

# ROUGH SLEEPERS

## CHARACTERS

LUCY - an eleven year old girl

CAPTAIN - a tramp

SYLVIA - a vicar

COLONEL MEGGINSON - a retired army officer

MRS MEGGINSON - his wife

BRENDA - a woman in her 30s

CHARLIE - her husband

THE DEAD - Arnold Megginson, Ellen Byram, George Whitwell, James Carter

## SCENE

A churchyard. Gravestones standing at various angles. Behind them the door to an old chapel. To one side of the door, against the chapel wall, a stone tomb. Diagonally opposite to the tomb, a plain wooden bench. Behind that, an old swing made from a plank hanging from ropes. Lucy sits on the swing throughout. In the transition from one scene to the next she gives a gentle push with her feet, then lets the swing slow down until it comes to a stop.

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*(Evening. Birdsong. LUCY sitting on the swing. CAPTAIN enters, carrying a bundle. Stops, out of breath.)*

**CAPTAIN**

Everything's a toil these days. I used to be able to walk up a hill, now I toil up it. I used to think nothing of walking twenty miles in a day. I still do some days, but it's a toil. Everything's a toil.

*(Drops his bundle on the ground, looking round.)*

You can't move for brambles.

*(Tries the door.)*

Locked. They always are. They didn't used to be.

*(Knocks on the door.)*

Anybody in?

*(Imitates the voice of a landlady.)*

There's a sign in the window. No vacancies! Can't you read?

*(In his own voice.)*

Sorry, missus.

*(Picks up his bundle and puts it down on the tomb.)*

I don't mind sleeping outside. What about this? Is this taken?

*(Imitates landlady again.)*

It was till he did a moonlight flit.

*(Lies down on the tomb, sits up again, looks round.)*

They'll all do that one day. Judgement Day. What a sight that would be!

*(Stands and goes to one of the graves.)*

Who have we got here then?

*(Bends down to read the inscription.)*

Can't read it for moss. It's been a long time since anyone left any flowers here.

*(Takes a penknife out of his pocket.)*

Let's see if we can make it out.

*(Scrapes the inscription with his penknife.)*

Arnold... Megginson... 1793... 1857. What's that come to? Seven and fifty-seven... Sixty four. Not a bad age in those days. Well, Mr Megginson, I'm thinking of moving in. Number one's empty. You and me could be neighbours. What do you say to that?

*(Goes to the next gravestone.)*

Who else have we got?

*(Scraping the inscription.)*

George, is it? George... Ernest... Whitwell... George Ernest Whitwell... 1782... 1841. So what does that make you? Fifty-nine. Fifty-nine in 1841 and fifty-nine for ever.

*(Goes to another gravestone.)*

Now then, here's one that's been a bit better looked after. Not so old, that's why. Ellen Angela Byram, Born in 1848, went to her rest in 1942. Wife of Joseph Byram, 1833-1882. 1882! That's sixty years. Sixty years a widow! He was a good bit older than you, wasn't he? Fifteen years. He could have been a widower when he married you. A man couldn't do without a wife in those days. He'd starve to death on his own. A cook, a cleaner and a bit of company. Something to warm his feet on in bed.

*(Moving on.)*

Who've we got here? Just look at that! Covered in moss. Must be ancient.

*(Speaking as he scrapes with his penknife.)*

Let's see then. Starts with an L... Luke... No, Lucy... Wilks... Lucy Wilks... Born in 1847... That makes her a year older than you, Mrs Byram. Did you know each other when you were children? Did you play together? Eh? On an evening like this, when the days were getting short, making the most of the daylight until your mothers called you in. Skipping, hopping, spinning a top, bowling a hoop down the pavement. Eh? Who went first then, you or Nelly Byram? Let's see... 1847 to 18...

*(Stops scraping suddenly.)*

Oh, Lucy! 1847 to 1858... Eleven. Oh Lucy, Lucy! How they must have grieved for you!

*(Folds his penknife and puts it back in his pocket. Brushes away a tear with his coat sleeve.)*

Oh well! It was a long time ago and it's all over now. God rest your little soul, Lucy.

*(Walks away from the gravestones and looks around.)*

This is the most overgrown, neglected graveyard I've ever been in, and I've been in a few.

*(Goes back to the tomb, sits down.)*

It isn't right. They deserve better. It needs taking in hand. I could have it looking nice again in no time if I could lay my hand on some tools. A sickle to get rid of the brambles. A pair of garden shears for that hedge. That's all it would take. It's a shame to see it like this. Must have been a nice little chapel in its day, on top of its little hill.

*(Long pause.)*

I'll take it.

*(Makes himself comfortable on the tomb and lies down, using his bundle as a pillow.)*

Goodnight, Mr Megginson. Goodnight, Mr Whitwell. Goodnight, Mrs Byram. Goodnight, Lucy. Goodnight, everybody. See you in the morning.

## Scene 2

*(Enter SYLVIA.)*

**SYLVIA**

*(Addressing the audience as if speaking to children in a school assembly.)*

Good morning, children! It's lovely to see you all! I can see you're dying to go back to your classrooms and start work. You are, aren't you? Aren't you?

*(Puts her hand to her ear as if waiting for them to answer.)*

Of course you are! Well, I promise not to keep you long, but Mrs Byram has very kindly asked me to come and talk to you in assembly this morning. You know who I am, don't you? I know some of you do, because I've seen some of you in church. I've seen you, haven't I, Emma? Hello, Emma! But even if you haven't seen me in church, you still know who I am, don't you? How do you know?

*(Short pause, waiting for someone to answer. Touches her collar to give them a clue.)*

Ah, yes! Lots of hands going up now!

*(Picks someone out.)*

Yes? You. Yes?

*(Waits a moment, then nods vigorously.)*

That's right! Easy, wasn't it? I'm the vicar of St Mary's. The new vicar, which is why some of you haven't seen me before. I'm sure you all knew the vicar before me, didn't you. Can you remember his name? Yes, of course! Mr Jenkins. The Reverend Gilbert Jenkins. Well, Mr Jenkins has retired now and I've taken his place. Mrs Byram told you my name when she introduced me, didn't she? Can you remember? That's right! Reverend Sylvia Collingwood. But I much prefer to be called by my first name. That's easier, isn't it? Shall we practise? Ready? Good morning, children.

*(Puts her hand to her ear.)*

Come on! I'm sure you can do better than that. Good morning, children.

*(Puts her hand to her ear again.)*

Good morning, Sylvia!

*(Pause.)*

Now, children, I wonder if anyone has noticed anything different about me? Different from Mr Jenkins, I mean. Anyone?

*(Waits for an answer.)*

That's right! I'm a woman. There was a time when only men could be vicars, wasn't there? But now anyone can be a vicar and there are quite a lot of other women in other parishes in this diocese, but I'm the first one to be vicar here. So I hope all you girls will make the most of your opportunities now and do whatever you want to do in life, just the same as the boys. Anything they can do, you can do... just as well!

*(Short pause.)*

Now, children, is there anything that's going to happen soon that you're all looking forward to and getting very excited about?

*(Puts her hands over her ears.)*

Hallowe'en! I thought so. Hallowe'en. And what is it you like about Hallowe'en? Putting on masks? Dressing up? Scaring people? Listening to ghost stories? Do you like to feel scared? Do you? Really? I wonder why. Perhaps another time we could talk about that, because it's a bit funny, isn't it, liking to be scared. But we'll save that for another time. All I want to do now is to tell you what Hallowe'en really means. Does anyone know? No? I'll tell you then. It's short for All Hallows Eve, which means the evening before All Hallows, and All Hallows is an old name for All Saints, and All Saints is the day in the church calendar when we celebrate the lives of all the saints, all the good people who were so good in their lives that when they died and went to heaven they became saints. So what has that got to do with feeling scared and putting on masks and dressing up as ghosts and ghouls and witches?

*(Short pause.)*

Well, what you have to remember is that a long time ago people really believed in ghosts and ghouls and witches and on All Hallows or All Saints they prayed to the saints to keep them safe. They used to think that the night before All Saints Day was the last chance the devil had to do his evil work, because the next day all the saints would be there and they would send the devil away with his tail between his legs. Go on, be off with you!

*(Pause.)*

So that's how Hallowe'en came about. We know now that it's just superstition and we have fun wearing masks and dressing up and pretending to be scared. We don't really believe in those things any more, do we? Of course not!

*(Turns to address the headteacher.)*

Thank you, Mrs Byram.

*(Exit.)*

### Scene 3

*(Early morning. Birdsong. CAPTAIN waking up.)*

**CAPTAIN**

Where am I? Where...?

*(Sits up, looks round.)*

Oh, yes! I remember. Mr Megginson, Mrs Byram. Who was the other one? Whitwell. Mr Whitwell. George Ernest Whitwell. Sounds very important. Waistcoat and fob watch. Bowler hat. Town clerk maybe.

*(Pause.)*

And Lucy! Mustn't forget Lucy. Little Lucy Wilks. Only eleven. Eleven years old forever. Eternal childhood! All eternity to play in! Don't cry for Lucy. Think what she avoided by dying when she did. The thousand shocks that flesh is heir to.

*(Aside to Mr Megginson.)*

Hamlet.

*(Pause.)*

Soon, with the help of my trusty penknife, I will learn all your names. We are neighbours, after all. How should I greet you? I can't very well ask you if you slept well, can I? Or can I? Perhaps I can. Do you wake and sleep as you always did? Only more peacefully? Is that it? Always at peace!

*(Pause.)*

Yes, thank you, I slept well, very well. I would even go so far as to say that I slept peacefully. By mortal standards, that is. Not by yours. You who enjoy a peace that passeth human understanding.

*(Pause.)*

One wakes sometimes from dreams of peace. But then, in the moment of waking, it is gone. Like Caliban. 'When I waked I cried to dream again.'

*(Aside to Mr Megginson.)*

The Tempest. Shakespeare.

*(Pause.)*

I remember a dream I had once as a child. I dreamed it only once, but I still remember it.

*(Short pause.)*

I was flying. Not in an aeroplane. More like a bird. But no, not even like a bird. There was no flapping of wings, no noise. I just floated, glided, like a leaf or a paper aeroplane. I was not very high, only just above the tree tops. I floated over the trees and I looked down, and all I could see below me was grass, green grass, long green grass that swayed in the breeze, like waves.

*(Pause.)*

It was very beautiful. I've tried to write a poem about it many times, but the words elude me. I wish it had been a recurring dream, but it was not. I dreamed it only once, which makes me think that it might not have been a dream at all, but a vision.

*(Pause.)*

I sometimes wonder if that's what it's like to die.

*(Addressing the gravestones.)*

Is it?

*(Long pause.)*

Now, where shall I go to get my breakfast? I'm hungry after my good night's sleep. Where shall I go? Any suggestions, Mrs Byram? What would you have said if I'd come to your door and asked if you could spare me a bite to eat? You wouldn't have turned me away, would you? People didn't then. I would have been expected to earn it of course, doing odd jobs. Odd jobs! Those were the days. The disappearance of odd jobs has changed the face of Britain. Take it from me, the women who used to open the door to you in those days had no end of jobs to do. They were always happy to give one to someone like me in exchange for a bacon sandwich.

*(Pause.)*

The odd jobs have all gone now, what with vacuum cleaners and automatic washing machines and tumble dryers and dish washers and ride-on lawn mowers and leaf blowers and what not. There's been an odd job revolution. It began across the Atlantic, came here, then spread like a plague all over Europe and beyond.

*(Short pause.)*

Western Europe anyway. They probably still have odd jobs in Poland.

*(Pause.)*

There was a time when feeding men like me was like feeding the birds. It was something the woman of the house used to do out of the kindness of her heart. Or the housekeeper or the cook.

*(Short pause.)*

They don't even feed the birds now like they used to do. They used to feed them with scraps and left-overs. Now they have special bird food that they buy from garden centres and put in bird feeders. Bird feeders! That's no good to me, is it? In the old days, the birds got the rind and I got the fat and a bit of the bacon. I can see the farmer's wife now, cutting up the rind with her scissors and throwing it out of the door. My bit of fat bacon's sizzling in the pan and I'm outside sweeping up the leaves or washing the windows. Bird feeders!

*(Pause. Gets off the tomb, walks about.)*

No lack of odd jobs to do here. What do you think, Mrs Byram? Needs a bit of - what do they call it now? - TLC. Tender loving care. If that hedge was cut back... You can see what it was at one time, a proper hedge that someone planted, with things that had been grown for the purpose from seed and slips. Oak, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, honeysuckle, dog rose. Hedges don't just grow, Lucy, any more than walls do.

*(Short pause.)*

Birds need hedges, I need walls, preferably four of them with a roof attached. A barn, a shed, a sheepfold, a byre. Is that where you get your name from, Mrs Byram? Something to do with cowsheds?

*(Pause.)*

I'd be happy in a cowshed. I often have been. Or a stable. Not so keen on pigsties, but beggars can't be choosers.

*(Pause.)*

I don't mean that literally, by the way, Mrs Byram. I do not and never will beg. I was speaking metaphorically.

*(Pause.)*

A bit of TLC, that's all it needs. I shall need some tools though. Can't do it with my bare hands. Garden shears. A sickle. People don't use things like that anymore. Everything's electric now. I'll have to see what I can find in the back of somebody's garden shed.

*(Pause.)*

See that bird, Lucy? Did you see it? It flew into that hedge and vanished. Safe as houses in there.

*(Pause.)*

My tummy's making noises. I shall have to find something to put in it.

*(Turns to go.)*

I won't be long.

(Exit.)

#### Scene 4

(Enter **COL MEGGINSON** holding a whisky glass and a sherry glass.)

**COL MEGGINSON** (Calling to his wife.)

Here's your sherry, darling. Sorry I'm late. Charlie phoned. Kept me talking.

(Enter **MRS MEGGINSON**, taking off her gardening gloves. **COL MEGGINSON** holds out the sherry glass.)

**MRS MEGGINSON** (As if to a child who has to have everything explained to him.)

Just put it down until I can take it, dear.

(**COL MEGGINSON** looks round for somewhere to put it. **MRS MEGGINSON** puts her gloves on the bench and takes the sherry glass from him.)

What did Charlie want?

**COL MEGGINSON** Wanted to know if he could go a bit over budget on the fireworks.

**MRS MEGGINSON** What did you say?

**COL MEGGINSON** He said it was for one of those rockets that go off in stages, you know, when you think it's all over and then there's another one, and another, and another. Different colours. Oohs and aahs all over the park. You know the kind of thing. Grand finale.

**MRS MEGGINSON** He does it very well.

**COL MEGGINSON** Ah yes, but it has to be better every time, you see. That's the thing. Has to outdo himself.

**MRS MEGGINSON** It's what everyone expects. Charlie's fireworks are legendary.

**COL MEGGINSON** "It's simple economics, George," he said. "Invest in the fireworks, you make more on the hog roast." Well, I could see the sense in that. I didn't take much persuading. It wasn't a lot he wanted anyway.

**MRS MEGGINSON** All the same, he has to get your approval, doesn't he? You are the chairman after all. Or do you have to consult the committee?

**COL MEGGINSON** Oh no. Executive decision. It's in the constitution.

(Pause.)

**MRS MEGGINSON** You won't forget the privet, will you?

**COL MEGGINSON** What? Oh yes. I was meaning to say.

**MRS MEGGINSON** What?

**COL MEGGINSON** I was going to do it yesterday, when you were out for your Ladies' Lunch. I went to get the shears and I couldn't find them. I thought you must have moved them.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Why on earth would I do that? Where did you look?

**COL MEGGINSON** In the shed.

**MRS MEGGINSON** If that's where you put them last time, that's where they'll be.

**COL MEGGINSON** That's where I always put them. There's a hook on the back wall of the shed.

**MRS MEGGINSON** I couldn't reach them even if I wanted to. I can't get my arm high enough.

(Raising one arm.)

This one.

**COL MEGGINSON** Gave up looking in the end. Went in and watched the rugby.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Ah!

**COL MEGGINSON** I suppose I must have put them down somewhere last time and forgot to put them away.

**MRS MEGGINSON** In the garage?

**COL MEGGINSON** Perhaps. I'll have another look tomorrow.

*(Pause.)*

France won. Good match.

*(Pause.)*

How was your lunch?

**MRS MEGGINSON** It was lovely! Jennifer Byram's youngest has got engaged.

**COL MEGGINSON** Anyone we know?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Staveley-Wainwright. Reggie. Not from round here.

**COL MEGGINSON** I could always borrow Charlie's hedge trimmer.

**MRS MEGGINSON** I'm getting cold.

**COL MEGGINSON** Knowing Charlie, he'd probably offer to do it himself.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Why don't you ask him?

*(Finishing her sherry.)*

I'm going to go in and have a wash and then you can pour me another.

*(She gives him her glass, picks up her gardening gloves and goes out.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Perhaps I will.

*(Finishes his whisky.)*

Chairman's privilege.

*(Follows her out.)*

## Scene 5

*(Morning. Birdsong. Enter SYLVIA, holding a large iron key. She unlocks the chapel door and goes in, closing it behind her. Enter CAPTAIN. He kneels down behind one of the gravestones, takes out his penknife and starts to scrape away the moss.)*

**CAPTAIN** James... Carter... 1763... 1857. People had long lives even then. Some of them. Not Lucy though. Poor little Lucy. Pleased to meet you, Mr Carter.

*(Crawls on his knees to another gravestone, goes to work on it with his penknife, alternately scraping and speaking.)*

There's a time to live and a time to die... No point in postponing it... The grim reaper isn't so grim really... I don't know why they call him that... He's only doing his job... Probably quite cheerful when you get to know him... The jolly reaper...

*(SYLVIA opens the chapel door and comes out. She closes the door and locks it. Seeing her, CAPTAIN looks up. She turns, sees him and screams, stumbling backwards. CAPTAIN gets up quickly and goes to help.)*

I'm sorry, ma'am. I didn't mean to scare you.

**SYLVIA** *(Breathless, recovering.)*  
Oh! Oh dear!

**CAPTAIN** Are you all right, ma'am?  
*(Looking round, points to the tomb.)*  
Why don't you sit down?

**SYLVIA** No, thank you. I'm all right now.

**CAPTAIN** I was trying to make out what it says.

**SYLVIA** You took me by surprise, that's all.

**CAPTAIN** I didn't think it was in use anymore, the door being locked and the graveyard a bit... neglected. It didn't look as if it was in use.

**SYLVIA** It isn't. I found the key and came to have a look. I'm new here, you see. I don't really know the history. I didn't even know this chapel was here until Mrs Byram told me.

**CAPTAIN** *(Glances at Mrs Byram's gravestone.)*  
Mrs Byram?

**SYLVIA** She's the head of the primary school. St Mary's. It's a Church of England school.

**CAPTAIN** *(Going to Mrs Byram's gravestone.)*  
This might be one of her ancestors, ma'am. See?

**SYLVIA** *(Reading the inscription.)*  
Ellen Angela Byram.

**CAPTAIN** You couldn't make it out before. I've been cleaning them up. Like this one here. James Carter. Are there any Carters in the village, ma'am?

**SYLVIA** I'm not sure. As I said, I haven't been here very long.  
*(Looking at the inscription again.)*  
1848-1942. It's on Jenny's husband's side, of course, not hers. It could be Mr Byram's grandmother or great grandmother, I suppose. I'll ask Mrs Byram next time I see her.

**CAPTAIN** Great-great grandmother perhaps. See when it says Mr Byram died, ma'am?

**SYLVIA** *(Looking again.)*  
1882. Yes, I see.

**CAPTAIN** It could even be his great-great-great grandmother!

**SYLVIA** I suppose it could! It would be a nice bit of mental arithmetic for the children, wouldn't it? I might suggest it to her.  
*(Pause.)*

**CAPTAIN** I'd been thinking I might tidy it up a bit. It's a shame to see it like this.

**SYLVIA** Yes.  
*(Pause.)*

**CAPTAIN** Are you all right now, ma'am?

**SYLVIA** Yes, thank you. I'm absolutely fine. Silly of me!  
*(Pause.)*

**CAPTAIN** So would it be all right if I did a bit of tidying up, ma'am? It must have been a pretty little place in its day. How old would you say it was?

**SYLVIA** I would say it's an old puritan chapel. It's very plain inside. That would put it sometime in the seventeenth century.

**CAPTAIN** I wouldn't want to be trespassing.  
(Pause.)  
I like to pay my way, ma'am, doing odd jobs in return for a bite to eat and somewhere to sleep.  
(Pause.)  
That old stone tomb makes a good bed.

**SYLVIA** Really? Isn't it a bit hard?

**CAPTAIN** Not at all, ma'am.  
(**SYLVIA** looks doubtful.)  
It's dry, that's the main thing. Off the ground. A hard bed is no problem. Your medical people will tell you that. It's good for the back. It's damp that does all the mischief. That's the thing you have to try to avoid when you're sleeping out.

**SYLVIA** Is that where you've been sleeping?

**CAPTAIN** Just last night, ma'am. Just the one night.

**SYLVIA** You're homeless? Sleeping rough?

**CAPTAIN** (After a short pause.)  
I don't have a home, ma'am, but that's a matter of choice. I don't think of myself as sleeping rough. I sleep very well, mostly.

**SYLVIA** I'm sorry. I didn't mean any offence.

**CAPTAIN** None taken, ma'am.  
(Pause.)  
I've been cleaning up the headstones, as you can see, ma'am.  
(Shows her his penknife.)  
This is what I'm using for that job, and it does very well, but I'd need something else to deal with the overgrown vegetation. It would be growing faster than I could cut it back if all I had to do it with was this.

**SYLVIA** Yes. A penknife wouldn't be much use for that.

**CAPTAIN** What I'd need, ma'am, would be a sickle. A sickle and a pair of garden shears. If you could find me something like that, I would have the job done in no time. A few days at the most.

**SYLVIA** Are you asking for a job? I have no money to pay you...

**CAPTAIN** And I wouldn't take it if you had, ma'am. Paid employment isn't in my line. That's not what I'm after. I prefer the old way.

**SYLVIA** The old way?

**CAPTAIN** Barter. Quid pro quo. I have no need of money.  
(Pause.)

**SYLVIA** 'And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'  
(Pause.)

**CAPTAIN** To be honest, ma'am, I'm not looking that far ahead.

**SYLVIA** Oh, no, I didn't mean...

**CAPTAIN** I'm just asking permission to make myself at home here for as long as it

takes me to get it looking nice.

**SYLVIA** Well... I suppose... I don't see why not... But why? I mean, what makes you want to do it?

**CAPTAIN** To be honest, ma'am, I don't really know. Something put the idea in my head and now it's there it won't go away.

*(Short pause.)*

Perhaps I thought they deserve better.

**SYLVIA** Who? Who deserved better?

**CAPTAIN** Mrs Byram. Mr Carter. All of them. Lucy.

**SYLVIA** Lucy?

*(CAPTAIN leads her to LUCY's gravestone.)*

**CAPTAIN** A little girl. She didn't live long.

*(She stands in front of it, reading, then turns back to him.)*

**SYLVIA** Please stay as long as you like.

**CAPTAIN** Thank you, ma'am.

*(Short pause.)*

And the tools, ma'am? Would you be able to lend me the tools? A sickle and a pair of shears is all I'll need.

**SYLVIA** Yes, of course, of course. I'll bring them as soon as I can.

**CAPTAIN** Thank you, ma'am. That's very kind of you.

**SYLVIA** My name is Sylvia Collingwood, by the way. Please call me Sylvia. I don't know your name...

**CAPTAIN** People call me Captain, ma'am. I was a sea-faring man once. A long time ago. I sail on land now.

*(SYLVIA holds out her hand.)*

**SYLVIA** I'm pleased to meet you, Captain.

**CAPTAIN** *(Shows her his hands.)*

My hands are a bit grubby, ma'am, from touching these old gravestones. All covered in moss, they are. Moss, lichen, bird droppings.

**SYLVIA** *(Smiling, lets her hand drop to her side.)*

I'll bring you your tools as soon as I can. Goodbye, Captain. Thank you.

**CAPTAIN** Goodbye, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am.

*(Exit SYLVIA. CAPTAIN watches her go, then bends down and picks up a pair of garden shears from behind one of the gravestones. Holds them up and speaks generally to the graveyard.)*

I needn't have bothered. I should have known something would turn up. It usually does. I'd better put them back before they're missed.

*(Exit with shears.)*

## Scene 6

*(Enter BRENDA, talking to someone on her mobile phone, hands free, walking to and fro.)*

**BRENDA** No! ... Really? ... Who? ... No! Where? ... I don't think I do, no. Where is

it? ... Oh, yes! I know! ... On her horse? ... I know, yes.... Only once. Gave me a sore arse. Anyway, go on. What did she see? ... I thought you said she was on her horse. That's like being on a double decker bus, isn't it? ... Go on... I wish she'd seen them. You've no idea who it was? ... Perhaps it was Reggie... I don't know. Planning the wedding? ... Well, it would be different... You mean all she heard was the voices? ... Even so... It was definitely her then? Jenny Byram? ... Whoever it was, he was definitely talking to her? ... I know, yes... Yes... Well, obviously... Why else would she be meeting a man in a graveyard? ... Neither can I, but you never know... There might be some perfectly innocent explanation... Caroline, you had the filthiest mind of anyone at the Girls' High School and you haven't changed a bit... Honestly, Caroline! ... I wish she'd been able to see them. Tell her to go on a bigger horse next time or stand up on her stirrups or something... What? ... Oh, Caroline, you're a hoot, you really are! ...Honestly! ... Of course I won't tell anyone... Who else have you told? ... Lorna? ... Caroline, I don't believe you! You know what she's like! It'll be halfway round the village by now... Just a minute, there's another call coming in.

*(Taking her mobile phone out of her handbag.)*

What do you bet it's her ringing to tell me?

*(Looks at mobile phone.)*

No, it's only Charlie. I'll ring him back.

*(Putting mobile phone away, walking out.)*

Go on. What else did she hear? ... I know. Me too... Of course I won't. You know what Charlie's like...

*(Exit, still talking.)*

## Scene 7

*(Twilight. Birdsong. Enter **SYLVIA** carrying a pair of garden shears and a sickle. Looks round, wondering where to leave them. Finally puts them down outside the chapel door and goes out. Pause. Enter **CAPTAIN**. It is obvious that he saw her and waited until she went before coming in. Picks up the tools, examines them, puts them down.)*

**CAPTAIN**

I don't know why I'm doing this. Do you? Never done anything like it before.

*(Pause.)*

I wouldn't be doing it for her. I'll do it for you, not for her. Then I'll go. I don't want to be thanked. I can't stand it.

*(Pause.)*

I never know what to say. You agree something and you stand by it. That's all. There's no need for anything else.

*(Pause.)*

It's only words anyway. You have to be careful with words. You never know where they've been.

*(Picks up shears, tries them. Rubs with his thumb, puts it to his nose, wipes it on his trousers.)*

She's even oiled them.

*(Puts them down, picks up sickle, tests the blade with his finger, makes two or three passes, puts it down.)*

Shall I do it now? If I work through the night I could have it done by morning. I've worked night shifts before, no one to see me but owls and hedgehogs and badgers and foxes.

*(Pause.)*

Shall I? There's a moon to see by. If I work all night, I can go in the morning before she comes back.

*(Lights change to moonlight. Nocturnal sounds, birds, animals. Music.*

**CAPTAIN** clearing the graveyard, **LUCY** swinging.)

**SONG**

Once a mariner hauled his boat  
Onto the golden sand  
Turned his back on the reckless sea  
With a wave of his hand.

Found a woman to be his wife  
Pretty as she could be  
Bought some land and built her a house  
With its back to the sea.

Looked after her as good men should  
As good as he could be  
Lay with no one but her at night  
With his back to the sea.

But every day he heard the wail  
Of wind-beleaguered waves  
And every night he heard the sigh  
Of sailors in their graves.

And every night the moon-dark waves  
Lapped at his land-locked bed  
And every day the seagulls came  
Screaming to wake the dead.

Once a mariner hauled his boat  
Back to the faithless sea  
Leaving his wife at home in bed  
Lonely as she could be.

*(CAPTAIN lies down on the tomb to sleep. Silence. LUCY comes to rest on the swing. Lights change to early morning. Birdsong. Enter COL MEGGINSON, with walking stick. He sees CAPTAIN, walks across to him and pokes him with his stick.)*

**COL MEGGINSON**

What are you doing here? Get out! This is private land. It belongs to the church. Get up off there and get out now!

*(CAPTAIN scrambles off the tomb and backs away.)*

Go on! Be off with you!

**CAPTAIN**

Hold on, sir, please. I can explain.

**COL MEGGINSON**

*(Waving his stick.)*

Don't argue with me! You're trespassing.

**CAPTAIN**

I beg your pardon, sir, but I'm not, I'm not trespassing.

**COL MEGGINSON**

You're trespassing on church property.

**CAPTAIN**

With respect, sir, I'm not.

**COL MEGGINSON**

You've no right to be here.

**CAPTAIN**

I have, sir.

**COL MEGGINSON**

Don't lie to me, you scoundrel!

**CAPTAIN**

The vicar said it was all right, sir.

**COL MEGGINSON**

The vicar?

**CAPTAIN**

A very nice lady, sir. Perhaps you know her. Her name is Collingwood. Rev Sylvia Collingwood.

**COL MEGGINSON**

I don't believe you.

**CAPTAIN**

That's what she said, sir. Sylvia Collingwood.

**COL MEGGINSON**

I know who she is.

**CAPTAIN**

I don't know whether she's a miss or a missis. She didn't say.

**COL MEGGINSON**

She's a miss.

**CAPTAIN**

I thought she might be. She looked very young and unmarried, if you know what I mean.

**COL MEGGINSON**

*(Momentarily lost for words.)*

Well... I...

**CAPTAIN**

I'm doing odd jobs for her in return for somewhere to stay.

**COL MEGGINSON**

Somewhere to stay? Where?

**CAPTAIN**

Here, sir. I've been tidying it up, sir, cutting the grass and so on. It's looking better already, don't you think, sir?

*(Goes on while COL MEGGINSON looks round, nonplussed.)*

It's been left to go wild, sir. For years probably.

**COL MEGGINSON**

I warn you, if you're not telling the truth...

**CAPTAIN**

I am, sir.

**COL MEGGINSON**

... I will report you to the police.

**CAPTAIN**

Ask her, sir.

**COL MEGGINSON**

I will! Don't you worry!

*(Pause.)*

I intend to speak to her straight away, and if you've been lying, my advice to you is to clear out now. I expect you've spun her some tale. Eh? Some sob story! Well, let me tell you, if it worked with her, it won't work with me. I know your sort. If you're still here when I come back, you'd better be damn sure of yourself. You've got me to deal with now, not a... Understand?

*(Exit.)*

**CAPTAIN**

*(Sits on the tomb.)*

I knew this would happen.

*(LUCY gets off the swing, sits next to him.)*

Time to go down from this one and toil up another hill.

*(Pause. Looks round.)*

It's looking better.

*(Pause.)*

"You've got me to deal with now!" Pompous idiot! I'd like to see his face when she tells him.

*(Pause.)*

It would be a shame to leave it, now that I've made a start.

*(Pause.)*

I haven't even started on the hedge yet.

*(Pause.)*

It would come again nicely in the spring.

*(Pause.)*

No need to be hasty.

*(Pause.)*

"I know your sort!" I know your sort too.

*(Pause.)*

Have a wash first. Something to eat. Then we'll see.

*(Exit. LUCY returns to the swing.)*

### Scene 8

*(Enter MRS MEGGINSON and BRENDA, each with a glass of wine in her hand.)*

**BRENDA** Honestly, darling, I'll be glad when it's over.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Oh, don't say that, Brenda! Everybody's looking forward to it. They've been looking forward to it for weeks!

**BRENDA** It's all I hear about.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Because he's a perfectionist, dear. Everything has to be just so. And there's the health and safety aspect too.

**BRENDA** Tell me about it!

**MRS MEGGINSON** He has to get that right. And he does, every time! There has never been the slightest problem in all the years he's been doing it. How long is that now?

**BRENDA** Forever?

**MRS MEGGINSON** He's got it off to a fine art.

*(Brief pause.)*

George tells me he's planning a special climax.

**BRENDA** That'll be the day!

**MRS MEGGINSON** What?

*(Brief pause.)*

Oh, Brenda! Stop it! I mean a big rocket or something.

**BRENDA** Oh yes?

**MRS MEGGINSON** *(Slaps her playfully on the arm.)*

Behave yourself, Brenda. No smut, please!

**BRENDA** Please, darling, let's talk about something else. I hear enough about the fireworks at home.

**MRS MEGGINSON** You said you had some gossip for me.

**BRENDA** So I did! It was something I heard. I'm not supposed to tell anyone, but I've heard the same thing or something like it from at least three different people now. Anyway, I can trust you, can't I?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Is it about Jenny Byram?

**BRENDA** *(Disappointed.)*  
You've heard.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Go on anyway. Say what you were going to say.

**BRENDA** Jenny Byram seen, or rather heard, with a man in that old churchyard down whatever it's name is, that lane that goes past the old chapel down to the footbridge.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Do you know who the man was?

**BRENDA** You're going to tell me, aren't you?

**MRS MEGGINSON** A tramp.

**BRENDA** You're joking me!

**MRS MEGGINSON** A down and out. What do they call them now? A rough sleeper.

**BRENDA** What on earth was Jenny Byram doing with a rough sleeper? I've heard of slumming it, but that's going a bit far, isn't it?

**MRS MEGGINSON** George saw him when he was what he calls 'walking the bounds'. He's just an old nosey parker really. Goes off on a route march round the village now and then. Other people go for a run, George goes for a march. Anyway, he was going past the chapel and he heard something or saw something and went in to investigate and found this tramp there.

**BRENDA** What happened?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Well, he challenged him, asked him what he was doing.

**BRENDA** And?

**MRS MEGGINSON** The tramp told him he had permission from the vicar.

**BRENDA** Sylvia?

**MRS MEGGINSON** So George went straight round to the vicarage and it turns out he had.

**BRENDA** You mean Sylvia likes a bit of rough as well as Jenny?

**MRS MEGGINSON** *(Shocked.)*  
Brenda! Please!  
*(Enter COL MEGGINSON.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** *(Speaking as he comes in.)*  
Just going to pour myself a drink, darling. Can I get you any... Oh! Hello, Brenda!

**BRENDA** Hello, George!

**MRS MEGGINSON** You're too late, dear. We helped ourselves.

**COL MEGGINSON** Jolly good! Mind if I join you? Everything all right, Brenda?

**BRENDA** Yes, thank you, George. We were just talking about you.

**COL MEGGINSON** Were you?

**MRS MEGGINSON** I was telling Brenda about your contretemps with Sylvia's odd job man.

**COL MEGGINSON** Huh!

**BRENDA** *(Giggling.)*  
That's one way of putting it.

**COL MEGGINSON** *(Turns to go.)*  
Let me get myself a drink.  
*(Turning back.)*  
Oh, by the way, darling, I found the shears.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Where were they?

**COL MEGGINSON** Where they always are! They must have been there all the time. Funny that, isn't it? Sometimes you just can't see for looking! Back in a minute.  
*(Exit.)*

**MRS MEGGINSON** I hope he isn't going gaga. So many people do nowadays. I couldn't bear that!  
*(Brief silence while both women take a sip of their drinks.)*

**BRENDA** He's obsessed with the weather.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Who?

**BRENDA** Charlie. If it isn't health and safety, it's the weather forecast.

**MRS MEGGINSON** You mean for the fireworks?

**BRENDA** Why can't they have Bonfire Night in July or something? It's absurd! Everybody in wellington boots and raincoats, waving sparklers about in the rain, pretending to enjoy themselves!

**MRS MEGGINSON** It has to be November because of Guy Fawkes. Anyway, it might be just the same in July.

**BRENDA** That's what Charlie says.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Everything will be all right, dear. It always is. Your husband is a local legend, Brenda. You should be proud of him.

**BRENDA** I know, I know.  
*(Pause.)*  
I am really.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Of course you are!  
*(Pause. Looks up at the sky.)*  
Was that a drop of rain?

**BRENDA** What did I say?

**MRS MEGGINSON** *(Holding her hand out.)*  
I think it was.  
*(Brief pause.)*  
It was. Come on, dear. Drink up. Let's go in and ask George to pour us another.  
*(They go out in a hurry.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** *(Returning with the garden shears in his hand, speaking as he comes in.)*  
Where they always are, on a hook in the shed. I could have sworn...  
*(Realising they have gone, he turns round and goes out again.)*

## Scene 9

*(Dusk. Enter **CAPTAIN**, walking slowly and thoughtfully, holding the key to the chapel. He stops and stands still, looking at the key.)*

**CAPTAIN**

She gave me the key. She said with winter coming on I would need somewhere warm and dry to sleep. Somewhere to shelter from the wind and the rain and the snow.

*(Goes to Mrs Byram's grave.)*

I said I couldn't do that, Mrs Byram. I said barns and places like that were what I was used to. Ships. Not places with a key.

*(Pause.)*

I said no, but she wouldn't listen. I tried to give it back, but she wouldn't take it. She wanted to go in with me and show me round, but that's something I've never done. Never gone into a woman's kitchen for a bite to eat, even if I was asked, which I was on occasion. You have to be careful. You don't want the man of the house coming in and finding you there with his wife. Or even the woman of the house coming in and finding you there with her cleaning woman. You'd both be in trouble. I've known it happen.

*(A distant rumble of thunder. He looks up at the sky again.)*

It's a long way off. It's dry enough here in the lee of the wall. I'll be sheltered from the worst of it there.

*(A faint flicker of lightning. He waits, counting.)*

One, two, three.

*(Thunder.)*

Three miles.

*(Goes to Lucy's grave.)*

That means the heart of the storm is three miles off, Lucy. Over there. The lightning's like the flash of the starter's gun, you see. You count when you see it and wait for the sound to arrive, which it does going at a mile a second, more or less. Did you know that? Mr Whitwell knew it. Didn't you, Mr Whitwell?

*(Goes to Mr Whitwell's grave.)*

Every boy used to know that from his father. Do children learn that now? I doubt it. Things aren't like they used to be. They don't even have miles. They have kilometres instead. You're better off where you are.

*(Another flash of lightning, followed after a second or two by a louder rumble of thunder.)*

You don't get barns or cowsheds like you used to do. The fields are bigger too. Nothing's the same.

*(The storm breaks with successive flashes of lightning and claps of thunder. **LUCY** is revealed in flashes of light, first on the swing with the key in her hand, then holding **CAPTAIN** by his hand, then leading him through the chapel door, closing it behind them. The sound of heavy rain continues, grows fainter, stops. Sunrise. Dawn chorus. Chapel door opens. **CAPTAIN** walks through, looks up at the sky. **LUCY** slips out behind him, hides behind a gravestone. **CAPTAIN** turns, closes the door, locks it, puts the key in his pocket. Turns away from the door. **LUCY** jumps out from behind the gravestone. **CAPTAIN** starts, then goes up to her, holding his hands out. She takes his hands, they skip round, dancing and laughing. Dawn chorus*

throughout. **LUCY** lets go as they swing round. **CAPTAIN** staggers and falls. **LUCY** laughs and runs back to the swing. **CAPTAIN** sits up. Dawn chorus ends. Silence. **CAPTAIN** stands up, takes the key out of his pocket.)

I can't remember the last time I had a key. Funny feeling. None of you has a key, do you? Not where you are. Not any more. You did once, didn't you? Locked yourself in at night, let yourself out in the morning. No need for a key now.

*(Pause. Putting the key back in his pocket.)*

Oh well! Thank you, ma'am. Very kind of you. Not as cosy as a barn or a cowshed, but dry. I'll use it when the weather's bad. That's all. I prefer to be out whenever I can. Up on deck, not down below.

*(Exit.)*

### Scene 10

*(Enter COL MEGGINSON and SYLVIA, speaking as they come in.)*

**SYLVIA**

Well, Colonel, I don't know what to say.

**COL MEGGINSON**

Literally dancing on their graves. The graves of our ancestors.

**SYLVIA**

Dancing?

**COL MEGGINSON**

Literally dancing.

**SYLVIA**

Well, I...

**COL MEGGINSON**

The man was obviously drunk. Cheap cider, meths. Who knows? Drunk as a... whatever it is... a judge.

**SYLVIA**

A lord.

**COL MEGGINSON**

Dancing around like this.

*(Holds his hands out and skips round in a circle.)*

Then he fell over. I had a good mind to go in and deal with him there and then. Throw him out. Give him the bum's rush. Pardon my language.

**SYLVIA**

That's all right.

**COL MEGGINSON**

Anyway, I thought better of it. Better let him sleep it off.

**SYLVIA**

Yes.

*(Pause.)*

**COL MEGGINSON**

Chap's probably had a hard life. Who knows? I don't want to be uncharitable, but charity takes different forms, doesn't it? Just letting him make camp in a church yard isn't necessarily what's best for him. I mean, is it? How could it be? There must be charities who could take him in. They have refuges for homeless people, don't they? They know what they're doing. They're the professionals, aren't they? We should leave it to them.

**SYLVIA**

To be fair, Colonel, he's made a very good job of tidying up the graveyard. It was terribly overgrown. I feel rather ashamed. Nobody even thought about it until he came along and took it upon himself to do it.

**COL MEGGINSON**

And drink himself silly every night!

**SYLVIA**

Well, perhaps. I don't know. I've never smelled anything on his breath.

**COL MEGGINSON**

There I was. Up bright and early. Beating the bounds, as I call it. Lovely morning after the rain. I thought, I know, I'll take a detour down the lane to the footbridge. What do I see when I'm gong past the chapel? A filthy old

tramp dancing on the graves like a lunatic, like a what do you call it, a whirling dervish! There are Megginsons in those graves, Sylvia.

**SYLVIA** I know, Colonel.

**COL MEGGINSON** And Byrams.

**SYLVIA** I know. I've seen them. He's cleaned up the headstones so you can read the names.

**COL MEGGINSON** It's like the history of our village. I was incensed!

**SYLVIA** I can understand that.  
(Pause.)

**COL MEGGINSON** Incensed!  
(Pause.)

**SYLVIA** I'll speak to him. If he's drinking, as you say, I'll try to get some help for him.

**COL MEGGINSON** He needs it!

**SYLVIA** The thing is, he's quite independent. Quite proud in a way. He doesn't look for help. Doesn't seem to want it. He...

**COL MEGGINSON** (Interrupting.)  
There are plenty of others to help, Sylvia. You don't have to do it all on your own. Perhaps I should have tackled him myself this morning.

**SYLVIA** It was good of you to come to me instead.

**COL MEGGINSON** Thought you should know, that's all.

**SYLVIA** Thank you, Colonel. I'm very grateful. It's a matter of finding the right way to help him. Just let me think about it and then I'll... I'll speak to you again.

**COL MEGGINSON** Fair enough.

**SYLVIA** Now I'm afraid I must dash.

**COL MEGGINSON** Yes, of course.

**SYLVIA** Goodbye for now.

**COL MEGGINSON** Goodbye, Sylvia.

**SYLVIA** Thank you again, Colonel.

**COL MEGGINSON** Don't mention it.  
(Turns to go, then turns back.)  
You'll be going to the fireworks tonight, I suppose?

**SYLVIA** Wouldn't miss it for anything. My first time!

**COL MEGGINSON** Should be a good show. Charlie's got one or two surprises up his sleeve. Might have overspent a bit, but I told him we'd turn a blind eye to that.

**SYLVIA** Good! I'm looking forward to it.

**COL MEGGINSON** Me too! Bye for now then.

**SYLVIA** Goodbye, Colonel.  
(They go out.)

## Scene 11

(Bonfire Night. Enter **CAPTAIN**. His speech is punctuated by the sound of

*fireworks. Except when the sky is lit up, he is a shadowy figure in the darkness of the graveyard.)*

**CAPTAIN**

Dogs don't like it. Neither do I. It's barbaric. Burning Guy Fawkes on a bonfire every year for four hundred years. More than four hundred years. The fifth of November sixteen hundred and five. Gunpowder, treason and plot.

*(Pause.)*

Never been propaganda like that before or since. Four hundred years of burning Catholics! Would you believe it?

*(Goes to stand by **LUCY**'s grave.)*

Don't mind me, Lucy. Take no notice. I'm rambling. It's the dogs I feel sorry for. And the horses. I know how they feel.

*(Pause.)*

Look what I've got.

*(Takes a sparkler out of his pocket.)*

It's all I could get. I'd have got a Catherine Wheel and nailed it to the door of the chapel if I could. St Catherine spinning round on her own special crucifix.

*(**LUCY** jumps off the swing and goes to him, holding out her hand.*

***CAPTAIN** gives her the sparkler to hold and takes a box of matches out of his pocket.)*

Now then. Hold it still until it's lit, then you can wave it about. They're called sparklers. Because that's what they do. They sparkle. Lots of little sparks come out. Don't be afraid, they won't hurt you. Just hold it out and wave it about.

*(Strikes a match and lights the sparkler. **LUCY** holds it out in front of her.)*

That's the way! See if you can spell your name. That's what I used to do when I was a boy. L. U. C. Y. That's it! You can see the letters in the air, but they don't last long. It's a good job your name's short. That's why Catherine's got a wheel and you've got a sparkler.

*(The sparkler goes out.)*

There! Did you like that?

*(He takes the spent sparkler from her.)*

They were always my favourite, sparklers. I didn't like bangers or those things that used to jump about on the ground. Jumping Jacks they were called. Bang! Bang! Bang! You never knew where they were going to go. Children got hurt sometimes. Blinded. Dogs and horses have more sense. I wish I was a horse. Very deep, they are. I wonder what they think about us. Not much, probably. They know what we're thinking though. Oh yes! They know all right.

*(A series of loud bangs, each accompanied by a different coloured light, brings the firework display to an end.)*

That's it. Finished. Consummatum est. The horses in their stables stop shuffling in their stalls, the dogs stop barking, the danger is past. Another meaningless happening has happened and all is quiet again.

*(Pause.)*

Christmas next.

*(Pause.)*

I don't like that much either.

*(Pause.)*

They'll be going in now. Leaving the bonfire to burn itself out. I like a bonfire. A smoky autumn bonfire in somebody's garden. In the morning or the afternoon or the evening. Not at night. They should be dampened down at night.

*(Pause.)*

I have a funny feeling in my tummy. As if something's going to happen. If I were a dog or a horse, I'd know what it was. But I'm only a man.

*(Pause.)*

It's time we were asleep. It's not raining. It's not cold. I should sleep outside. But I won't. Not tonight. Not after all that noise, all that gunpowder, all that plotting.

*(Pause.)*

I won't sleep outside tonight. I'll sleep in the chapel and lock the door. I'll be safe there. Safe as a horse in its stable or a dog in its kennel. Safe as houses. Safe as the grave.

*(Takes the key out of his pocket, unlocks the door and opens it. LUCY slips past him. He follows her into the chapel and closes the door.)*

## ACT TWO

### Scene 1

*(Enter COL MEGGINSON, MRS MEGGINSON, CHARLIE and BRENDA, all with drinks.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Good show, Charlie! Splendid show!

**CHARLIE** Thank you, George.

**COL MEGGINSON** Best yet!

**CHARLIE** I haven't quite finished doing the accounts yet, but I think we'll be in the clear.

**COL MEGGINSON** The hog roast was doing a roaring trade.

**BRENDA** And the gingerbread and the toffee apples.

**COL MEGGINSON** I used to love toffee apples when I was a young un. Haven't got the teeth for it now.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Mrs Carter makes such delicious gingerbread, doesn't she?

**CHARLIE** We'll have to wait and see, but I'd be surprised if there isn't at least as much as last year to go into Village Hall funds. Perhaps a bit more.

**COL MEGGINSON** Well done, Charlie!

**MRS MEGGINSON** Hear hear!

**BRENDA** You pulled it off again, darling! What was it you said about him, Elizabeth?

**MRS MEGGINSON** What?

**BRENDA** She said you were a local legend, Charlie.

*(Drags him away from the others and stands very close to him. He is embarrassed.)*

And so you are! Charlie pulls it off again!

*(Whispers in his ear.)*

I wish you would!

**COL MEGGINSON** Anyone ready for a top up?

*(Collects glasses and takes them out.)*

**MRS MEGGINSON** Oh dear! Poor George!

**CHARLIE** *(Taking the opportunity to extricate himself from **BRENDA**.)*

What's that, Elizabeth? What do you mean?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Oh, it's that down and out, that homeless man. Has he said anything to you about him?

**CHARLIE** He said something. Said he'd leave it till Bonfire Night was out of the way.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Well, do talk to him, Charlie, won't you?

**CHARLIE** Of course I will. Is it serious?

**MRS MEGGINSON** I think it is, yes. It's Sylvia.

**CHARLIE** Sylvia?

**MRS MEGGINSON** George thinks he's taking advantage of her. He thinks we might never be able to get rid of him and then there might be others.

**BRENDA** Is he a traveller?

**MRS MEGGINSON** I don't know. He might be.

**BRENDA** Irish. You can't trust them.

**MRS MEGGINSON** The charities always say the worst thing you can do is give them money.

**CHARLIE** Absolutely!

**MRS MEGGINSON** I've seen it on the television.

**CHARLIE** They spend it on drugs and alcohol. You're not helping them at all, just making matters worse.

**MRS MEGGINSON** He was completely drunk the last time George saw him.

**CHARLIE** Did he tell Sylvia?

**MRS MEGGINSON** He did, and she didn't believe him.

**CHARLIE** Didn't believe him?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Or should I say she didn't want to believe him? That's it, you see. He's twisting her round his little finger. Like they do. Will you help, Charlie?

**CHARLIE** Of course I will.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Thank you, dear! The thing is, it's difficult for Sylvia.

**CHARLIE** I suppose it is.

**MRS MEGGINSON** George says he's suggested getting in touch with some charity, but he doesn't think she will.

**CHARLIE** I suppose she thinks she ought to do it herself.

**BRENDA** *(Goes close to **CHARLIE**.)*

She's the vicar, Charlie. She has to behave like a Christian, doesn't she?  
*(Stroking his arm.)*

You know, love your neighbour.

*(**COL MEGGINSON** returns with drinks.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Drinks, everyone! Did you think I was never coming?

*(Hands out the drinks.)*

- MRS MEGGINSON** Thank you, George. I've been telling them about your attempts to persuade Sylvia to get rid of her unwelcome visitor and how they have so far fallen on deaf ears.
- COL MEGGINSON** On stony ground. Yes. I wanted to have a word with you about it, Charlie. Didn't want to bother you until the fireworks were out of the way.
- CHARLIE** Sounds like a tricky situation. How can I help?
- COL MEGGINSON** I'm not sure, Charlie. Just wanted to talk it over with you. Something needs doing, that's for sure.
- CHARLIE** You found him drunk, Elizabeth says.
- COL MEGGINSON** Quite disgraceful! In a churchyard! Literally dancing on people's graves! I couldn't believe it! I went to the vicarage straight away. I've been wishing ever since that I'd just thrown him out, kicked him down the road.
- CHARLIE** I'm glad you managed to restrain yourself, George. Technically that would have been assault. They know the law, these people, and use it to their own advantage.
- COL MEGGINSON** There was a time when the village bobby would have saved us the trouble and kicked him down the road himself. Not any more! When did you last see a policeman in the village?
- CHARLIE** It's tricky for Sylvia too.
- COL MEGGINSON** Oh, I'm not blaming her. I know the position she's in.
- MRS MEGGINSON** I remember reading somewhere that tramps used to leave special marks outside people's houses to let other tramps know what kind of reception they were likely to get if they went begging there.
- BRENDA** They just ring each other up now.
- COL MEGGINSON** I wouldn't be surprised. You see these beggars on the street, they all have mobile phones.
- MRS MEGGINSON** I told them what you said, George, that you'd advised her to call in a charity and get them to help.
- CHARLIE** I suppose the church is a kind of charity itself, isn't it?
- COL MEGGINSON** All I'm saying is that what she sees as helping him isn't going to help him at all. Before long he'll have squatter's rights and we'll never get rid of him.
- MRS MEGGINSON** Squatter's rights? Does that still exist?
- CHARLIE** I'm afraid it does. Once they're in, it's the devil's own job to get them out.
- BRENDA** We'll have Irish travellers parking their lorries on the village green before we know where we are.
- MRS MEGGINSON** Oh, Brenda, don't say that!
- COL MEGGINSON** I just think we shouldn't leave it to Sylvia. It's not fair on her.
- CHARLIE** Let me think about it, George.  
*(Looks at his watch.)*  
It's time we were going.
- COL MEGGINSON** Stay for another?
- BRENDA** Why don't we just do it? Find a homeless charity, ring them up and get them onto it.
- CHARLIE** Well...
- BRENDA** Let's just get on with it!

**COL MEGGINSON** No reason why not, I suppose.

**BRENDA** What are you doing in the morning, Elizabeth?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Nothing.

**BRENDA** Right! Come round to mine and we'll google homeless charities and ring them up and get one of them to come and sort him out.

**CHARLIE** Worth a try.

**COL MEGGINSON** Why didn't we think of that?

**BRENDA** You can pretend you did if you like. We don't want to be local legends, do we, Elizabeth?  
*(Kisses CHARLIE.)*  
 Come on now, my legendary darling, let's get moving or the baby sitter will be charging overtime.  
*(Kisses MRS MEGGINSON, while CHARLIE and COL MEGGINSON shake hands.)*  
 About ten?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Ten o'clock will be fine, dear.  
*(Walking out together, talking as they go.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Let's hope you can solve the problem.

**BRENDA** Don't worry!

**CHARLIE** They will!

**MRS MEGGINSON** We'll do our best anyway.

**BRENDA** Charlie isn't the only one in the family who knows how to pull it off.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Brenda! Honestly!

## Scene 2

*(Afternoon. Birdsong. Enter SYLVIA. She stops and looks to see if there is anyone there. She walks forward cautiously, examining the ground. She goes to the chapel door and puts her ear to it.)*

**SYLVIA** Hello!  
*(She tries the door and finds it locked.)*  
 Hello!  
*(She knocks lightly.)*  
 It's me. Sylvia.  
*(She knocks again, a little more loudly, then turns her back on the door and stands looking round the graveyard.)*  
 Where do people get these ideas from? Sheer prejudice!  
*(She walks among the gravestones, reading the inscriptions. Enter CAPTAIN. He stops when he sees her. She looks up.)*  
 Ah! Captain! There you are! I just stopped to say hello and make sure you've got everything you need.  
*(She opens her handbag and takes out an apple. Holds it out to him.)*  
 I picked it this morning. There are some old apple trees in the vicarage garden, hardly an orchard, just a few, but they've done very well this year.

No thanks to me! I'm not much of a gardener.

*(Holds the apple out a little further, smiling.)*

Here!

**CAPTAIN**

*(Takes the apple.)*

Thank you, ma'am. Very kind. It looks a beauty.

**SYLVIA**

*(Glowing with satisfaction.)*

It does, doesn't it!

*(Pause.)*

**CAPTAIN**

*(Putting the apple in his pocket.)*

I'll have it for my dinner.

**SYLVIA**

You'll need more than that.

**CAPTAIN**

Don't worry about me, ma'am. I won't starve.

**SYLVIA**

You look well enough, I must say. It's the outdoor life, I suppose. You probably have a healthier lifestyle than the rest of us.

*(Pause.)*

Don't smoke, don't drink.

**CAPTAIN**

Never have, ma'am.

**SYLVIA**

Not even a tot of rum? I thought sailors all drank it. They call it grog, don't they?

**CAPTAIN**

Never been my way, ma'am.

*(Pause.)*

**SYLVIA**

I thought you might still be sleeping. The door was locked. I didn't want to disturb you.

**CAPTAIN**

I like to be up and about, ma'am. The dawn chorus is my alarm clock.

*(Pause.)*

**SYLVIA**

The rest of us have a lot to learn from people like you. From you, I mean. Sorry. It's how Jesus lived.

**CAPTAIN**

Is it, ma'am?

**SYLVIA**

He didn't go home every night, like most of us do. He did the same as you. Either someone gave him a bed for the night or he slept under the stars. It's what he told his disciples to do.

*(Reaching into her handbag, takes out a small New Testament.)*

I'm going to take it as my text on Sunday.

*(Finding the right page.)*

Luke, chapter 9, verses 1-5. And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: 'Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.'

*(Pause.)*

That's like you, isn't it?

**CAPTAIN**

Some of it is, ma'am. Apart from proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing the sick. I've never done that.

**SYLVIA**

*(Laughs.)*

But the rest of it is.

*(Puts the bible back in her handbag.)*

I thought of something else the other day that made me think of you. 'What is this world if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?' Do you know who wrote that?

**CAPTAIN**

I believe it was W.H.Davies, ma'am.

**SYLVIA**

*(Surprised.)*

It was! He was a tramp, like you, and he wrote poetry.

**CAPTAIN**

He did. He was Welsh, ma'am.

**SYLVIA**

He wrote his autobiography too. 'The Autobiography of a Supertramp.'

**CAPTAIN**

He settled down when he got a bit older, ma'am. Married a young girl and moved into a cottage.

**SYLVIA**

Oh? I didn't know that.

**CAPTAIN**

Not many people do.

*(Pause.)*

**SYLVIA**

Well, if you're sure you've got everything you need for now, I'll leave you to it.

**CAPTAIN**

Thank you, ma'am. Thank you for the apple.

**SYLVIA**

I hope you enjoy it.

**CAPTAIN**

I will, ma'am. Thank you.

*(Exit SYLVIA. He watches her go, then goes to the chapel door and takes the key out of his pocket, unlocks the door and opens it.)*

Lifestyle! I never knew I had a lifestyle.

*(He turns his back to the door and looks round the graveyard. LUCY slips past him and sits on the swing.)*

I'd better go and say my prayers now, like a good little boy. Eh, Lucy? Let's go and say our prayers.

*(He goes into the chapel and closes the door. LUCY swings.)*

### Scene 3

*(Enter BRENDA, speaking hands-free on her mobile phone.)*

**BRENDA**

Complete waste of time! Bloody charities... All of them... Waste of a morning... Honestly, Caroline, I'm so pissed off... Just not interested... If he isn't sleeping in a shop doorway somewhere, he doesn't count... No... That's right... Doesn't tick the box... Yes, of course I did... I said I thought you were there to look after homeless people. Well, he's homeless, isn't he... Church property... Yes... Not our business... I thought jobsworths like that only worked for councils... It seems charities have their jobsworths too... Yes... Yes... I know... About a dozen... I know... Then one of them started talking about legacies... Legacies... You know, asking me if I'd thought about leaving something in my will... Not to him, Caroline... To them... Yes... I just put the phone down... Anyway, we had a nice lunch... Elizabeth gave me all the latest on Jenny Byram's youngest and Reggie... I know... Me neither... Anyway, Caroline, I want to see for myself... I'm going down now... Yes... No, not on a horse... Yes... I'll ring you later and tell you what I see... Yes... Bye for now... Bye... Bye...

*(Exit.)*

## Scene 4

*(Early evening. Birdsong. Chapel door opens. CAPTAIN walks out and closes it behind him, the key in his hand. Hesitates, then locks the door and puts the key in his pocket.)*

CAPTAIN

I can't get used to it.

*(Takes the apple out of his pocket.)*

Funny lot, vicars. You never know where you are with them. I've met a few in my time. All sorts. This one's not so bad.

*(Enter BRENDA at one side. Hearing a voice, she crouches down behind the hedge. CAPTAIN takes a bite out of the apple and walks towards her. She gets lower. He stops, looking in her direction.)*

I couldn't have done this without her getting the shears for me. All it wanted was cutting back. It'll come up again lovely next year. Not that I'll be here to see it.

*(He goes to Mr Carter's grave. BRENDA stays very still, listening intently.)*

Eh, Mr Carter? You will, but I won't.

*(Walks towards the gravestones. BRENDA changes her position cautiously, trying to see through the hedge.)*

Not me. I've been tempted before, but I know better now. You learn from your mistakes. Don't you, Mr Megginson?

*(BRENDA reacts to the name, tries again to see through the hedge.)*

You try anyway. She means well. More like a vicar's wife than a vicar. A vicar's wife would usually give you something. They have to, don't they? Eh, Mrs Byram?

*(BRENDA reacts again.)*

Wives have to keep up appearances. Making up for their husbands' shortcomings.

*(Stands in front of LUCY's gravestone.)*

You missed all that, didn't you, Lucy? The hypocrisy. Never saw the world as it really is, only as it is to a child. Is that still how you see it? I hope it is. I think it will be. I think it will.

*(Goes to the tomb, sits on it, goes on eating the apple.)*

Shall I stay then? A bit longer? How long? All winter? So I can see the hawthorn budding, see it all turn white. And the honeysuckle winding through the hedge and the wild garlic making a carpet on the ground, catching travellers unaware, getting them drunk on their scent. Then the traveller's joy and the wild roses. Then, when the sun gets too old to get up off its knees, there'll be the hips and haws and holly berries, like little drops of blood on the leaves.

*(Pause.)*

Shall I stay and see it?

*(Pause.)*

No. Not here. I can see it somewhere else. I'll stay a few days, then I'll be on my way.

*(Silence. BRENDA stands up, waits a moment before speaking.)*

BRENDA

Hello!

*(She walks towards him. Very friendly.)*

Is it all right to come in?

*(CAPTAIN stares at her blankly.)*

It's not private property, is it?

**CAPTAIN**

No.

**BRENDA**

What about the chapel? Is it open?

**CAPTAIN**

I think they keep it locked.

**BRENDA**

*(Tries the door.)*

It's the same everywhere now, isn't it? It used to be that you could always go in. Not like that now, is it? Such a shame!

*(Pause.)*

I'm not disturbing you, am I?

**CAPTAIN**

No.

**BRENDA**

I've only ever seen it from the road. Thought I'd have a closer look. Pretty, isn't it?

**CAPTAIN**

Yes.

**BRENDA**

And the names on the gravestones. It's so interesting to see the names and wonder who they were when they were alive. Don't you think?

**CAPTAIN**

Yes.

**BRENDA**

Goodness! Look at that! Arnold Megginson. I know someone called Megginson. His name's George. He lives in the village. And look here! Ellen Byram! Jenny Byram is the headmistress of St Mary's. That's the primary school in the village. Well! I wonder if they know. I suppose they must.

*(Pause.)*

I don't suppose you know them?

**CAPTAIN**

No.

**BRENDA**

Of course not. Silly of me!

*(Silence.)*

Oh well! I hope I didn't disturb you. It's been lovely to meet you! Perhaps we'll meet again.

*(Turns, speaking as she walks away.)*

Goodbye!

*(Exit. CAPTAIN watches her go, then looks straight ahead, sitting in silence.)*

Winter's coming. What should I do? Same as the robin. Do you know that one, Lucy? The North wind doth blow and we shall have snow, and what will poor robin do then, poor thing? He'll sit in a barn and keep himself warm and hide his head under his wing, poor thing. Who wrote that, I wonder. Anon. Do you want to hear some of mine? I used to write them when I was on watch. An old habit.

*(He takes a notebook out of his pocket and turns the pages.)*

Here's one.

*(Reads from the notebook.)*

Day dawns like an ebb tide

On the horizon's distant shore.

A pale moon in a pale sky

Waits at winter's door.

*(Turns to another page.)*

And another.

Summer's truth has been denied,  
Autumn's mystery laid bare,  
Fire and air no longer feed  
The furnace of the dying year.

*(Turns the pages again.)*

One more.

*(Finds the page.)*

I like this one.

The late rose that burns on a winter's day  
Ignites the fuse of spring.  
Mistletoe, cherry and jasmine catch fire,  
Flames dance, flowers sing.

*(He closes the notebook and puts it back in his pocket.)*

What's that, Mrs Byram? You prefer the one about the robin?

*(Picks up the apple.)*

So do I.

*(Takes a bite of the apple and walks off.)*

## Scene 5

*(Enter **BRENDA**, followed by **MRS MEGGINSON**, **COL MEGGINSON** and **CHARLIE**.)*

**BRENDA** He's mad! Should be in a mental hospital or whatever they call it now.

**COL MEGGINSON** It's the meths. That's what it does to them.

**BRENDA** Talking to himself, then just staring at me.

*(Shows what she mean by staring at them with her eyes wide and her mouth hanging open.)*

**MRS MEGGINSON** Oh dear! It's the children we have to think about. What if any of them were to bump into him when they're out playing? It doesn't bear thinking about!

**COL MEGGINSON** At the very least we need to warn the parents.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Jenny must say something in assembly and send a letter home with the children.

**BRENDA** Tell them, Charlie.

*(**MRS MEGGINSON** and **COL MEGGINSON** look at **CHARLIE**.)*

Go on!

**CHARLIE** It was your idea.

**BRENDA** True!

*(Turns to the others, who now look at her.)*

I told Charlie about our wasted morning...

**MRS MEGGINSON** Don't remind me!

**BRENDA** So last night we sat and talked about it, thinking what else we could do.

**COL MEGGINSON** Get rid of the blighter before he does any more damage.

**BRENDA** Exactly.

**MRS MEGGINSON** (*Restraining COL MEGGINSON before he can say anything else.*)  
Let Brenda go on, dear.

**BRENDA** We came up with various options. We could have another go at the charities.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Oh, I don't know if I could stand that! Sorry, dear. Go on.

**BRENDA** We ruled that out.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Good!

**BRENDA** Other options were to do what some of the more helpful charities had suggested.

**COL MEGGINSON** Such as?

**BRENDA** Such as speaking to the council about it.

**COL MEGGINSON** I hope you ruled that out too.

**BRENDA** We did.

**COL MEGGINSON** Good!

**BRENDA** We also ruled out going to the police.

**COL MEGGINSON** Police? What police? I haven't seen a policeman for years!

**MRS MEGGINSON** (*Putting a hand on his arm.*)  
Shush, dear! Let Brenda go on!

**BRENDA** Which left asking the church authorities to deal with it.  
(*Pause.*)

**MRS MEGGINSON** So is that what you're going to do? I suppose it's all we can do, isn't it? After all, it's their responsibility. It's their land he's trespassing on.

**COL MEGGINSON** What about Sylvia? It would be like going over her head, wouldn't it?

**MRS MEGGINSON** I'm sure Brenda doesn't mean going behind her back. You would speak to her first, dear, wouldn't you?

**CHARLIE** Don't worry. The situation won't arise.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Won't it?

**CHARLIE** (*To BRENDA.*)  
Go on.  
(*To the others.*)  
It's brilliant! Wait till you hear! You're going to love it, George!  
(*To BRENDA.*)  
Go on!

**BRENDA** I thought of it this morning. We'd gone through all the other options last night, didn't like any of them, thought we'd better sleep on it, still couldn't decide. Something told me I ought to go and look for myself. So I went for a look, which is when I found out that he's mad. Like the people you see walking down the street talking to themselves.

**COL MEGGINSON** Harmless really.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Not always, dear.

**COL MEGGINSON** True.

**CHARLIE** When she told me, I thought the idea might be to get him sectioned.

**COL MEGGINSON** Sectioned? What's that? Hung, drawn and quartered?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Don't be silly, George.

**CHARLIE** Nice idea, but not really practical.

**COL MEGGINSON** Come on then, Brenda! Let's hear it!

**BRENDA** *(Waits until they are all looking at her, COL MEGGINSON and MRS MEGGINSON with eager anticipation, CHARLIE with a knowing smile.)*  
It was seeing him like that, like one of those people you see on the street, people with - what do they call it? - mental health issues. It reminded me of what the charities had said to us when we rang them up. They only help people they find sleeping on the street, you know, in shop doorways. Not someone sleeping in a churchyard in a village. That's what gave me the idea. If they won't come to him, let's take him to them.

*(Pause. COL MEGGINSON and MRS MEGGINSON, look at her, then at each other, then back at her.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** I don't think I follow...

**MRS MEGGINSON** You mean...

**CHARLIE** She means bundle him into the back of a van and dump him in a shop doorway for someone else to deal with.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Can we do that?

**CHARLIE** Why not?

**MRS MEGGINSON** Well! If you say so. But what about Sylvia?

**CHARLIE** What about her?

**BRENDA** She won't know. We'll do it after dark. In the morning he'll be gone and she'll be none the wiser.

**COL MEGGINSON** Your wife has missed her way, Charlie. She could have been a brilliant military tactician.

**BRENDA** *(To CHARLIE.)*  
A legend, Charlie! Like you!

**COL MEGGINSON** Brilliant!

**CHARLIE** *(Puts his arm around BRENDA and kisses her on the cheek.)*  
Well done, darling!

**BRENDA** *(Ignores him.)*  
All agreed?

**COL MEGGINSON** Nem con!

**MRS MEGGINSON** A very good idea, Brenda. You're a very clever girl!

**BRENDA** Thank you, Elizabeth. Thank you, George. All that remains is to put the plan into action. That's Charlie's department. Compared to organising the village fireworks, kidnapping a harmless lunatic should be child's play.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Coffee?

**BRENDA** I'll give you a hand. They don't need us now.  
*(Exeunt BRENDA and MRS MEGGINSON.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Come on, then, Charlie! What's the plan?

**CHARLIE** It's very simple, George.

**COL MEGGINSON** The best plans always are.

**CHARLIE** We can manage it all ourselves, I think. The fewer people who know about it, the better.

**COL MEGGINSON** Absolutely!

**CHARLIE** Just you and me, Elizabeth and Brenda. Brenda driving, Elizabeth in front with her, you and me in the back of the van.

**COL MEGGINSON** The van?

**CHARLIE** Horse van.

**COL MEGGINSON** You can get one?

**CHARLIE** No problem. I'll borrow my sister's. Don't worry, I'll make something up. She lets me borrow it for the fireworks. I'll tell her it's something to do with that.

**COL MEGGINSON** It won't arouse any suspicions?

**CHARLIE** None at all. The only question is when.

**COL MEGGINSON** Sooner the better. Element of surprise. No point putting it off.

**CHARLIE** Tomorrow?

**COL MEGGINSON** Why not?

**CHARLIE** Good! We'll pick you up here about eight. Have him in the van by half-past. Sunday night, the streets will be quiet.

**COL MEGGINSON** Where are we taking him?

**CHARLIE** Brenda's going to do a recce in the morning and decide the best place to leave him. All she'll have to do tomorrow night is stop, give us the signal...

**COL MEGGINSON** What's the signal?

**CHARLIE** Knock on the partition?

**COL MEGGINSON** *(Looks doubtful.)*  
Hmm...

**CHARLIE** Better still, she can ring me on my mobile!

**COL MEGGINSON** Good idea!

**CHARLIE** Not while she's driving though. We don't want to risk getting stopped by the police.

**COL MEGGINSON** Elizabeth could do it.

**CHARLIE** Of course she could! Brenda tells her when we're nearly there, Elizabeth rings me in the back, you and I are ready to bundle him out as soon as we stop, jump back in and away we go.

**COL MEGGINSON** Well, Charlie, I haven't felt so excited since the last time my regiment played war games with the Yanks.  
*(Short pause.)*  
You miss it, you know. You miss it.

**CHARLIE** All set then! Operation Rough Sleepers!

**COL MEGGINSON** Operation Rough Sleepers! Never mind coffee, I want a whisky! You too?

**CHARLIE** I wouldn't say no.

**COL MEGGINSON** Come on! Let's go in and tell them the plan.  
*(Puts his arm around CHARLIE's shoulders and walks off.)*  
Well done, old boy! Well done!

**CHARLIE**                   *(Speaking as they go out.)*  
 It was all Brenda's idea.

**COL MEGGINSON**       *(Off.)*  
 Well done, Brenda! Charlie says it was your idea.

**BRENDA**                   *(Off.)*  
 So it was!

**Scene 6**

*(Nightfall. Enter **SYLVIA** carrying a thermos flask.)*

**SYLVIA**                   Hello!  
*(Goes to chapel door.)*  
 Hello!  
*(Knocks on the door.)*  
 I've brought you some soup. It's a cold night.  
*(Knocks again. Tries the door, finds it open, goes in. Enter **CAPTAIN**. He sits on the stone tomb.)*

**CAPTAIN**               I'm going tomorrow.  
*(Pause.)*  
 I've been here long enough.  
*(Pause.)*  
 Time to move on.  
*(Pause.)*  
 It's the longest I've stayed in one place since...  
*(Pause.)*  
 Time to go.  
*(Pause.)*  
 It's cold in that chapel. You're better sleeping where animals are. They keep you warm.  
*(Pause.)*  
 I'll leave in the morning before it's light.  
*(Stands up. Goes towards chapel door, stops when he sees it open. **SYLVIA** comes out, closes the door, turns, sees **CAPTAIN** and jumps.)*

**SYLVIA**               Oh! You startled me.  
*(Brief pause, **CAPTAIN** looking at her. She holds out the flask.)*  
 I brought you this. Soup. To warm you up. Tomato. I hope you like it.

**CAPTAIN**               *(Taking the flask.)*  
 I can't afford to have likes or dislikes. Thank you, ma'am.  
*(Silence.)*

**SYLVIA**               I'm afraid I'm going to have to dash off. I've come straight from evensong. I have visitors waiting.  
*(Pause.)*  
 Sometimes when I'm preaching, I look at the congregation and it's like

looking at a painting. Their expressions never change. Almost as if they don't want you to know what they're thinking.

*(Pause.)*

Perhaps they're not thinking anything.

*(Pause.)*

Oh well! It's a cold night. You'd better go in. You're sure you're warm enough in there?

**CAPTAIN**

I've got my blanket, ma'am. Don't worry about me.

**SYLVIA**

*(Lost in her thoughts for a moment.)*

I must go. Goodnight, Captain. God bless you!

*(She hurries out. **CAPTAIN** removes the cup from the top of the flask, unscrews the stopper and smells the soup.)*

**CAPTAIN**

Heinz. Glad it's not Campbell's. I've never liked Campbell's.

*(Sits on the tomb, pours soup into the cup. Sound of a vehicle some way off, slowing down and stopping. Silence. He puts the cup down, stands on the tomb, looks off, sees something, gets down quickly and walks off. Enter **CHARLIE** and **COL MEGGINSON**. They stop, look round cautiously. **CHARLIE** points to the flask, then to the open door. **COL MEGGINSON** nods. **CHARLIE** walks quickly to the door, **COL MEGGINSON** following close behind. They stop at the door, exchange looks, then go in. **CAPTAIN** returns at once, taking the key out of his pocket, closes the door and locks it.)*

I should have left before. I might have done if it hadn't been for her. Kindness, you see. It distracts you. You forget.

*(Sits on the tomb, picks up the cup and takes a drink.)*

What with you and then her. You forget everything you ever learned. You get illusions.

*(The door handle turns, the door shakes. He looks round. **CHARLIE** and **COL MEGGINSON** are heard from behind the door.)*

**CHARLIE**

It's locked.

**COL MEGGINSON**

What?

**CHARLIE**

It's locked.

**COL MEGGINSON**

It can't be.

**CHARLIE**

You try.

*(The door handle turns again, the door shaking.)*

**COL MEGGINSON**

It must be jammed.

*(Sound of banging.)*

**CHARLIE**

It's no good, George. He must have seen us. It was stupid to come in.

*(More banging.)*

**COL MEGGINSON**

Never gave it a thought.

**CHARLIE**

What now?

**COL MEGGINSON**

Wait for the ladies.

**CHARLIE**

With him outside?

*(He shouts.)*

Brenda! Brenda!

*(Increased sound of banging, door rattling on its hinges.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Elizabeth!

**CHARLIE** Brenda!

*(CHARLIE and COL MEGGINSON shout repeatedly. CAPTAIN drinks the soup, in a hurry to finish it, but otherwise more amused than concerned. Enter BRENDA and MRS MEGGINSON.)*

**MRS MEGGINSON** *(Calling in answer to the others.)*

George! Charlie! What is it? Where are you?

*(CAPTAIN stands up.)*

**BRENDA** *(More composed.)*

They're in there, in the chapel.

*(Sees CAPTAIN, alerts MRS MEGGINSON.)*

Look!

**MRS MEGGINSON** Is that him?

**BRENDA** *(To MRS MEGGINSON.)*

Tell them we're here.

*(BRENDA approaches CAPTAIN, MRS MEGGINSON goes to chapel door, CHARLIE and COL MEGGINSON still shouting.)*

**MRS MEGGINSON** It's all right. We're here.

**CHARLIE** We're locked in.

**BRENDA** *(To CAPTAIN, holding out her hand.)*

The key, please.

**COL MEGGINSON** Is that you, Elizabeth?

**CAPTAIN** I've thrown it away.

**MRS MEGGINSON** Are you all right, dear?

**BRENDA** The key.

**COL MEGGINSON** Yes, we're all right. Apart from being locked in.

**CAPTAIN** I told you. I've thrown it away.

**BRENDA** I don't believe you.

**CAPTAIN** *(Sits down again, picks up the cup.)*

Locked them in and threw away the key.

*(Calmly drinking soup.)*

**BRENDA** Where did you get it anyway? You must have stolen it.

**CAPTAIN** You shouldn't jump to conclusions, miss. You were a lot nicer to me before. How could I have stolen it? I was given it.

**BRENDA** That woman's got a lot to answer for.

**CHARLIE** What's going on out there? Brenda? Are you there?

**BRENDA** Yes, Charlie. I'm here. Unlike you. How did you manage to get yourselves locked in?

**CAPTAIN** Trespassing. That's what they were doing. I've been given permission. They haven't.

**BRENDA** Just give me the key. Either you give it to me or I take it off you.

*(CAPTAIN finishes the soup, puts the cap back on the flask, holds it out.)*

**COL MEGGINSON** Elizabeth!

**CAPTAIN** Hold this, will you?

**BRENDA** *(Very reluctantly, takes it from him.)*  
The key.

**COL MEGGINSON** Elizabeth! Are you all right

**MRS MEGGINSON** Yes, dear. I'm all right.  
*(CAPTAIN reaches into one pocket after another until he finally brings out the key. He holds it out, she reaches for it, he throws it up in the air.)*

**BRENDA** Elizabeth! Quick! Don't let him get away!  
*(MRS MEGGINSON goes to her. BRENDA gives her the flask, goes to where the key landed, picks it up.)*  
Stop him!  
*(MRS MEGGINSON stands in his way as CAPTAIN tries to escape. BRENDA runs to the door, unlocks it. CHARLIE and COL MEGGINSON stumble out.)*  
He's there! Get him!  
*(CAPTAIN finally manages to get past MRS MEGGINSON but is immediately held by CHARLIE.)*

**CHARLIE** I've got him, George.

**COL MEGGINSON** *(Also grabs hold of CAPTAIN.)*  
Got you, you old scoundrel! Now you're coming with us!

**CHARLIE** You might as well come quietly. Otherwise you might get hurt.

**BRENDA** Hurt him anyway! It's what he deserves!  
*(She runs towards CAPTAIN and slaps him.)*

**MRS MEGGINSON** *(Shocked.)*  
Oh, darling!

**CHARLIE** Come on, George! Let's get him in the van!  
*(CHARLIE and COL MEGGINSON drag him away, CAPTAIN resisting. BRENDA and MRS MEGGINSON follow. A sudden flash of lightning illuminates the scene as LUCY jumps off the swing and runs to the tomb. A loud clap of thunder follows. A second flash of lightning shows LUCY lifting the lid of the tomb and THE DEAD climbing out. To the accompaniment of continuous claps of thunder and flashes of lightning, they advance on CHARLIE, BRENDA, COL MEGGINSON and MRS MEGGINSON, pursuing them as they back away and try to escape. LUCY lowers the lid of the tomb, runs to CAPTAIN and pulls him to one side. They watch as THE DEAD catch CHARLIE, BRENDA, COL MEGGINSON and MRS MEGGINSON and drag them out through the auditorium. When they are alone again, LUCY leads CAPTAIN to the swing and makes him sit on it. She stands behind the swing and pushes him. One by one, THE DEAD return and stand watching them. An owl hoots as the light fades to blackout.)*

END