seemed to be trying to persuade me

That I was better off without her. But didn't you realise

That I was in no state to make a decision?

REILLY: If I had not brought your wife back, Mr. Chamberlayne,

Do you suppose that things would be any better—now?

EDWARD: I don't know, I'm sure. They could hardly be worse.

REILLY: They might be much worse. You might have ruined three  
lives

By your indecision. Now there are only two—

Which you still have the chance of redeeming from ruin.

EDWARD: You talk as if I was capable of action:

If I were, I should not need to consult you

Or anyone else. I came here as a patient.

If you take no interest in my case, I can go elsewhere.

REILLY: You have reason to believe that you are very ill?

EDWARD: I should have thought a doctor could see that for himself.

Or at least that he would enquire about the symptoms.

Two people advised me recently,

Almost in the same words, that I ought to see a doctor.

They said—again, in almost the same words—

That I was on the edge of a nervous breakdown.

I didn't know it then myself—but if they saw it

I should have thought that a doctor could see it.

REILLY: 'Nervous breakdown' is a term I never use:

It can mean almost anything.

EDWARD: And since then, I have realised

That mine is a very unusual case.

REILLY: All cases are unique, and very similar to others.

EDWARD: Is there a sanatorium to which you send such patients

As myself, under your personal observation?

REILLY: You are very impetuous, Mr. Chamberlayne.

There are several kinds of sanatoria

For several kinds of patient. And there are also patients  
For whom a sanatorium is the worst place possible.  
We must first find out what is wrong with you  
Before we decide what to do with you.

EDWARD: I doubt if you have ever had a case like mine:

I have ceased to believe in my own personality.

REILLY: Oh, dear yes; this is serious. A very common malady.  
Very prevalent indeed.

EDWARD: I remember, in my childhood . . .

REILLY: I always begin from the immediate situation

And then go back as far as I find necessary.

You see, your memories of childhood—

I mean, in your present state of mind—

Would be largely fictitious; and as for your dreams,

You would produce amazing dreams, to oblige me.

I could make you dream any kind of dream I suggested,

And it would only go to flatter your vanity

With the temporary stimulus of feeling interesting.

EDWARD: But I am obsessed by the thought of my own insignificance.

REILLY: Precisely. And I could make you feel important,

And you would imagine it a marvellous cure;

And you would go on, doing such amount of mischief

As lay within your power—until you came to grief.

Half of the harm that is done in this world

Is due to people who want to feel important.

They don't mean to do harm—but the harm does not interest  
them.

Or they do not see it, or they justify it

Because they are absorbed in the endless struggle

To think well of themselves.

EDWARD: If I am like that

I must have done a great deal of harm.

REILLY: Oh, not so much as you would like to think.

Only, shall we say, within your modest capacity.

Try to explain what has happened since I left you.

EDWARD: I see now why I wanted my wife to come back.

It was because of what she had made me into.

We had not been alone again for fifteen minutes

Before I felt, and still more acutely—  
Indeed, acutely, perhaps, for the first time,  
The whole oppression, the unreality  
Of the role she had always imposed upon me  
With the obstinate, unconscious, sub-human strength  
That some women have. Without her, it was vacancy.  
When I thought she had left me, I began to dissolve,  
To cease to exist. That was what she had done to me!  
I cannot live with her—that is now intolerable;  
I cannot live without her, for she has made me incapable  
Of having any existence of my own.  
That is what she has done to me in five years together!  
She has made the world a place I cannot live in  
Except on her terms. I must be alone,  
But not in the same world. So I want you to put me  
Into your sanatorium. I could be alone there?

[*House-telephone rings.*]

REILLY: [*Into telephone*] Yes.

[*To EDWARD*] Yes, you could be alone there.

EDWARD: I wonder

If you have understood a word of what I have been saying.

REILLY: You must have patience with me, Mr. Chamberlayne:

I learn a good deal by merely observing you,

And letting you talk as long as you please,

And taking note of what you do not say.

EDWARD: I once experienced the extreme of physical pain,

And now I know there is suffering worse than that.

It is surprising, if one had time to be surprised:

I am not afraid of the death of the body,

But this death is terrifying. The death of the spirit—

Can you understand what I suffer?

REILLY: I understand what you mean.

EDWARD: I can no longer act for myself.

Coming to see you—that's the last decision

I was capable of making. I am in your hands.

I cannot take any further responsibility.

REILLY: Many patients come in that belief.

EDWARD: And now will you send me to the sanatorium?

REILLY: You have nothing else to tell me?

EDWARD: What else can I tell you?

You don't want to hear about my early history.

REILLY: No, I did not want to hear about your *early* history.

EDWARD: And so will you send me to the sanatorium?

I can't go home again. And at my club

They won't let you keep a room for more than seven days;

I haven't the courage to go to a hotel,

And besides, I need more shirts—you can get my wife

To have my things sent on: whatever I shall need.

But of course you mustn't tell her where I am.

Is it far to go?

REILLY: You might say, a long journey.

But before I treat a patient like yourself

I need to know a great deal more about him,

Than the patient himself can always tell me.

Indeed, it is often the case that my patients

Are only pieces of a total situation

Which I have to explore. The single patient

Who is ill by himself, is rather the exception.

I have recently had another patient

Whose situation is much the same as your own.

*[Presses the bell on his desk three times]*

You must accept a rather unusual procedure:

I propose to introduce you to the other patient.

EDWARD: What do you mean? Who is this other patient?

I consider this very unprofessional conduct—

I will not discuss my case before another patient.

REILLY: On the contrary. That is the only way

In which it can be discussed. You have told me nothing.

You have had the opportunity, and you have said enough

To convince me that you have been making up your case

So to speak, as you went along. A barrister

Ought to know his brief before he enters the court.

EDWARD: I am at least free to leave. And I propose to do so.

My mind is made up. I shall go to a hotel.

REILLY: It is just because you are not free, Mr. Chamberlayne,

That you have come to me. It is for me to give you that—

Your freedom. That is my affair.

[LAVINIA is shown in by the NURSE-SECRETARY.]

But here is the other patient.

EDWARD: Lavinia!

LAVINIA: Well, Sir Henry!

I said I would come to talk about my husband:

I didn't say I was prepared to meet him.

EDWARD: And I did not expect to meet *you*, Lavinia.

I call this a very dishonourable trick.

REILLY: Honesty before honour, Mr. Chamberlayne.

Sit down, please, both of you. Mrs. Chamberlayne,

Your husband wishes to enter a sanatorium,

And that is a question which naturally concerns you.

EDWARD: I am not going to any sanatorium.

I am going to a hotel. And I shall ask you, Lavinia,

To be so good as to send me on some clothes.

LAVINIA: Oh, to what hotel?

EDWARD: I don't know—I mean to say,

That doesn't concern you.

LAVINIA: In that case, Edward,

I don't think your clothes concern me either.

[To REILLY]

I presume you will send him to the same sanatorium

To which you sent me? Well, he needs it more than I did.

REILLY: I am glad that you have come to see it in that light—

At least, for the moment. But, Mrs. Chamberlayne,

You have never visited my sanatorium.

LAVINIA: What do you mean? I asked to be sent

And you took me there. If that was not a sanatorium

What was it?

REILLY: A kind of hotel. A retreat

For people who imagine that they need a respite

From everyday life. They return refreshed;

And if they believe it to be a sanatorium

That is good reason for not sending them to one.

The people who need my sort of sanatorium

Are not easily deceived.

LAVINIA: Are you a devil



Or merely a lunatic practical joker?

EDWARD: I incline to the second explanation

Without the qualification 'lunatic.'

Why should *you* go to a sanatorium?

I have never known anyone in my life

With fewer mental complications than you;

You're stronger than a . . . battleship. That's what drove me mad.

I am the one who needs a sanatorium—

But I'm not going there.

REILLY: You are right, Mr. Chamberlayne.

You are no case for my sanatorium:

You are much too ill.

EDWARD: Much too ill?

Then I'll go and be ill in a suburban boarding-house.

LAVINIA: That would never suit you, Edward. Now I know of a hotel  
In the New Forest . . .

EDWARD: How like you, Lavinia.

You always know of something better.

LAVINIA: It's only that I have a more practical mind

Than you have, Edward. You do know that.

EDWARD: Only because you've told me so often.

I'd like to see *you* filling up an income-tax form.

LAVINIA: Don't be silly, Edward. When I say practical,

I mean practical in the things that really matter.

REILLY: May I interrupt this interesting discussion?

I say you are both too ill. There are several symptoms

Which must occur together, and to a marked degree,

To qualify a patient for *my* sanatorium:

And one of them is an honest mind.

That is one of the causes of their suffering.

LAVINIA: No one can say my husband has an honest mind.

EDWARD: And I could not honestly say that of *you*, Lavinia.

REILLY: I congratulate you both on your perspicacity.

Your sympathetic understanding of each other

Will prepare you to appreciate what I have to say to you.

I do not trouble myself with the common cheat,

Or with the insuperably, innocently dull:



My patients such as you are the self-deceivers  
Taking infinite pains, exhausting their energy,  
Yet never quite successful. You have both of you pretended  
To be consulting me; both, tried to impose upon me  
Your own diagnosis, and prescribe your own cure.  
But when you put yourselves into hands like mine  
You surrender a great deal more than you meant to.  
This is the consequence of trying to lie to me.

LAVINIA: I did not come here to be insulted.

REILLY: You have come where the word 'insult' has no meaning;  
And you must put up with that. All that you have told me—  
Both of you—was true enough: you described your feelings—  
Or some of them—omitting the important facts.  
Let me take your husband first.

[To EDWARD]

You were lying to me  
By concealing your relations with Miss Coplestone.

EDWARD: This is monstrous! My wife knew nothing about it.

LAVINIA: Really, Edward! Even if I'd been blind  
There were plenty of people to let me know about it.  
I wonder if there was anyone who didn't know.

REILLY: There was one, in fact. But you, Mrs. Chamberlayne,  
Tried to make me believe that it was this discovery  
Precipitated what you called your nervous breakdown.

LAVINIA: But it's true! I was completely prostrated;  
Even if I have made a partial recovery.

REILLY: Certainly, you were completely prostrated,  
And certainly, you have somewhat recovered.  
But you failed to mention that the cause of your distress  
Was the defection of your lover—who suddenly  
For the first time in his life, fell in love with someone,  
And with someone of whom you had reason to be jealous.

EDWARD: Really, Lavinia! This is very interesting.  
You seem to have been much more successful at concealment  
Than I was. Now I wonder who it could have been.

LAVINIA: Well, tell him if you like.

REILLY: A young man named Peter.

EDWARD: Peter? Peter who?

REILLY: Mr. Peter Quilpe

Was a frequent guest.

EDWARD: Peter Quilpe!

Peter Quilpe! Really Lavinia!

I congratulate you. You could not have chosen

Anyone I was less likely to suspect.

And then he came to *me* to confide about Celia!

I have never heard anything so utterly ludicrous:

This is the best joke that ever happened.

LAVINIA: I never knew you had such a sense of humour.

REILLY: It is the first more hopeful symptom.

LAVINIA: How did you know all this?

REILLY: That I cannot disclose.

I have my own method of collecting information

About my patients. You must not ask me to reveal it—

That is a matter of professional etiquette.

LAVINIA: I have not noticed much professional etiquette

About your behaviour today.

REILLY: A point well taken.

But permit me to remark that my revelations

About each of you, to one another,

Have not been of anything that you confided to me.

The information I have exchanged between you

Was all obtained from outside sources.

Mrs. Chamberlayne, when you came to me two months ago

I was dissatisfied with your explanation

Of your obvious symptoms of emotional strain

And so I made enquiries.

EDWARD: It was two months ago

That your breakdown began! And I never noticed it.

LAVINIA: You wouldn't notice anything. You never noticed *me*.

REILLY: Now, I want to point out to both of you

How much you have in common. Indeed, I consider

That you are exceptionally well-suited to each other.

Mr. Chamberlayne, when you thought your wife had left you,

You discovered, to your surprise and consternation,

That you were not really in love with Miss Coplestone . . .

LAVINIA: My husband has never been in love with anybody.

REILLY: And were not prepared to make the least sacrifice  
On her account. This injured your vanity.  
You liked to think of yourself as a passionate lover.  
Then you realised, what your wife has justly remarked,  
That you had never been in love with anybody;  
Which made you suspect that you were incapable  
Of loving. To men of a certain type  
The suspicion that they are incapable of loving  
Is as disturbing to their self-esteem  
As, in cruder men, the fear of impotence.

LAVINIA: You *are* cold-hearted, Edward.

REILLY: So you say, Mrs. Chamberlayne.  
And now, let us turn to your side of the problem.  
When you discovered that your young friend  
(Though you knew, in your heart, that he was not in love with  
you,  
And were always humiliated by the awareness  
That you had forced him into this position) —  
When, I say, you discovered that your young friend  
Had actually fallen in love with Miss Coplestone,  
It took you some time, I have no doubt,  
Before you would admit it. Though perhaps you knew it  
Before he did. You pretended to yourself,  
I suspect, and for as long as you could,  
That he was aiming at a higher social distinction  
Than the honour conferred by being *your* lover.  
When you had to face the fact that his feelings towards her  
Were different from any you had aroused in him—  
It was a shock. You had wanted to be loved;  
You had come to see that no one had ever loved you.  
Then you began to fear that no one *could* love you.

EDWARD: I'm beginning to feel very sorry for you, Lavinia.  
You know, you really are exceptionally unlovable,  
And I never quite knew why. I thought it was *my* fault.

REILLY: And now you begin to see, I hope,  
How much you have in common. The same isolation.  
A man who finds himself incapable of loving  
And a woman who finds that no man can love her.

LAVINIA: It seems to me that what we have in common  
Might be just enough to make us loathe one another.

REILLY: See it rather as the bond which holds you together.  
While still in a state of unenlightenment,  
You could always say: 'He could not love any woman';  
You could always say: 'No man could love her.'  
You could accuse each other of your own faults,  
And so could avoid understanding each other.  
Now, you have only to reverse the propositions  
And put them together.

LAVINIA: Is that possible?

REILLY: If I had sent either of you to the sanatorium  
In the state in which you came to me—I tell you this:  
It would have been a horror beyond your imagining,  
For you would have been left with what you brought with you:  
The shadow of desires of desires. A prey  
To the devils who arrive at their plenitude of power  
When they have you to themselves.

LAVINIA: Then what can we do  
When we can go neither back nor forward? Edward!  
What can we do?

REILLY: You have answered your own question,  
Though you do not know the meaning of what you have said.

EDWARD: Lavinia, we must make the best of a bad job.  
That is what he means.

REILLY: When you find, Mr. Chamberlayne,  
The best of a bad job is all any of us make of it—  
Except of course, the saints—such as those who go  
To the sanatorium—you will forget this phrase,  
And in forgetting it will alter the condition.

LAVINIA: Edward, there *is* that hotel in the New Forest  
If you want to go there. The proprietor  
Who has just taken over, is a friend of Alex's.  
I could go down with you, and then leave you there  
If you want to be alone . . .

EDWARD: But I can't go away!  
I have a case coming on next Monday.

LAVINIA: Then will you stop at your club?

EDWARD: No, they won't let me.

I must leave tomorrow—but how did you know

I was staying at the club?

LAVINIA: Really, Edward!

I have *some* sense of responsibility.

I was going to leave some shirts there for you.

EDWARD: It seems to me that I might as well go home.

LAVINIA: Then we can share a taxi, and be economical.

Edward, have you anything else to ask him

Before we go?

EDWARD: Yes, I have.

But it's difficult to say.

LAVINIA: But I wish you would say it.

At least, there is something I would like you to ask.

EDWARD: It's about the future of . . . the others.

I don't want to build on other people's ruins.

LAVINIA: Exactly. And I have a question too.

Sir Henry, was it you who sent those telegrams?

REILLY: I think I will dispose of your husband's problem.

[To EDWARD]

Your business is not to clear your conscience

But to learn how to bear the burdens on your conscience.

With the future of the others you are not concerned.

LAVINIA: I think you have answered my question too.

They had to tell us, themselves, that they had made their decision.

EDWARD: Have you anything else to say to us, Sir Henry?

REILLY: No. Not in this capacity.

[EDWARD takes out his cheque-book. REILLY raises his hand.]

My secretary will send you my account.

Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence.

[Exeunt EDWARD and LAVINIA.]

[REILLY goes to the couch and lies down. The house-telephone rings. He gets up and answers it.]

REILLY: Yes? . . . Yes. Come in.

[Enter JULIA by side door.]

She's waiting downstairs.

JULIA: I know that, Henry. I brought her here myself.

REILLY: Oh? You didn't let her know you were seeing me first?

JULIA: Of course not. I dropped her at the door  
And went on in the taxi, round the corner;  
Waited a moment, and slipped in by the back way.  
I only came to tell you, I am sure she is ready  
To make a decision.

REILLY: Was she reluctant?  
Was that why you brought her?

JULIA: Oh no, not reluctant:  
Only diffident. She cannot believe  
That you will take her seriously.

REILLY: That is not uncommon.

JULIA: Or that she deserves to be taken seriously.

REILLY: That is most uncommon.

JULIA: Henry, get up. You can't be as tired as that. I shall wait in the  
next room,

And come back when she's gone.

REILLY: Yes, when she's gone.

JULIA: Will Alex be here?

REILLY: Yes, he'll be here.

[Exit JULIA by side door.]

[REILLY presses button.]

NURSE-SECRETARY shows in CELIA.]

REILLY: Miss Celia Coplestone? . . . Won't you sit down?  
I believe you are a friend of Mrs. Shuttlethwaite.

CELIA: Yes, it was Julia . . . Mrs. Shuttlethwaite  
Who advised me to come to you.—But I've met you before,  
Haven't I, somewhere? . . . Oh, of course.  
But I didn't know . . .

REILLY: There is nothing you need to know.  
I was there at the instance of Mrs. Shuttlethwaite.

CELIA: That makes it even more perplexing. However,  
I don't want to waste your time. And I'm awfully afraid  
That you'll think that I am wasting it anyway.  
I suppose most people, when they come to see you,  
Are obviously ill, or can give good reasons  
For wanting to see you. Well, I can't.  
I just came in desperation. And I shan't be offended

If you simply tell me to go away again.

REILLY: Most of my patients begin, Miss Coplestone,  
By telling me exactly what is the matter with them,  
And what I am to do about it. They are quite sure  
They have had a nervous breakdown—that is what they call it—  
And usually they think that someone else is to blame.

CELIA: I at least have no one to blame but myself.

REILLY: And after that, the prologue to my treatment  
Is to try to show them that they are mistaken  
About the nature of their illness, and lead them to see  
That it's not so interesting as they had imagined.  
When I get as far as that, there is something to be done.

CELIA: Well, I can't pretend that my trouble is interesting;  
But I shan't begin that way. I feel perfectly well.  
I could lead an active life—if there's anything to work for;  
I don't imagine that I am being persecuted;  
I don't hear any voices, I have no delusions—  
Except that the world I live in seems all a delusion!  
But oughtn't I first to tell you the circumstances?  
I'd forgotten that you know nothing about me;  
And with what I've been going through, these last weeks,  
I somehow took it for granted that I needn't explain myself.

REILLY: I know quite enough about you for the moment:  
Try first to describe your present state of mind.

CELIA: Well, there are two things I can't understand,  
Which you might consider symptoms. But first I must tell you  
That I should really *like* to think there's something wrong with  
me—

Because, if there isn't, then there's something wrong,  
Or at least, very different from what it seemed to be,  
With the world itself—and that's much more frightening!  
That would be terrible. So I'd rather believe  
There is something wrong with me, that could be put right.  
I'd do anything you told me, to get back to normality.

REILLY: We must find out about you, before we decide  
What *is* normality. You say there are two things:  
What is the first?

CELIA:                   An awareness of solitude.



But that sounds so flat. I don't mean simply  
 That there's been a crash: though indeed there has been  
 It isn't simply the end of an illusion  
 In the ordinary way, or being ditched.  
 Of course that's something that's always happening  
 To all sorts of people, and they get over it  
 More or less, or at least they carry on.  
 No. I mean that what has happened has made me aware  
 That I've always been alone. That one always is alone.  
 Not simply the ending of one relationship,  
 Not even simply finding that it never existed—  
 But a revelation about my relationship  
 With *everybody*. Do you know—  
 It no longer seems worth while to *speak* to anyone!

REILLY: And what about your parents?

CELIA: Oh, they live in the country,  
 Now they can't afford to have a place in town.  
 It's all they can do to keep the country house going:  
 But it's been in the family so long, they won't leave it.

REILLY: And you live in London?

CELIA: I share a flat  
 With a cousin: but she's abroad at the moment,  
 And my family want me to come down and stay with them.  
 But I just can't face it.

REILLY: So you want to see no one?

CELIA: No . . . it isn't that I *want* to be alone,  
 But that everyone's alone—or so it seems to me.  
 They make noises, and think they are talking to each other;  
 They make faces, and think they understand each other.  
 And I'm sure that they don't. Is that a delusion?

REILLY: A delusion is something we must return from.

There are other states of mind, which we take to be delusion,  
 But which we have to accept and go on from.  
 And the second symptom?

CELIA: That's stranger still.  
 It sounds ridiculous—but the only word for it  
 That I can find, is a sense of sin.



REILLY: You suffer from a sense of sin, Miss Coplestone?  
This is most unusual.

CELIA: It seemed to *me* abnormal.

REILLY: We have yet to find what would be normal  
For *you*, before we use the term 'abnormal.'  
Tell me what you mean by a sense of sin.

CELIA: It's much easier to tell you what I don't mean:  
I don't mean sin in the ordinary sense.

REILLY: And what, in your opinion, is the ordinary sense?

CELIA: Well . . . I suppose it's being immoral—  
And I don't feel as if I was immoral:  
In fact, aren't the people one thinks of as immoral  
Just the people who we say have no moral sense?  
I've never noticed that immorality  
Was accompanied by a sense of sin:  
At least, I have never come across it.  
I suppose it is wicked to hurt other people  
If you know that you're hurting them. I haven't hurt *her*.  
I wasn't taking anything away from her—  
Anything she wanted. I may have been a fool:  
But I don't mind at all having been a fool.

REILLY: And what is the point of view of your family?

CELIA: Well, my bringing up was pretty conventional—  
I had always been taught to disbelieve in sin.  
Oh, I don't mean that it was ever mentioned!  
But anything wrong, from our point of view,  
Was either bad form, or was psychological.  
And bad form always led to disaster  
Because the people one knew disapproved of it.  
I don't worry much about form, myself—  
But when everything's bad form, or mental kinks,  
You either become bad form, and cease to care,  
Or else, if you care, you must be kinky.

REILLY: And so you suppose you have what you call a 'kink'?

CELIA: But everything seemed so right, at the time!  
I've been thinking about it, over and over;  
I can see now, it was all a mistake:

But I don't see why mistakes should make one feel sinfull  
And yet I can't find any other word for it.  
It must be some kind of hallucination;  
Yet, at the same time, I'm frightened by the fear  
That it is more real than anything I believed in.

REILLY: What is more real than anything you believed in?

CELIA: It's not the feeling of anything I've ever *done*,  
Which I might get away from, or of anything in me  
I could get rid of—but of emptiness, of failure  
Towards someone, or something, outside of myself;  
And I feel I must . . . *atone*—is that the word?  
Can you treat a patient for such a state of mind?

REILLY: What had you believed were your relations with this man?

CELIA: Oh, you'd guessed that, had you? That's clever of you.  
No, perhaps I made it obvious. You don't need to know  
About him, do you?

REILLY: No.

CELIA: Perhaps I'm only typical.

REILLY: There are different types. Some are rarer than others.

CELIA: Oh, I thought that I was giving him so much!  
And he to me—and the giving and the taking  
Seemed so right: not in terms of calculation  
Of what was good for the persons we had been  
But for the new person, *us*. If I could feel  
As I did then, even now it would seem right.  
And then I found we were only strangers  
And that there had been neither giving nor taking  
But that we had merely made use of each other  
Each for his purpose. That's horrible. Can we only love  
Something created by our own imagination?  
Are we all in fact unloving and unlovable?  
Then one *is* alone, and if one is alone  
Then lover and beloved are equally unreal  
And the dreamer is no more real than his dreams.

REILLY: And this man. What does he now seem like, to you?

CELIA: Like a child who has wandered into a forest  
Playing with an imaginary playmate

And suddenly discovers he is only a child

Lost in a forest, wanting to go home.

REILLY: Compassion may be already a clue

Towards finding your own way out of the forest.

CELIA: But even if I find my way out of the forest

I shall be left with the inconsolable memory

Of the treasure I went into the forest to find

And never found, and which was not there

And perhaps is not anywhere? But if not anywhere,

Why do I feel guilty at not having found it?

REILLY: Disillusion can become itself an illusion

If we rest in it.

CELIA: I cannot argue.

It's not that I'm afraid of being hurt again:

Nothing again can either hurt or heal.

I have thought at moments that the ecstasy is real

Although those who experience it may have no reality.

For what happened is remembered like a dream

In which one is exalted by intensity of loving

In the spirit, a vibration of delight

Without desire, for desire is fulfilled

In the delight of loving. A state one does not know

When awake. But what, or whom I loved,

Or what in me was loving, I do not know.

And if that is all meaningless, I want to be cured

Of a craving for something I cannot find

And of the shame of never finding it.

Can you cure me?

REILLY: The condition is curable.

But the form of treatment must be your own choice:

I cannot choose for you. If that is what you wish,

I can reconcile you to the human condition,

The condition to which some who have gone as far as you

Have succeeded in returning. They may remember

The vision they have had, but they cease to regret it,

Maintain themselves by the common routine,

Learn to avoid excessive expectation,

Become tolerant of themselves and others,  
 Giving and taking, in the usual actions  
 What there is to give and take. They do not repine;  
 Are contented with the morning that separates  
 And with the evening that brings together  
 For casual talk before the fire  
 Two people who know they do not understand each other,  
 Breeding children whom they do not understand  
 And who will never understand them.

CELIA: Is that the best life?

REILLY: It is a good life. Though you will not know how good  
 Till you come to the end. But you will want nothing else,  
 And the other life will be only like a book  
 You have read once, and lost. In a world of lunacy,  
 Violence, stupidity, greed . . . it is a good life.

CELIA: I know I ought to be able to accept that  
 If I might still have it. Yet it leaves me cold.  
 Perhaps that's just a part of my illness,  
 But I feel it would be a kind of surrender—  
 No, not a surrender—more like a betrayal.  
 You see, I think I really had a vision of something  
 Though I don't know what it is. I don't want to forget it.  
 I want to live with it. I could do without everything,  
 Put up with anything, if I might cherish it.  
 In fact, I think it would really be dishonest  
 For me, now, to try to make a life with *anybody*!  
 I couldn't give anyone the kind of love—  
 I wish I could—which belongs to that life.  
 Oh, I'm afraid this sounds like raving!  
 Or just cantankerousness . . . still,  
 If there's no other way . . . then I feel just hopeless.

REILLY: There *is* another way, if you have the courage.  
 The first I could describe in familiar terms  
 Because you have seen it, as we all have seen it,  
 Illustrated, more or less, in lives of those about us.  
 The second is unknown, and so requires faith—  
 The kind of faith that issues from despair.  
 The destination cannot be described;

You will know very little until you get there;  
You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession  
Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.

CELIA: That sounds like what I want. But what is my duty?

REILLY: Whichever way you choose will prescribe its own duty.

CELIA: Which way is better?

REILLY: Neither way is better.

Both ways are necessary. It is also necessary

To make a choice between them.

CELIA: Then I choose the second.

REILLY: It is a terrifying journey.

CELIA: I am not frightened

But glad. I suppose it is a lonely way?

REILLY: No lonelier than the other. But those who take the other

Can forget their loneliness. You will not forget yours.

Each way means loneliness—and communion.

## Both ways avoid the final desolation

## Of solitude in the phantasmal world

Of imagination, shuffling memories and desires.

CELIA: That is the hell I have been in.

REILLY: It isn't hell

Till you become incapable of anything else.

Now—do you feel quite sure?

CELIA: I want your second way.

So what am I to do?

REILLY: You will go to the sanatorium.

CELIA: Oh, what an anti-climax! I have known people

Who have been to your sanatorium, and come back again—

I don't mean to say they weren't much better for it—

That's why I came to you. But they returned . . .

Well . . . I mean . . . to everyday life.

REILLY: True. But the friends you have in mind

Cannot have been to this sanatorium.

I am very careful whom I send there:

Those who go do not come back as these did.

CELIA: It sounds like a prison. But they can't *all* stay there!

I mean, it would make the place so over-crowded.

REILLY: Not very many go. But I said they did not come back

In the sense in which your friends came back.  
I did not say they stayed there.

CELIA: What becomes of them?

REILLY: They choose, Miss Coplestone. Nothing is forced on them.  
Some of them return, in a physical sense;  
No one disappears. They lead very active lives  
Very often, in the world.

CELIA: How soon will you send me there?

REILLY: How soon will you be ready?

CELIA: Tonight, by nine o'clock.

REILLY: Go home then, and make your preparations.

Here is the address for you to give your friends;

*[Writes on a slip of paper.]*

You had better let your family know at once.

I will send a car for you at nine o'clock.

CELIA: What do I need to take with me?

REILLY: Nothing.

Everything you need will be provided for you.

And you will have no expenses at the sanatorium.

CELIA: I don't in the least know what I am doing

Or why I am doing it. There is nothing else to do:

That is the only reason.

REILLY: It is the best reason.

CELIA: But I know it is I who have made the decision:

I must tell you that. Oh, I almost forgot—

May I ask what your fee is?

REILLY: I have told my secretary

That there is no fee.

CELIA: But . . .

REILLY: For a case like yours

There is no fee.

*[Presses button.]*

CELIA: You have been very kind.

REILLY: Go in peace, my daughter.

Work out your salvation with diligence.

*[NURSE-SECRETARY appears at door. Exit CELIA.]*

*REILLY dials on house-telephone.]*

REILLY *[Into telephone]*: It is finished. You can come in now.

[Enter JULIA by side door.]

She will go far, that one.

JULIA: Very far, I think.

You do not need to tell me. I knew from the beginning.

REILLY: It's the other ones I am worried about.

JULIA: Nonsense, Henry. *I* shall keep an eye on them.

REILLY: To send them back: what have they to go back to?

To the stale food mouldering in the larder,  
The stale thoughts mouldering in their minds.  
Each unable to disguise his own meanness  
From himself, because it is known to the other.  
It's not the knowledge of the mutual treachery  
But the knowledge that the other understands the motive—  
Mirror to mirror, reflecting vanity.  
I have taken a great risk.

JULIA: We must always take risks.

That is our destiny. Since you question the decision

What possible alternative can you imagine?

REILLY: None.

JULIA: Very well then. We must take the risk.

All we could do was to give them the chance.  
And now, when they are stripped naked to their souls  
And can choose, whether to put on proper costumes  
Or huddle quickly into new disguises,  
They have, for the first time, somewhere to start from.  
Oh, of course, they might just murder each other!  
But I don't think they will do that. We shall see.  
It's the thought of Celia that weighs upon my mind.

REILLY: Of Celia?

JULIA:                   Of Celia.

REILLY: But when I said just now

That she would go far, you agreed with me.

JULIA: Oh yes, she will go far. And we know where she is going.

But what do we know of the terrors of the journey ?  
You and I don't know the process by which the human is  
Transhumanised: what do we know  
Of the kind of suffering they must undergo  
On the way of illumination?



REILLY: Will she be frightened  
By the first appearance of projected spirits?

JULIA: Henry, you simply do not understand innocence.  
She will be afraid of nothing; she will not even know  
That there is anything there to be afraid of.  
She is too humble. She will pass between the scolding hills,  
Through the valley of derision, like a child sent on an errand  
In eagerness and patience. Yet she must suffer.

REILLY: When I express confidence in anything  
You always raise doubts; when I am apprehensive  
Then you see no reason for anything but confidence.

JULIA: That's one way in which I am so useful to you.  
You ought to be grateful.

REILLY: And when I say to one like her,  
'Work out your salvation with diligence,' I do not understand  
What I myself am saying.

JULIA: You must accept your limitations.  
—But how much longer will Alex keep us waiting?

REILLY: He should be here by now. I'll speak to Miss Barraway.  
[Takes up house-telephone.]  
Miss Barraway, when Mr. Gibbs arrives . . .  
Oh, very good.

[To JULIA]  
He's on his way up.  
[Into telephone]

You may bring the tray in now, Miss Barraway.  
[Enter ALEX.]

ALEX: Well! Well! and how have we got on?

JULIA: Everything is in order.

ALEX: The Chamberlaynes have chosen?

REILLY: They accept their destiny.

ALEX: And *she* has made the choice?

REILLY: She will be fetched this evening.  
[NURSE-SECRETARY enters with a tray, a decanter and three  
glasses, and exits. REILLY pours drinks.]

And now we are ready to proceed to the libation.

ALEX: The words for the building of the hearth.

[They raise their glasses.]



REILLY: Let them build the hearth  
Under the protection of the stars.

ALEX: Let them place a chair each side of it.

JULIA: May the holy ones watch over the roof,  
May the Moon herself influence the bed.

[*They drink.*]

ALEX: The words for those who go upon a journey.

REILLY: Protector of travellers

Bless the road.

ALEX: Watch over her in the desert

Watch over her in the mountain

Watch over her in the labyrinth

Watch over her by the quicksand.

JULIA: Protect her from the Voices

Protect her from the Visions

Protect her in the tumult

Protect her in the silence.

[*They drink.*]

REILLY: There is one for whom the words cannot be spoken.

ALEX: They cannot be spoken yet.

JULIA: You mean Peter Quilpe.

REILLY: He has not yet come to where the words are valid.

JULIA: Shall we ever speak them?

ALEX: Others, perhaps, will speak them.

You know, I have connections—even in California.

CURTAIN

## Act Three

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*The drawing room of the Chamberlaynes' London flat. Two years later. A late afternoon in July. A CATERER'S MAN is arranging a buffet table. LAVINIA enters from side door.*

CATERER'S MAN: Have you any further orders for us, Madam?

LAVINIA: You could bring in the trolley with the glasses  
And leave them ready.

CATERER'S MAN: Very good, Madam.

*[Exit. LAVINIA looks about the room critically and moves a bowl of flowers.]*

*[Re-enter CATERER'S MAN with trolley.]*

LAVINIA: There, in that corner. That's the most convenient;  
You can get in and out. Is there anything you need  
That you can't find in the kitchen?

CATERER'S MAN: Nothing, Madam.

Will there be anything more you require?

LAVINIA: Nothing more, I think, till half past six.

*[Exit CATERER'S MAN.]*

*[EDWARD lets himself in at the front door.]*

EDWARD: I'm in good time, I think. I hope you've not been worrying.

LAVINIA: Oh no. I did in fact ring up your chambers,  
And your clerk told me you had already left.  
But all I rang up for was to reassure you . . .

EDWARD *[Smiling]*: That you hadn't run away?

LAVINIA: Now Edward, that's unfair!

You know that we've given *several* parties  
In the last two years. And I've attended *all* of them.  
I hope you're not too tired?

EDWARD: Oh no, a quiet day.

Two consultations with solicitors

On quite straightforward cases. It's you who should be tired.

LAVINIA: I'm not tired yet. But I know that I'll be glad

When it's all over.

EDWARD: I like the dress you're wearing:

I'm glad you put on that one.

LAVINIA: Well, Edward!

Do you know it's the first time you've paid me a compliment  
*Before* a party? And that's when one needs them.

EDWARD: Well, you deserve it.—We asked too many people.

LAVINIA: It's true, a great many more accepted

Than we thought would want to come. But what can you do?

There's usually a lot who don't want to come

But all the same would be bitterly offended

To hear we'd given a party without asking them.

EDWARD: Perhaps we ought to have arranged to have two parties  
Instead of one.

LAVINIA: That's never satisfactory.

Everyone who's asked to either party

Suspects that the other one was more important.

EDWARD: That's true. You have a very practical mind.

LAVINIA: But you know, I don't think that you need worry:

They won't all come, out of those who accepted.

You know we said, 'We can ask twenty more

Because they will be going to the Gunnings instead.'

EDWARD: I know, that's what we said at the time;

But I'd forgotten what the Gunnings' parties were like.

Their guests will get just enough to make them thirsty;

They'll come on to us later, roaring for drink.

Well, let's hope that those who come to us early

Will be going on to the Gunnings afterwards,

To make room for those who come from the Gunnings.

LAVINIA: And if it's very crowded, they can't get at the cocktails,

And the man won't be able to take the tray about,

So they'll go away again. Anyway, at that stage

There's nothing whatever you can do about it:

And everyone likes to be seen at a party

Where everybody else is, to show they've been invited.

That's what makes it a success. Is that picture straight?

EDWARD: Yes, it is.

LAVINIA: No, it isn't. Do please straighten it.

EDWARD: Is it straight now?

LAVINIA: Too much to the left.

EDWARD: How's that now?

LAVINIA: No, I meant the right.

That will do. I'm too tired to bother.

EDWARD: After they're all gone, we will have some champagne,

Just ourselves. You lie down now, Lavinia.

No one will be coming for at least half an hour;

So just stretch out.

LAVINIA: You must sit beside me,

Then I can relax.

EDWARD: This is the best moment

Of the whole party.

LAVINIA: Oh no, Edward.

The best moment is the moment it's over;

And then to remember, it's the end of the season

And no more parties.

EDWARD: And no more committees.

LAVINIA: Can we get away soon?

EDWARD: By the end of next week

I shall be quite free.

LAVINIA: And we can be alone.

I love that house being so remote.

EDWARD: That's why we took it. And I'm really thankful

To have that excuse for not seeing people;

And you do need to rest now.

[*The doorbell rings.*]

LAVINIA: Oh, bother!

Now who would come so early? I simply *can't* get up.

CATERER'S MAN: Mrs. Shuttlethwaite!

LAVINIA: Oh, it's Julia!

[*Enter JULIA.*]

JULIA: Well, my dears, and here I am!

I seem *literally* to have caught you napping!

I know I'm much too early; but the fact is, my dears,

That I have to go on to the Gunnings' party—  
And you know what *they* offer in the way of food and drink!  
And I've had to miss my tea, and I'm simply ravenous  
And dying of thirst. What can Parkinson's do for me?  
Oh yes, I know this is a Parkinson party;  
I recognised one of their men at the door—  
An old friend of mine, in fact. But I'm forgetting!  
I've got a surprise: I've brought Alex with me!  
He only got back this morning from somewhere—  
One of his mysterious expeditions,  
And we're going to get him to tell us all about it.  
But what's become of him?  
[Enter ALEX.]

EDWARD: Well, Alex!

Where on earth do you turn up from?

ALEX: Where on earth? From the East. From Kinkanja—  
An island that you won't have heard of  
Yet. Got back this morning. I heard about your party  
And, as I thought you might be leaving for the country,  
I said, I must not miss the opportunity  
To see Edward and Lavinia.

LAVINIA: How are you, Alex?

ALEX: I did try to get you on the telephone  
After lunch, but my secretary couldn't get through to you.  
Never mind, I said—to myself, not to her—  
Never mind: the unexpected guest  
Is the one to whom they give the warmest welcome.  
I know them well enough for that.

JULIA: But tell us, Alex.  
What were you doing in this strange place—  
What's it called?

ALEX: Kinkanja.

JULIA: What were you doing  
In Kinkanja? Visiting some Sultan?  
You were shooting tigers?

ALEX: There are no tigers, Julia,  
In Kinkanja. And there are no sultans.

I have been staying with the Governor.  
Three of us have been out on a tour of inspection  
Of local conditions.

JULIA:                               What about? Monkey nuts?

ALEX: That was a nearer guess than you think.

No, not monkey nuts. But it had to do with monkeys—  
Though whether the monkeys are the core of the problem  
Or merely a symptom, I am not so sure.  
At least, the monkeys have become the pretext  
For general unrest amongst the natives.

EDWARD: But how do the monkeys create unrest?

ALEX: To begin with, the monkeys are very destructive . . .

JULIA: You don't need to tell me that monkeys are destructive.

I shall never forget Mary Mallington's monkey,  
The horrid little beast—stole my ticket to Mentone  
And I had to travel in a very slow train  
And in a *couchette*. She was very angry  
When I told her the creature ought to be destroyed.

LAVINIA: But can't they exterminate these monkeys  
If they are a pest?

ALEX:                               Unfortunately,  
The majority of the natives are heathen:  
They hold these monkeys in peculiar veneration  
And do not want them killed. So they blame the Government  
For the damage that the monkeys do.

EDWARD: That seems unreasonable.

ALEX:                               It is unreasonable,  
But characteristic. And that's not the worst of it.  
Some of the tribes are Christian converts,  
And, naturally, take a different view.  
They trap the monkeys. And they eat them.  
The young monkeys are extremely palatable:  
I've cooked them myself . . .

EDWARD:                               And did anybody eat them  
When you cooked them?

ALEX:                               Oh yes, indeed.  
I invented for the natives several new recipes.  
But you see, what with eating the monkeys

And what with protecting their crops from the monkeys  
The Christian natives prosper exceedingly:  
And that creates friction between them and the others.  
And that's the real problem. I hope I'm not boring you?

EDWARD: No indeed: we are anxious to learn the solution.

ALEX: I'm not sure that there *is* any solution.

But even this does not bring us to the heart of the matter.  
There are also foreign agitators,  
Stirring up trouble . . .

LAVINIA: Why don't you expel them?

ALEX: They are citizens of a friendly neighbouring state  
Which we have just recognized. You see, Lavinia,  
There are very deep waters.

EDWARD: And the agitators;  
How do they agitate?

ALEX: By convincing the heathen  
That the slaughter of monkeys has put a curse on them  
Which can only be removed by slaughtering the Christians.  
They have even been persuading some of the converts—  
Who, after all, prefer not to be slaughtered—  
To relapse into heathendom. So, instead of eating monkeys  
They are eating Christians.

JULIA: Who have eaten monkeys.

ALEX: The native is not, I fear, very logical.

JULIA: I wondered where you were taking us, with your monkeys.  
I thought I was going to dine out on those monkeys:  
But one can't dine out on eating Christians—  
Even among pagans!

ALEX: Not on the *whole* story.

EDWARD: And have any of the English residents been murdered?

ALEX: Yes, but they are not usually eaten.

When these people have done with a European  
He is, as a rule, no longer fit to eat.

EDWARD: And what has your commission accomplished?

ALEX: We have just drawn up an interim report.

EDWARD: Will it be made public?

ALEX: It cannot be, at present:  
There are too many international complications.

Eventually, there may be an official publication.

EDWARD: But when?

ALEX: In a year or two.

EDWARD: And meanwhile?

ALEX: Meanwhile the monkeys multiply.

LAVINIA: And the Christians?

ALEX: Ah, the Christians! Now, I think I ought to tell you  
About someone you know—or knew . . .

JULIA: Edward!

Somebody must have walked over my grave:

I'm feeling so chilly. Give me some gin.

Not a cocktail. I'm freezing—in July!

CATERER'S MAN: Mr. Quilpe!

EDWARD: Now who . . .

[Enter PETER.]

Why, it's Peter!

LAVINIA: Peter!

PETER: Hullo, everybody!

LAVINIA: When did you arrive?

PETER: I flew over from New York last night—

I left Los Angeles three days ago.

I saw Sheila Paisley at lunch today

And she told me you were giving a party—

She's coming on later, after the Gunnings—

So I said, I really must crash in:

It's my only chance to see Edward and Lavinia.

I'm only over for a week, you see,

And I'm driving down to the country this evening,

So I knew you wouldn't mind my looking in so early.

It does seem ages since I last saw any of you!

And how are you, Alex? And dear old Julia!

LAVINIA: So you've just come from New York.

PETER: Yeah, from New York.

The Bologolomskys saw me off.

You remember Princess Bologolomsky

In the old days? We dined the other night

At the Saffron Monkey. That's the place to go now.

ALEX: How very odd. My monkeys are saffron.



PETER: Your monkeys, Alex? I always said  
That Alex knew everybody. But I didn't know  
That he knew any monkeys.

JULIA: But give us your news;  
Give us your news of the world, Peter.  
We lead such a quiet life, here in London.

PETER: You always did enjoy a leg-pull, Julia:  
But you all know I'm working for Pan-Am-Eagle?

EDWARD: No. Tell us, what is Pan-Am-Eagle?

PETER: You must have been living a quiet life!  
Don't you go to the movies?

LAVINIA: Occasionally.

PETER: Alex knows.

Did you see my last picture, Alex?

ALEX: I knew about it, but I didn't see it.

There is no cinema in Kinkanja.

PETER: Kinkanja? Where's that? They don't have pictures?  
Pan-Am-Eagle must look into this.

Perhaps it would be a good place to make one.

—Alex knows all about Pan-Am-Eagle:

It was he who introduced me to the great Bela.

JULIA: And who is the great Bela?

PETER: Why, Bela Szogody—

He's my boss. I thought everyone knew *his* name.

JULIA: Is he your connection in California, Alex?

ALEX: Yes, we have sometimes obliged each other.

PETER: Well, it was Bela sent me over

Just for a week. And I have my hands full.

I'm going down tonight, to Boltwell.

JULIA: To stay with the Duke?

PETER: And do him a good turn.

We're making a film of English life

And we want to use Boltwell.

JULIA: But I understood that Boltwell  
Is in a very decayed condition.

PETER: Exactly. It is. And that's why we're interested.

The most decayed noble mansion in England!

At least, of any that are still inhabited.

We've got a team of experts over  
To study the decay, so as to reproduce it.  
Then we build another Boltwell in California.

JULIA: But what is your position, Peter?

Have you become an expert on decaying houses?

PETER: Oh dear no! I've written the script of this film,  
And Bela is very pleased with it.

He thought I should see the original Boltwell;

And besides, he thought that as I'm English

I ought to know the best way to handle a duke.

Besides that, we've got the casting director:

He's looking for some typical English faces—

Of course, only for minor parts—

And I'll help him decide what faces are typical.

JULIA: Peter, I've thought of a wonderful idea!

I've always wanted to go to California:

Couldn't you persuade your casting director

To take us all over? We're all very typical.

PETER: No, I'm afraid . . .

CATERER'S MAN: Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly!

JULIA: Oh, I forgot! I'd another surprise for you.

[Enter REILLY.]

I want you to meet Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly—

EDWARD: We're delighted to see him. But we *have* met before.

JULIA: Then if you know him already, you won't be afraid of him.

You know, I was afraid of him at first:

He looks so forbidding . . .

REILLY: My dear Julia,

You are giving me a very bad introduction—

Supposing that an introduction was necessary.

JULIA: My dear Henry, you are interrupting me.

LAVINIA: If you can interrupt Julia, Sir Henry,

You are the perfect guest we've been waiting for.

REILLY: I should not dream of trying to interrupt Julia . . .

JULIA: But you're both interrupting!

REILLY: Who is interrupting now?

JULIA: Now my head's fairly spinning. I must have a cocktail.

EDWARD [*To REILLY*]: And will you have a cocktail?

REILLY: Might I have a glass of water?

EDWARD: Anything with it?

REILLY: Nothing, thank you.

LAVINIA: May I introduce Mr. Peter Quilpe?

Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly. Peter's an old friend

Of my husband and myself. Oh, I forgot—

[*Turning to ALEX*]

I rather assumed that you knew each other—

I don't know why I should. Mr. MacColgie Gibbs.

ALEX: Indeed, yes, we have met.

REILLY: On several commissions.

JULIA: We've been having such an interesting conversation.

Peter's just over from California

Where he's something very important in films.

He's making a film of English life

And he's going to find parts for all of us. Think of it!

PETER: But, Julia, I was just about to explain—

I'm afraid I can't find parts for anybody

In *this* film—it's not my business;

And that's not the way we do it.

JULIA: But, Peter;

If you're taking Boltwell to California

Why can't you take me?

PETER: We're not taking Boltwell.

We reconstruct a Boltwell.

JULIA: Very well, then:

Why not reconstruct *me*? It's very much cheaper.

Oh dear, I can see you're determined not to have me.

PETER: You know you'd never come if we invited you.

But there's someone I wanted to ask about,

Who did really want to get into films,

And I always thought she could make a success of it

If she only got the chance. It's Celia Coplestone.

She always wanted to. And now I could help her.

I've already spoken to Bela about her,

And I want to introduce her to our casting director.

I've got an idea for another film.

Can you tell me where she is? I couldn't find her  
In the telephone directory.

JULIA: Not in the directory,  
Or in any directory. You can tell them now, Alex.

LAVINIA: What does Julia mean?

ALEX: I was about to speak of her  
When you came in, Peter. I'm afraid you can't have Celia.

PETER: Oh . . . Is she married?

ALEX: Not married, but dead.

LAVINIA: Celia?

ALEX: Dead.

PETER: Dead. That knocks the bottom out of it.

EDWARD: Celia dead.

JULIA: You had better tell them, Alex,  
The news that you bring back from Kinkanja.

LAVINIA: Kinkanja? What was Celia doing in Kinkanja?  
We heard that she had joined some nursing order . . .

ALEX: She had joined an order. A very austere one.  
And as she already had experience of nursing . . .

LAVINIA: Yes, she had been a V.A.D. I remember.

ALEX: She was directed to Kinkanja,  
Where there are various endemic diseases  
Besides, of course, those brought by Europeans,  
And where the conditions are favourable to plague.

EDWARD: Go on.

ALEX: It seems that there were three of them—  
Three sisters at this station, in a Christian village;  
And half the natives were dying of pestilence.  
They must have been overworked for weeks.

EDWARD: And then?

ALEX: And then, the insurrection broke out  
Among the heathen, of which I was telling you.  
They knew of it, but would not leave the dying natives.  
Eventually, two of them escaped:  
One died in the jungle, and the other  
Will never be fit for normal life again.  
But Celia Coplestone, she was taken.

When our people got there, they questioned the villagers—  
Those who survived. And then they found her body,  
Or at least, they found the traces of it.

EDWARD: But before that . . .

ALEX: It was difficult to tell.  
But from what we know of local practices  
It would seem that she must have been crucified  
Very near an ant-hill.

LAVINIA: But Celia! . . . of all people . . .

EDWARD: And just for a handful of plague-stricken natives  
Who would have died anyway.

ALEX: Yes, the patients died anyway;  
Being tainted with the plague, they were not eaten.

LAVINIA: Oh, Edward, I'm so sorry—what a feeble thing to say!  
But you know what I mean.

EDWARD: And you know what I'm thinking.

PETER: I don't understand at all. But then I've been away  
For two years and don't know what happened  
To Celia, during those two years.  
Two years! Thinking about Celia.

EDWARD: It's the waste that I resent.

PETER: You know more than I do:  
For *me*, it's everything else that's a waste.  
Two years! And it was all a mistake.  
Julia! Why don't *you* say anything?

JULIA: You gave her those two years, as best you could.

PETER: When did she . . . take up this career?

JULIA: Two years ago.

PETER: Two years ago! I tried to forget about her,  
Until I began to think myself a success  
And got a little more self-confidence;  
And then I thought about her again. More and more  
At first I did not want to know about Celia  
And so I never asked. Then I wanted to know  
And did not dare to ask. It took all my courage  
To ask you about her just now; but I never thought  
Of anything like this. I suppose I didn't know her,  
I didn't understand her. I understand nothing.

REILLY: You understand your *métier*, Mr. Quilpe—

Which is the most that any of us can ask for.

PETER: And what a *métier*! I've tried to believe in it

So that I might believe in myself.

I thought I had ideas to make a revolution

In the cinema, that no one could ignore—

But here I am, making a second-rate film!

But I thought it was going to lead to something better,

And that seemed possible, while Celia was alive.

I wanted it, believed in it, for Celia.

And, of course, I wanted to do something for Celia—

But what mattered was, that Celia was alive.

And now it's all worthless. Celia's not alive.

LAVINIA: No, it's not all worthless, Peter. You've only just begun.

I mean, this only brings you to the point

At which you *must* begin. You were saying just now

That you never knew Celia. We none of us did.

What you've been living on is an image of Celia

Which you made for yourself, to meet your own needs.

Peter, please don't think I'm being unkind . . .

PETER: No, I don't think you're being unkind, Lavinia;

And I know that you're right.

LAVINIA: And perhaps what I've been saying

Will seem less unkind if I can make you understand

That in fact I've been talking about myself.

EDWARD: Lavinia is right. This is where you start from.

If you find out now, Peter, things about yourself

That you don't like to face: well, just remember

That some men have to learn much worse things

About themselves, and learn them later

When it's harder to recover, and make a new beginning.

It's not so hard for you. You're naturally good.

PETER: I'm sorry. I don't believe I've taken in

All that you've been saying. But I'm grateful all the same.

You know, all the time that you've been talking,

One thought has been going round and round in my head—

That I've only been interested in myself:

And that isn't good enough for Celia.

JULIA: You must have learned how to look at people, Peter,  
When you looked at them with an eye for the films:  
That is, when you're not concerned with yourself  
But just being an eye. You will come to think of Celia  
Like that, one day. And then you'll understand her  
And be reconciled, and be happy in the thought of her.

LAVINIA: Sir Henry, there is something I want to say to you.  
While Alex was telling us what happened to Celia  
I was looking at your face. And it seemed from your expression  
That the way in which she died did not disturb you  
Or the fact that she died because she would not leave  
A few dying natives.

REILLY: Who knows, Mrs. Chamberlayne,  
The difference that made to the natives who were dying  
Or the state of mind in which they died?

LAVINIA: I'm willing to grant that. What struck me, though,  
Was that your face showed no surprise or horror  
At the way in which she died. I don't know if you knew her.  
I suspect you did. In any case you knew *about* her;  
Yet I thought your expression was one of . . . satisfaction!

REILLY: Mrs. Chamberlayne, I must be very transparent  
Or else you are very perceptive.

JULIA: Oh, Henry!  
Lavinia is much more observant than you think.  
I believe that she has forced you to a show-down.

REILLY: You state the position correctly, Julia.  
Do you mind if I quote poetry, Mrs. Chamberlayne?

LAVINIA: Oh no, I should love to hear you speaking poetry . . .

JULIA: She has made a point, Henry.

LAVINIA: . . . if it answers my question.

REILLY: *Ere Babylon was dust  
The magus Zoroaster, my dead child,  
Met his own image walking in the garden.  
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.  
For know there are two worlds of life and death:  
One that which thou beholdest; but the other  
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit  
The shadows of all forms that think and live*



*Till death unite them and they part no more.*

—When I first met Miss Coplestone, in this room,  
 I saw the image, standing behind her chair,  
 Of a Celia Coplestone whose face showed the astonishment  
 Of the first five minutes after a violent death.  
 If this strains your credulity, Mrs. Chamberlayne,  
 I ask you only to entertain the suggestion  
 That a sudden intuition, in certain minds,  
 May tend to express itself at once in a picture.  
 That happens to me, sometimes. So it was obvious  
 That here was a woman under sentence of death.  
 That was her destiny. The only question  
 Then was, what sort of death? *I* could not know;  
 Because it was for her to choose the way of life  
 To lead to death, and, without knowing the end  
 Yet choose the form of death. We know the death she chose.  
 I did not know that she would die in this way,  
*She* did not know. So all that *I* could do  
 Was to direct her in the way of preparation.  
 That way, which she accepted, led to this death.  
 And if that is not a happy death, what death is happy?

EDWARD: Do you mean that having chosen this form of death  
 She did not suffer as ordinary people suffer?

REILLY: Not at all what I mean. Rather the contrary.  
 I'd say that she suffered all that we should suffer  
 In fear and pain and loathing—all these together—  
 And reluctance of the body to become a *thing*.  
 I'd say she suffered more, because more conscious  
 Than the rest of us. She paid the highest price  
 In suffering. That is part of the design.

LAVINIA: Perhaps she had been through greater agony beforehand.  
 I mean—I know nothing of her last two years.

REILLY: That shows some insight on your part, Mrs. Chamberlayne;  
 But such experience can only be hinted at  
 In myths and images. To speak about it  
 We talk of darkness, labyrinths, Minotaur terrors.  
 But that world does not take the place of this one.  
 Do you imagine that the Saint in the desert



With spiritual evil always at his shoulder  
Suffered any less from hunger, damp, exposure,  
Bowel trouble, and the fear of lions,  
Cold of the night and heat of the day, than we should?

EDWARD: But if this was right—if this was right for Celia—  
There must be something else that is terribly wrong,  
And the rest of us are somehow involved in the wrong.  
I should only speak for myself. I'm sure that *I* am.

REILLY: Let me free your mind from one impediment:  
You must try to detach yourself from what you still feel  
As your responsibility.

EDWARD: I cannot help the feeling  
That, in some way, my responsibility  
Is greater than that of a band of half-crazed savages.

LAVINIA: Oh, Edward, I knew! I knew what you were thinking!  
Doesn't it help you, that I feel guilty too?

REILLY: If we all were judged according to the consequences  
Of all our words and deeds, beyond the intention  
And beyond our limited understanding  
Of ourselves and others, we should all be condemned.  
Mrs. Chamberlayne, I often have to make a decision  
Which may mean restoration or ruin to a patient—  
And sometimes I have made the wrong decision.  
As for Miss Coplestone, because you think her death was waste  
You blame yourselves, and because you blame yourselves  
You think her life was wasted. It was triumphant.  
But I am no more responsible for the triumph—  
And just as responsible for her death as you are.

LAVINIA: Yet I know I shall go on blaming myself  
For being so unkind to her . . . so spiteful.  
I shall go on seeing her at the moment  
When she said good-bye to us, two years ago.

EDWARD: Your responsibility is nothing to mine, Lavinia.

LAVINIA: I'm not sure about that. If I had understood you  
Then I might not have misunderstood Celia.

REILLY: You will have to live with these memories and make them  
Into something new. Only by acceptance  
Of the past will you alter its meaning.

JULIA: Henry, I think it is time that *I* said something.  
Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another,  
And then must take the consequences. Celia chose  
A way of which the consequence was Kinkanja.  
Peter chose a way that leads him to Boltwell:  
And he's got to go there.

PETER: I see what you mean.  
I wish I didn't have to. But the car will be waiting,  
And the experts—I'd almost forgotten them.  
I realize that I can't get out of it—  
What else can I do?

ALEX: It is your film.  
And I know that Bela expects great things of it.

PETER: So now I'll be going.

EDWARD: Shall we see you again, Peter,  
Before you leave England?

LAVINIA: Do try to come to see us.  
You know, I think it would do us all good—  
You and me and Edward . . . to talk about Celia.

PETER: Thanks very much. But not this time—  
I simply shan't be able to.

EDWARD: But on your next visit?

PETER: The next time I come to England, I promise you.

I really do want to see you both, very much.

Good-bye, Julia. Good-bye, Alex. Good-bye, Sir Henry. *[Exit.]*

JULIA: And now the consequence of the Chamberlaynes' choice  
Is a cocktail party. They must be ready for it.  
Their guests may be arriving at any moment.

REILLY: Julia, you are right. It is also right  
That the Chamberlaynes should now be giving a party.

LAVINIA: And I have been thinking, for these last five minutes,  
How I could face my guests. I wish it was over.  
I mean . . . I am glad you came . . . I am glad Alex told us . . .  
And Peter had to know . . .

EDWARD: Now I think I understand . . .

LAVINIA: Then I hope you will explain it to me!

EDWARD: Oh, it isn't much  
That I understand yet! But Sir Henry has been saying,

I think, that every moment is a fresh beginning;  
And Julia, that life is only keeping on;  
And somehow, the two ideas seem to fit together.

LAVINIA: But all the same . . . I don't want to see these people.

REILLY: It is your appointed burden. And as for the party,  
I am sure it will be a success.

JULIA: And I think, Henry,  
That we should leave before the party begins.  
They will get on better without us. You too, Alex.

LAVINIA: We don't *want* you to go!

ALEX: We have another engagement.

REILLY: And on this occasion I shall not be unexpected.

JULIA: Now, Henry. Now, Alex. We're going to the Gunnings'.

[*Exeunt JULIA, REILLY and ALEX.*]

LAVINIA: Edward, how am I looking?

EDWARD: Very well.

I might almost say, your best. But you always look your best.

LAVINIA: Oh, Edward, that spoils it. No woman can believe  
That she always looks her best. You're rather transparent,  
You know, when you're trying to cheer me up.

To say I always look my best can only mean the worst.

EDWARD: I never shall learn how to pay a compliment.

LAVINIA: What you should have done was to admire my dress.

EDWARD: But I've already told you how much I like it.

LAVINIA: But so much has happened since then. And besides,  
One sometimes likes to hear the same compliment twice.

EDWARD: And now for the party.

LAVINIA: Now for the party.

EDWARD: It will soon be over.

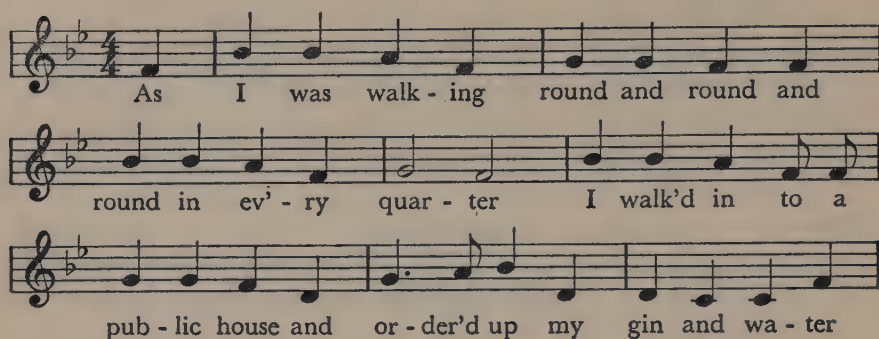
LAVINIA: I wish it would begin.

EDWARD: There's the doorbell.

LAVINIA: Oh, I'm glad. It's begun.

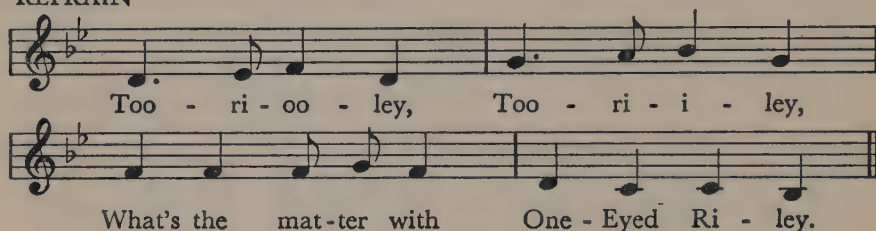
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# ONE-EYED RILEY

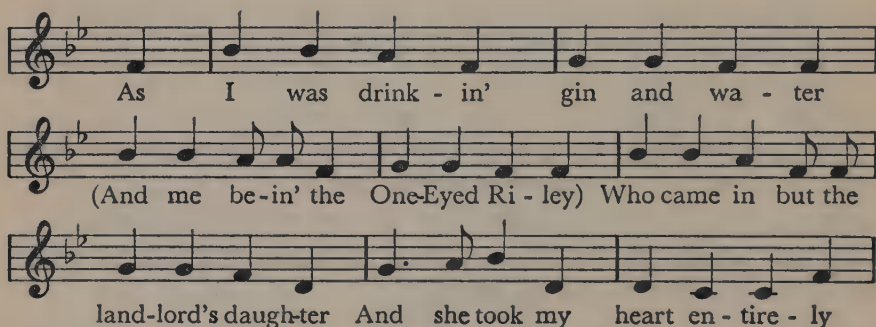


As I was walk - ing round and round and  
round in ev' - ry quar - ter I walk'd in to a  
pub - lic house and or - der'd up my gin and wa - ter

## REFRAIN

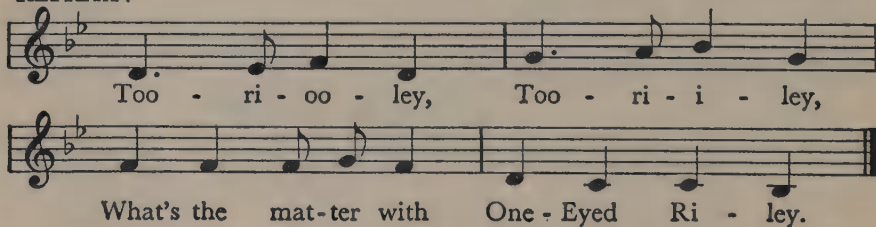


Too - ri - oo - ley, Too - ri - i - ley,  
What's the mat - ter with One - Eyed Ri - ley.



As I was drink - in' gin and wa - ter  
(And me be-in' the One-Eyed Ri - ley) Who came in but the  
land-lord's daugh-ter And she took my heart en - tire - ly

## REFRAIN



Too - ri - oo - ley, Too - ri - i - ley,  
What's the mat - ter with One - Eyed Ri - ley.

[The tune of *One-Eyed Riley* as scored from the author's dictation by Miss Mary Trevelyan.]

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T. S. ELIOT was born in St. Louis in 1888. He was educated at Harvard, the Sorbonne, and Merton College, Oxford. Harvard, Princeton, and Yale have conferred on him honorary degrees, and one of the British Empire's highest honors, the Order of Merit, was bestowed on him by the late King George in 1948—the same year he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.











PS3509 .L43 1952  
Eliot, T. S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888-196  
Complete poems and plays.

PS Eliot, Thomas Stearns, 1888-1965.  
3509 Complete poems and plays. [1st ed.] New York, Har-  
L43 court, Brace, 1952,  
1952 vii, 392 p. music. 25 cm.

PS3509.L43 1952

810.81

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