

Evelyn Waugh's

# **The Loved One**

*A Musical Comedy*

After the novella by Evelyn Waugh  
Adapted for the stage by Robert Styles  
Music by Timothy Higgs  
Lyrics by Robert Styles and Timothy Higgs  
Orchestrations by Timothy Higgs

## **LIBRETTO**

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## **LIST OF CHARACTERS**

### **The English**

DENNIS BARLOW, an opportunist and would-be poet  
SIR FRANCIS HINSLEY, an elderly scriptwriter  
SIR AMBROSE ABERCROMBIE, a famous Hollywood actor

### **The Americans**

THEODORA HEINKEL, a dog-lover  
WALTER HEINKEL, her husband  
MR SCHULTZ, proprietor of The Happier Hunting Ground Pet Cemetery  
MR ERIKSON, Chief Executive of Megalopolitan Pictures  
LORENZO MEDICI, a film director  
OTTO BAUMBEIN, an assistant director  
MISS POSKI, Mortuary Hostess at Whispering Glades  
THE ITALIAN PLOT AND MONUMENT COORDINATOR  
THE COFFIN MAKER  
THE FRENCH TAILOR  
MR JOYBOY, Chief Embalmer at Whispering Glades  
AIMÉE THANATOGENOS, a junior cosmetician at Whispering Glades  
MR VOGEL, Cosmetic Supervisor at Whispering Glades  
A PRIEST  
MOM, mother of Mr Joyboy  
MRS MELLY, an organist  
A PRIEST, a non-sectarian clergyman  
GURU BRAHMIN, a spiritual healer  
MR SLUMP, a journalist

Various staff and bystanders at Los Angeles Airport, Megalopolitan Pictures and  
Whispering Glades

## SYNOPSIS

### ACT ONE

Hollywood, 1952

DENNIS BARLOW arrives in Los Angeles to commence work on a writing project for Megalopolitan Pictures. He is met at the airport by SIR FRANCIS HINSLEY – a fellow Englishman also employed by the studio but with considerably more years' scriptwriting experience behind him.

Within a fortnight, Dennis is fired and finds himself working as an undertaker for the Happier Hunting Ground Pet Cemetery. Business is brisk, the ovens are burning day and night, and its proprietor MR SCHULTZ is overjoyed with the effect his new employee is having on the sale of headstones. However, these feelings are not shared by SIR AMBROSE ABERCROMBIE – a highly respected and acclaimed British actor who, concerned only for his own reputation at Megalopolitan, pays Dennis an unexpected visit to warn him what might happen should he continue to pursue his macabre occupation.

Back at the studio, Sir Francis finds his office has been taken over by a stranger and that people appear to be avoiding him. Behind closed doors, the board of directors deliver the damning verdict on Hinsley's latest screenplay and the wheels of his dismissal are set in motion.

When a news bulletin announces that Sir Francis has been found dead, Sir Ambrose elects Dennis to organize the funeral arrangements. Seeing it as a high-profile society occasion, Sir Ambrose chooses the largest and most prestigious undertaking business in L.A. – Whispering Glades Memorial Park.

Passing through its imposing portals, Dennis finds himself in a hitherto unknown world. Escorted by MISS POSKI – the Mortuary Hostess – Dennis is introduced to a variety of coffin-makers, tailors, embalmers and cosmeticians who whirl past him in a floor-show reminiscent of Busby Berkeley. But Whispering Glades has a further surprise in store. Once the appropriate casket, slumber chamber, burial plot and headstone have been finalised, Dennis enters The Orchid Room to be confronted by AIMÉE THANATOGENOS – a shy and pretty junior cosmetician.

Behind her clipboard and colour charts, Dennis senses the subtle signs of mutual attraction and welcomes the opportunity of seeing her again on the day of the leave-taking. But Aimée has a problem which has dominated her private thoughts for some months. Desperately in search of love, Aimée feels she may have at last found it in the figure of her immediate superior – MR JOYBOY, Chief Embalmer at Whispering Glades.

Obsessively passionate about his work, Joyboy has been displaying his silent devotion to her in a rather singular way: the faces of the Loved Ones sent by him for Aimée to beautify have been set with beaming angelic smiles. More often than not, an affectionate well-wishing note has also been attached to the toes.

Though moved by these demonstrations, Aimée is deeply confused and has found herself in frustrated correspondence with the spiritual healer – GURU BRAHMIN. So far, even he has been unable to calm her muddled head. Dennis returns to Whispering Glades intent on making a good impression, but enquiries about his occupation force Dennis into a corner. Rather than

confess to being fired by Megalopolitan and his involvement with the pet cemetery, Dennis tells her that he is a poet. Naive to the world of literature, Aimée is impressed.

The day of the funeral arrives and as the mourners assemble at the graveside, Aimée is struck by the seemingly sad and romantic figure of Dennis, all alone in The Garden of Remembrance. Though her head is haunted by warning voices, Aimée decides to throw caution to the wind for the first time in her life and give Dennis a chance.

## **ACT TWO**

Three weeks later and Aimée's double-lifestyle is giving her a migraine. Though secretly dating Dennis behind Joyboy's back, an air of mystery has started to cloud his true intentions. And with Joyboy being as elusive as ever, Aimée is forced into deeper correspondence with Guru Brahmin. Lost in a labyrinth of confusion, Aimée decides to wait for a sign.

To her relief, the riddle is solved when Joyboy makes his first significant move. On a wave of uncharacteristic romanticism, he whisks her up to the slabs, announces her promotion to become his First Lady Embalmer and, over a fresh cadaver, invites her out to supper.

When news of Aimée's substantial pay rise reaches Dennis, he retaliates by proposing marriage. Appalled by his motives, Aimée takes great pleasure in informing Guru Brahmin that she will never see Dennis again. But as Aimée prepares for her first date with Joyboy, Dennis concocts a plan to win her back. Unable to write a decent poem himself, he raids *The Oxford Book of English Verse* for a poem that will steal her heart once and for ever.

Aimée arrives at the Joyboy household in anticipation of a cosy candle-lit supper for two only to discover another female in attendance. Bearing a strong resemblance to Bette Davis in 'Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?' MRS JOYBOY – or Mom – together with her pet parrot, Sambo – succeed in making their guest extremely uneasy. Aimée's main worry is that Joyboy seems oblivious to his mother's eccentricities – in fact, she has a distinct feeling of being in their way. The notion of this ever becoming a fulfilling relationship is suddenly a very bad idea indeed, and when Dennis presents her with his latest 'original' poem the following day, Aimée accepts his proposal.

The news of their engagement sends the staff of Whispering Glades into a frenzy of excitement, but the festive mood is shattered by the entrance of a despondent Joyboy. His forlorn expression fills Aimée with pity and when he informs her that his mother's parrot also died that morning, her guilty conscience is fit to burst. To appease him, she offers to accompany the Joyboys to the funeral. Joyboy has already made the arrangements – at The Happier Hunting Ground.

In a spectacular showdown (most certainly engineered by Joyboy), Aimée's 'poet' fiancé is exposed as a fake and, horrified by his lies, she breaks off their engagement. News travels fast in Hollywood and Sir Ambrose seizes the opportunity he has been waiting for. The money for a ticket is raised and, utterly disgraced, Dennis has no other option but to prepare to return to England.

Meanwhile at Whispering Glades, the celebrations of Aimée and Joyboy's engagement are in full swing. The party goes on until late into the evening and when Aimée leaves, Dennis is lying in wait for her. Embittered by his rejection from every corner of Los Angeles, Dennis is determined to drag someone down with him. Knowing he has no future with Aimée, he instead plants the seeds of doubt into her head about her future with Joyboy. Having imparted his venomous

sting, Dennis disappears into the night.

Desperately confused, Aimée telephones Joyboy to relay her fears about their marriage. Too busy with his mother to talk, Joyboy hangs up on her. With her fears confirmed, Aimée frantically tries to contact Guru Brahmin. It is late and she eventually tracks him down to Mooney's Saloon. To her horror, she learns that the Guru is not the great spiritual force in her life that she thought he was, but a journalist called MR SLUMP. Fired that day and the worse for bourbon, Slump gives Miss Thanatogenos a final and brutal word of advice.

Whispering Glades is in darkness when she enters Joyboy's embalming room where, after injecting herself with formaldehyde, she collapses and dies.

Joyboy is terrified of the effect that Aimée's suicide will have on his career and journeys to The Happier Hunting Ground to plead with Dennis to help him. For a price, Dennis comes up with a solution that will put an end to any recriminations for Joyboy – that Aimée saw the error of her ways and instead eloped with Dennis to start a new life in England. At his wit's end, Joyboy agrees to the bribe and, in order to destroy all trace of her existence, they load Aimée's body into the pet incinerator and slam the door. As Aimée's body bursts into flames and the room is filled with dancing shadows, Joyboy makes his escape. Leaving Aimée's ashes to cool and a remembrance card for Joyboy, Dennis departs for England.

# LIBRETTO

## PROLOGUE

*[The drone of an approaching aircraft. The orchestra strikes up the intro to 'Hollywood'. Lights up on a flight of passenger boarding stairs marked 'Property of TWA/Los Angeles International Airport'. The aircraft engines shut down. A stewardess appears above. A group of passengers descend. DENNIS BARLOW emerges last and pauses on the top step]*

SONG: HOLLYWOOD

DENNIS:

IT'S FUN TO FLY  
DIRECT TO HOLLYWOOD  
TO WIN A GUY  
RESPECT FROM HOLLYWOOD

*[DENNIS exchanges glances with the stewardess before descending]*

SHE'S A BAZAAR FULL OF TURKISH DELIGHTS  
SHE'S A CONFECTION OF SWEETMEATS  
AND HOT ARABIAN NIGHTS

*[DENNIS moves in to collect his bag from the tarmac where another damsel takes his eye]*

ALL HOLLY'S GIRLS  
ARE MOST RESPECTABLE  
WITH GORGEOUS CURLS  
THEY'RE MOST SELECTABLE  
THEIR PRECIOUS PEARLS  
ARE UNCONNECTABLE  
AND HIGHLY COLLECTABLE  
IN HOLLYWOOD

*[DENNIS moves downstage. The scene behind him dissolves into the hustle and bustle of the terminal building – a 1950's pageant of passengers, flight attendants & airport personnel - with perhaps a pilot or two and a film goddess thrown in for good measure. DENNIS' passport is stamped]*

INSTEAD OF BREAD  
SHE FED ON HOLLYWOOD  
SOUGHT BY THE FED  
SHE FLED TO HOLLYWOOD

SHE HAD TO RUMBA FOR EIGHT BUCKS A WEEK  
DEEP IN THE NIGHT WE WOULD SLUMBER  
TOGETHER CHEEK TO CHEEK

HER LOVELY BOYS  
ARE UNINSURABLE  
WITH GRACEFUL POISE  
COMPACT AND TOURABLE  
THEY FLIRT WITH BOYS  
ARE PAST INCURABLE  
ADRIFT AND LURABLE  
IN HOLLYWOOD

BOYS:  
WHEN HOLLY'S SWEET  
GIRLS:  
SHE CAN BE AWFUL NICE  
BOYS:  
COMPLETELY SWEET  
GIRLS  
WHY THEN SHE'S PARADISE

GIRLS & BOYS:  
THE SUNNY MOONLIGHT JUST GRINS AT THE NOISE  
SHE CANNOT HANDLE THE SPOTLIGHT AND PINS IT ON HER BOYS

BOYS:  
SHE LISTS HER FRIENDS  
GIRLS:  
AMONG THE UPPER SET  
BOYS:  
SHE FOLLOWS TRENDS  
GIRLS:  
ENJOYS A TÊTE À TÊTE

GIRLS & BOYS:  
SHE OFTEN LENDS  
TO THOSE SHE'S HARDLY MET  
AND PUTS HERSELF IN DEBT  
IN HOLLYWOOD

*[Stage action continues]*

DENNIS:  
SHE SCRAPES A CENT  
TO PAY THE SALARIES  
SHE STARVES FOR RENT  
AND SAVES ON CALORIES  
  
HER DAYS GROW SHORTER AND SHORTER WITH TIME  
SHE HAS A DAUGHTER REPORTER  
WHO PARTNERS HER IN CRIME

*[Eventually SIR FRANCIS HINSLEY emerges from the crowd brandishing a small Union Jack flag on a stick. He and DENNIS shake hands]*

I WON'T EXTEND  
THIS POTTED HISTORY  
BECAUSE THE END  
IS NO GREAT MYSTERY

*[HINSLEY reaches out to carry DENNIS's suitcase. As they both turn to leave, DENNIS faces the audience]*

SHE HAS A FRIEND  
WHO SLIT HIS WRIST YOU SEE  
THE REST IS HISTORY  
IN HOLLYWOOD

*[BLACKOUT]*

## ACT I SCENE 1

*[Silhouetted against the palm trees, the words **Megalopolitan Pictures** appear on the horizon. ERIKSON, the studio boss appears with three other STUDIO DIRECTORS]*

SONG: FAR FROM HIS BEST

ERIKSON: Good morning, gentlemen. I would like to welcome you all to this meeting between the Megalopolitan Pictures Directors of Law, Publicity, Personality, and International Relations. As you know, we are here to discuss Sir Francis Hinsley's latest screenplay – "The Mountains of Mourne" – which the author himself describes as "a fairy romance set against the turbulent background of Celtic Mythology". So, what's the verdict?  
DIRECTORS *[variously]*: Disappointing. Terrible. Allergic to the assignment.

*[Music under. A telephone rings. Lights up separately on DENNIS BARLOW typing furiously. He lifts the receiver]*

DENNIS: The Happier Hunting Ground. . .

*[Lights up on THEODORA & WALTER HEINKEL]*

MRS HEINKEL:

THIS IS THEODORA HEINKEL  
MRS WALTER HEINKEL  
THAT'S 207 VIA DOLOROSA BEL AIR

Have you got that?

DENNIS: 207 Dolorosa. I've got it. How may we be of service to you?

MRS HEINKEL: My - my – oh, it's too awful! I can't bring myself to speak of it.

WALTER: *[Taking the receiver]* Give it here . . .

IT'S HER LITTLE ARTHUR  
HER PRECIOUS BABY ARTHUR  
THE GUILT IS ALMOST TOO MUCH FOR HER TO BEAR

DENNIS: Ah. Mr Heinkel? I think I need you to be more specific.

MRS HEINKEL: *[Taking back the receiver]*

FOR AS LONG AS I LIVE  
I CAN NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF AND . . .  
HELLO, HELLO? ARE YOU STILL THERE?

DENNIS: Yes, I'm coming at once. Please try and keep calm....

MRS HEINKEL:

HE WENT OUT AROUND NINE BUT HE DIDN'T COME BACK  
BY MIDDAY MY NERVES WERE BEGINNING TO CRACK  
SO WALTER CAME HOME 'CASE I HAD AN ATTACK  
THEN AT EIGHT THERE'S A KNOCK – IT'S A MAN WITH A SACK!  
DENNIS: The Happier Hunting ground is on its way.

*[They hang up. Lights fade on DENNIS and THE HEINKELS. Lights up on ERIKSON and DIRECTORS]*

DIRECTOR 1:

IT'S FAR FROM HIS BEST  
AND BORED ME TO TEARS  
IT GOT ME SO DEPRESSED  
TO READ THE WORST SCRIPT IN YEARS

DIRECTOR 2:

THE SUBTEXT IS THIN  
HE SHOULD HAVE RETIRED  
WE SHOULD HAVE CALLED HIM IN  
BEFORE HIS CONTRACT EXPIRED

*[Lights up on SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR and SIR FRANCIS HINSLEY on the telephone]*

SWITCHBOARD: Good morning, Megalopolitan Administration.



FRANCIS: Good morning. This is Sir Francis Hinsley. I was wondering if you might know the whereabouts of my personal secretary? She's usually very punctual and it is now nearly eleven thirty.

SWITCHBOARD: Yes, Sir Francis, that is correct.

FRANCIS: No, you misunderstand me. She usually arrives at nine thirty prompt to open the mail. *[Pause]*

SWITCHBOARD: Miss Mavrocordato has been transferred to the Catering Department. *[Pause]*

FRANCIS: Well, I must have somebody.

SWITCHBOARD: I'm not sure we have anyone available right now.

FRANCIS: This is most inconvenient. I'll just have to come down to the studio and finish my work there. Will you have my car sent for me please?

SWITCHBOARD: I'll put you through to Transportation. Please hold.

*[Lights down on SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. SIR FRANCIS continues to hold]*

DIRECTOR 3:

HE'S OUT OF HIS MIND  
AND WON'T TAKE ON BOARD  
THE BUDGET FOR THE COSTUMES  
WHICH WE JUST CAN'T AFFORD

*[Lights up on CHAUFFEUR]*

CHAUFFEUR: No, Sir Francis, I'm sorry, we don't have a studio automobile here right now.

FRANCIS: I see.

CHAUFFEUR: Take a taxi!

*[Lights down on SIR FRANCIS and CHAUFFEUR]*

DIRECTOR 4:

IT'S HARD ON THE GUY  
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO  
EXCUSES HE WILL BUY  
BUT DO WE KNOW HE WON'T SUE

*[Lights up on SIR AMBROSE and JOURNALIST. Ambrose is dressed in Shakespearean attire – a toga, leather leggings and a laurel crown. A SECRETARY hovers]*

AMBROSE: Twenty years. Twenty years on American soil. I can hardly believe it. Nowadays I think of Tinseltown as my home. And I've always had two principles throughout my life in motion pictures: Never do before the camera what you would not do at home, and never do at home what you would not do before the camera. It has always worked for me and. . .

SECRETARY: I'm sorry to interrupt, Sir Ambrose, but Mr Erikson would like to see you when you break for lunch.

AMBROSE: The canteen?

SECRETARY: In his office.

AMBROSE: Oh.

*[Lights down on SIR AMBROSE]*

TWO SECRETARIES:

WE THOUGHT HE WAS CUTE  
AN OLD FASHIONED GENT  
HE GOES AND GETS THE BOOT  
AND IT WON'T COST THEM A CENT

*[Lights up on SIR FRANCIS walking in on LORENZO MEDICI]*

FRANCIS: I say. There must be some mistake.

MEDICI: Maybe there is too. Everything seems kinda screwy round here. I've spent half the morning clearing junk out of this room. Piles of stuff – bottles of medicine, books, photographs, kids' games! Seems it belonged to some old Britisher who has just kicked off.

FRANCIS: I am that old Britisher and I have not kicked off.

MEDICI: I'm mighty glad to hear it.

FRANCIS: I must go and talk to Otto.

MEDICI: Hope there wasn't anything you valued in all that junk. I just pushed it out into the passage. Maybe some janitor . . .

*[Lights down on SIR FRANCIS and MEDICI]*

ERIKSON :

IT'S JUST AN IDEA

CHORUS:

JUST AN IDEA

ERIKSON :

BUT I THINK HE JUST MIGHT

CHORUS:

WE THINK HE JUST MIGHT

ERIKSON :

BELIEVE OUR EXCUSE

ABOUT THE COPYRIGHT

CHORUS:

BELIEVE OUR EXCUSE

ALL:

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

ERIKSON:

SO WHEN HE ARRIVES

DON'T ANYONE LAUGH

WE WON'T GET OUT THE KNIVES

UNTIL WE'VE FATTENED THE CALF

ALL:

HM HM HM HM HM

*[Lights up on SIR FRANCIS and SECRETARY]*

SECRETARY: Oh. Sir Francis. Was there anyone in particular you were looking for?

FRANCIS: Yes, I'd like to speak to Otto.

SECRETARY: Mr Baumbein is in conference right now. Shall I have him call you?

FRANCIS: I'll wait.

*[Voices off]*

OTTO: There's a cousin of my wife just arrived – maybe I'd better give him a try-out on the job?

ERIKSON: Yes Sam. Have your wife's cousin look it over.

*[Lights up on SIR FRANCIS and OTTO]*

FRANCIS: I've just found a Mr Medici in my office.

OTTO: Why, yes Frank. Only he says it "Medissy". Mr Medici is a very fine young man, with a very, very fine and wonderful record, who I'd be proud to have you meet.

FRANCIS: So where do I work?

OTTO: Well, now see here, Frank. That's a thing I want very much to talk to you about – but I haven't the time right now. I haven't the time have I, dear?

SECRETARY: *[off]* No Mr Baumbein, you certainly haven't the time.

OTTO: How say I give you a ring next week sometime?

FRANCIS: What about my script?

OTTO:

IT'S GOTTA HAVE GRIT  
IT NEEDS TO BE COOL  
ADJUST THE BOOK A BIT  
AND HAVE IT END IN A DUEL  
YOU'VE EARNED SOME TIME OFF  
YOU'RE GETTING UPTIGHT  
WITHIN A WEEK YOU'LL COUGH  
UP SOMETHING DYNAMITE

FRANCIS: I'm going to see Mr Erikson.

OTTO: Mighty nice of you to look us up. I appreciate that. No, I do really. Come again. Come often, Frank.

*[Lights dim as SIR FRANCIS moves off. Lights up on ERIKSON and SIR AMBROSE still dressed in toga and laurel crown. As ERIKSON speaks, AMBROSE toys with a prop dagger]*

ERIKSON: I don't suppose there's anyone left in Hollywood – except yourself – who remembers Frank in his prime. Wasn't he the first Englishman to go into motion pictures?

AMBROSE: Well, one of the first. You might say he laid the foundations on which I – on which we all have built. He did yeoman service. Yes, you could say he was our first ambassador. However? We've all had to move with the times. Frank has – well, he's just lost touch.

*[ERIKSON motions to SIR AMBROSE to look behind him. He turns to face SIR FRANCIS who has entered without either of them noticing]*

VOICE 1:

IT'S FAR FROM HIS BEST

VOICE 2:

THE CONTENT IS LIGHT

ERIKSON: Frank.

VOICE 3:

THE PASSIONATE SCENES

VOICE 4:

THEY'LL FAIL TO IGNITE

FRANCIS: It would have been civil to tell me.

VOICE 1:

THE SUBTEXT IS WEAK

VOICE 2:

THE THEMES DON'T UNITE

SPLIT CHORUS:

IT'S JUST AN IDEA / JUST AN IDEA

BUT I THINK HE JUST MIGHT / I THINK HE JUST MIGHT

BELIEVE OUR EXCUSE

ERIKSON: The letter is on its way. These things get hung up sometimes, as you know; so many different departments, the Legal Branch, Finance, Labour Disputes Section, etc, etc. But I don't anticipate any trouble in your case. You've had a record run. Twenty-five years isn't it? There's not even a provision in your contract for repatriation. Your termination ought to whip right through.

*[They all attempt to shake hands. ERIKSON and SIR AMBROSE exit leaving SIR FRANCIS alone]*

FRANCIS: Junk...

*[The lights slowly fade on SIR FRANCIS as he picks up the dagger left behind by SIR AMBROSE]*

CHORUS:

IT'S JUST AS WE SAID  
THE OLD BOY IS THROUGH  
HE WENT TO BED  
TO MEND HIS HEAD  
T'WAS ALL HE COULD DO  
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA  
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA  
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

[BLACKOUT]

## ACT I SCENE 2

*[Doorbell. The Heinkel's hallway. Music continues under. THEODORA slumps in a chair whilst WALTER paces. WALTER opens the door to reveal DENNIS carrying an aluminium container]*

SONG: THINK OF THIS BEFORE YOU WEEP

DENNIS: Mr W. H., all happiness!

WALTER: Pardon me?

DENNIS: I am The Happier Hunting Ground.

WALTER: Boy, am I pleased to see you. It's been a long night. Come along in.

DENNIS: Will this be large enough?

WALTER: Plenty. *[Theodora gasps]* This has been a terrible experience for Mrs Heinkel. I haven't seen her like this since they took her off the tranquillisers. *[He exits]*

DENNIS: The Happier Hunting Ground assumes all responsibility.

MRS HEINKEL: As I'd arranged to have some friends over to dine with us, and Mr Heinkel said "What the heck – you can't cancel at the last minute?" – we went ahead with it. I had just served the consommé when we heard the news.

DENNIS: It must have been a great shock for you both.

MRS HEINKEL: I keep thinking . . . a city wagon! *[Walter returns with a small but bulky sack in his arms.]* I don't want to see him! Oh don't let me see him!

DENNIS: *[opening the box]* He's in capable hands now Mrs Heinkel. We'll take good care of him.

*[To Mr Heinkel]* Shall we discuss arrangements now, or would you prefer a call tomorrow morning?

WALTER: Now would be preferable, I think. Get it out of the way, you know? I'm a pretty busy man in the mornings.

DENNIS: I understand entirely.

TO THOSE WHO'VE LOST A FRIEND  
WE'RE WITH YOU TO THE END  
UNTIL YOU WAVE GOODBYE

AND AS THE DAYS UNFOLD  
AND ARTHUR'S GROWING COLD  
YOU'RE SURE TO WONDER WHY

IF THERE'S A GREATER POWER  
TO NURTURE EVERY FLOWER  
WHY TAKE THIS LIFE AWAY

YOU'LL SAVE ON ARTHUR'S FARE  
COS WE TRANSPORT HIM THERE  
ON THE APPOINTED DAY

YOU NEED TO LOOK AT ALL THE OPTIONS  
WOULD LITTLE ARTHUR RATHER BURN  
IT'S ALL OVER IN A FLASH  
AND ONCE WE'VE SIFTED THROUGH HIS ASH  
THEN YOU CAN STASH HIM ON THE SIDEBOARD IN AN URN

*[Music continues under]*

WALTER: The best will be good enough.

DENNIS: Do you require a niche in our columbarium or would you prefer to keep the remains at home?

WALTER: *[after a pause]* What you said first.

DENNIS: Perhaps I might draw your attention to a unique feature of our Grade A Service?

WALTER: *[suspiciously]* Go ahead.

DENNIS:

AT THE MOMENT OF COMMITTAL  
A PURE WHITE DOVE  
IN MEMORY OF YOUR DECEASED  
IS RELEASED UP ABOVE

WALTER: Yup! She'd appreciate the dove all right.

DENNIS:

WE INSCRIBE ON A CARD THAT WILL COME WITHOUT FAIL  
ON THE DAY THAT HE DIED EVERY YEAR IN THE MAIL  
YOUR LITTLE ARTHUR  
IN HEAVEN TODAY  
IS THINKING OF YOU  
AND WAGGING HIS TAIL

There's no extra charge for that.

WALTER: That's a very beautiful thought, Mr..?

DENNIS: Barlow. Dennis Barlow.

WALTER: You're British, right?

DENNIS: Through and through, Mr Heinkel.

WALTER: I had a sister who emigrated to Birmingham. You might know her.

DENNIS: I must say that I've never had cause to visit Birmingham. So, if you'll just sign the order.

WALTER: It's been a great pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mr. Barlow. You will never know the great responsibility you have lifted from my shoulders.

DENNIS: That is what The Happier Hunting Ground aims to do. Before I leave, and with your permission, I would like to offer a small poem of my own composition by way of comfort.

THINK OF THIS BEFORE YOU WEEP  
DEATH ON ALL OF US DOTH CREEP  
IT IS TRUE THAT ARTHUR'S GONE  
BUT HIS SPIRIT LINGERS ON  
WHEN YOU SEE A CAN OF MEAT  
A BONE A BALL A CHEWY TREAT  
JUST REMINDERS THROUGH THE FOG  
OF A DEAR DEPARTED DOG  
GONE TO A KINGDOM WAY UP HIGH  
THAT HEAVENLY LAMPPOST IN THE SKY

*[DENNIS exits. BLACKOUT]*

## ACT I SCENE 3

*[The Happier Hunting Ground Office. A seedy back room never viewed by the clients. A large oven door dominates. Lights up on DENNIS holding the aluminium container. He is listening to the radio]*

ANNOUNCER: News just in – Sir Francis Hinsley, the veteran Hollywood scriptwriter, has been found dead near his office at Megalopolitan Studios. A spokesman for the Los Angeles Police Department said they were not viewing his death as suspicious. More later. This news-flash was brought to you courtesy of Kaiser's Stoneless Peaches....

KAISER GIRLS:

K – A – I – S – E – R  
THEY'RE FLUFFY SWEET AND FUN TO EAT  
THE FLAVOUR OVERREACHES  
YOU MAY TRY BUT YOU'LL NOT BEAT  
OUR KAISER'S STONELESS PEACHES

*[DENNIS turns the radio off. He stands motionless for a moment before lifting the phone then hangs up when SCHULTZ enters]*

SCHULTZ: Ah, Dennis. That was a quick trip. No problems I take it?

DENNIS: Perfectly straightforward. No quibbling or haggling over the cost. To coin a phrase, Mr Schultz – the Heinkels have money to burn! *[Taking off his coat]* Jesus, it's like an oven in here!

SCHULTZ: And has been all week I'm happy to say. *(Opening the aluminium container)* Not very big is he? That's good though, we can slide him in alongside that Labrador that came in this morning. There'll be plenty of room and it keeps the fuel bills down.

DENNIS: I did not expect you to be here.

SCHULTZ: *(opening the refrigerator and removing a plate of sandwiches and a milk carton from amongst the dead animals)* I'm off shortly. I promised to take Dolores to the Planetarium but she doesn't knock off at the Rollerdrome till three. I was waiting till the last batch was cold enough to pack up. They're all for home delivery. Except the goat.

DENNIS: Did you come up with anything for the remembrance card?

SCHULTZ: As a matter of fact I did. Dealing sensitively with the death of barnyard animals is always kinda tricky, but I think the budding writer in you will appreciate my efforts. *(Pulling a sheet from the typewriter)* "Today in the clouds/All fluffy and hilly/He's thinkin' of you/Your bearded pal, Billy."

DENNIS: That's very witty, Mr Schultz. You'll make a poet yet!

SCHULTZ: You think so, huh?

DENNIS: Are you familiar with the works of Shelley?

SCHULTZ: Temple?

DENNIS: Percy Bysshe Shelley. He's a poet you see. "Tremble ye conquerors at whose fell command/The war-fiend riots over o'er a peaceful land/You Desolation's gory throng/Shall bear from Victory along".

SCHULTZ: Ah, the beauty of a classical education. I knew you'd be good for business the moment you walked through that door. Vinny, I said, this young man has class. Sophistication. He talks nice and he's a looker too god-dam it! The ladies'll love that. The guy before you lacked charm. Wit. He had a body odour problem too - but you, you Mr Wise guy, have found your niche. Have no doubt about it - Megalopolitan's loss is the Happier Hunting Ground's gain.

DENNIS: I'd rather we didn't discuss it if it's all the same with you.

SCHULTZ: Ah, lighten up. *(putting his arm around Dennis' shoulders)* You don't need none of them. You got me now. Where's that smile? Attaboy. And I'll tell you somethin' else. One of these days you're gonna thank me. One of these days you and me are gonna be lyin' on a beach in Tahiti.

DENNIS: How do you mean, Mr Schultz?

SONG: TURN UP THE GAS

SCHULTZ:

I THINK I CAN SAY  
WITHOUT RESERVATION  
THAT THING'S ARE LOOKIN' GOOD  
THERE'S A BIG CALL  
FOR INCINERATION  
RIGHT HERE IN HOLLYWOOD  
IF YOU LOOK AT THE FACTS IT'S QUITE CLEAR  
TEN THOUSAND NEW CARS EVERY YEAR  
AND WITH PEOPLE LIKE ME ON THE ROAD  
DEAD CATS AND DOGS ARE GONNA BE THE MODE  
BELIEVE ME  
IF I'M ASSUMIN'  
THAT AN UPWARD TURN IS LOOMIN'  
BECAUSE THE NEED FOR US IS BLOOMIN'  
TURN UP THE GAS  
AND SO PRESUMIN'  
THAT THOSE NEW MOTOR CARS KEEP ZOOMIN'  
THEN BUSINESS IS BOOMIN'  
TURN UP THE GAS

DENNIS:

JUST THINKIN' OF THE WORKLOAD  
BRINGS ME OUT IN THE SWEATS

SCHULTZ:

REMIND ME IN THE MORNING  
THAT WE'RE LOW ON BRIQUETTES

DENNIS:

IF THINGS IN HERE GET TOO HOT  
THEN WE'LL TURN DOWN THE JETS

SCHULTZ: No!

TURN UP THE JETS  
TURN UP THE JETS

BOTH:

TURN UP THE GAS

SCHULTZ:

AND JUST IMAGINE  
ALL THOSE DEMENTED DOGS ZIG-ZAGGIN'  
AND WHEN THEIR LITTLE TAILS STOP WAGGIN'  
TURN UP THE GAS  
SO IF I'M NAGGIN'  
BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO ME YOU'RE FLAGGIN'  
AFTER A LONG DAY'S TAG AND BAGGIN'  
TURN UP THE GAS

DENNIS:

IF YOU CAN PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT  
YOU'LL BE LAYING THE BETS

SCHULTZ:

WITH ALL THOSE EXTRA CORPSES  
I CAN PAY OFF MY DEBTS

DENNIS:

AND YOU MUSTN'T OVERLOOK  
THAT LITTLE DEAL WITH THE VETS

BOTH: *[conspiratorially]*

TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS

SCHULTZ: Sorry ma'am – I can't do Rover this week.

DENNIS: Why is that, Mr Schultz?

SCHULTZ: I'm working with a skeleton staff

NO TIME FOR NAPPIN'  
COS WHEN THOSE LITTLE JAWS STOP YAPPIN'  
THEIR FURRY BODIES YOU'LL BE WRAPPIN'  
TURN UP THE GAS  
GET SET GET POSTED  
STAND BY GET READY TO BE ROASTED  
ROLL UP SEE TIBBLES GETTING TOASTED  
OH WHAT A GAS  
SO GIVE YOUR PETS A MANICURE  
AND SHARPEN THOSE CLAWS

DENNIS:

THEY WON'T GET INTO HEAVEN MA'AM  
WITH MUD ON THEIR PAWS

SCHULTZ:

MAKE SURE THEY LOOK THEIR BEST  
BEFORE THEY GLIDE THRO' THE DOORS

BOTH:

TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS

SCHULTZ:

A CASKET LINED IN VELVET  
THAT IS SIMPLY POW-WOW

DENNIS:

THE SORT OF HOMELY COMFORT  
EVEN PUSS WOULD ALLOW

SCHULTZ:

GOING TO HIS MAKER  
WITH A FINAL MIAOW

BOTH:

TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS

*[DANCE BREAK – during which they prepare 'Arthur' for cremation, finally hurling the dog into the oven and slamming the door behind him]*

SCHULTZ: I'll be like Noah in his Ark – unable to move for all the different species. Hey! We could do taxidermy - at Thanksgiving. The perfect gift. Catgut for fiddle strings. 'Mr Schultz's Horse Hoof Adhesive'. What have I always said: "There's Cash in Ash!"

AND SO ON SUNDAY MORNING  
AFTER TAKING THEIR VOWS  
SAINT PETER AND THE ANGELS  
STAND THERE MOPPING THEIR BROWS

BOTH:

IT'S US THEY'LL HAVE TO THANK  
FOR FARMER NED'S HOLY COWS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS  
TURN UP THE GAS



SCHULTZ: *[spoken]* THERE'S CASH IN ASH!

*[SCHULTZ picks up his coat and exits. DENNIS turns on the radio, puts his feet up on the desk and begins reading a newspaper. SIR AMBROSE ABERCROMBIE enters unseen and turns off the radio. DENNIS looks up]*

AMBROSE: So this is where you've been hiding out.

DENNIS: Yes. Don't you like it?

AMBROSE: *(moving around the room)* We had an unfortunate case some years ago of a very decent young fellow who came out here as a scene designer. Clever chap but he went completely native. Wore ready-made shoes and a belt instead of braces, went about without a tie, ate at drug stores. Then, if you'll believe it, he left the studio and opened a restaurant with an Italian. Got cheated of course and the next thing he was behind a bar shaking cocktails. Appalling business. We raised a subscription to send him home, but the bugger wouldn't go. Said he liked the place if you please. That man did irreparable harm, Barlow. Luckily the war came. He went home then alright and got himself killed in Norway. He atoned, but I always think how much better not to have anything to atone for, eh?

DENNIS: Have you read my latest rave? "It is forbidden by Californian law to scatter human remains from an aeroplane, but the skies are free to the animal world. On this unique occasion it fell to Dennis Barlow of The Happier Hunting Ground Pet Cemetery, to commit the tabby's ashes to the slip-stream over Sunset Boulevard".

AMBROSE: *(snatching the newspaper)* What in God's name do you think you're playing at?

DENNIS: The owner's favourite movie was 'Gone With The Wind'.

AMBROSE: You know the form out here as well as I do. Not once but twice now you have been a great embarrassment to us all. Things were bad enough when they fired you from Megalopolitan after - what was it?

DENNIS: Three days.

AMBROSE: Three days. And now this – macabre - occupation. Do you give your new employer satisfaction, do you think?

DENNIS: Apparently so. It is my combination of melancholy with the English accent. Several of our clientele have commented favourably upon it.

AMBROSE: There are jobs that an Englishman just doesn't take. We British have a position to keep up. You never find an Englishman among the underdogs – except in England of course. That's understood out here. They respect a man who knows his own value. Now you're a man of reputation in your own line, Barlow. I don't say poets are much in demand but the studios are bound to want one again sooner or later and when they do they'll come to you cap in hand – if you haven't done anything in the meantime to lose their respect. You've heard about Frank I take it? A terrible tragedy – but one out of which you yourself might find reason to atone. This is an occasion when we've all got to show the flag. A funeral is not a time for penny-pinching and so I have chosen Whispering Glades as Frank's final resting place. We may have to put our hands in our pockets but it will be money well spent if it puts the British colony right in the eyes of the industry. As his close friend, I feel sure that Frank would find comfort in knowing that you were sorting out all the preliminary arrangements, Barlow. You owe him that. And while you are about it, give some thought to a reading. Something I can recite at the graveside. Write it yourself if necessary. You're a literary chap. *(Going to leave)* It's a big responsibility. I'm needed on set every day this week so I want you to go up to Whispering Glades as soon as the police hand over the body.

DENNIS: I suppose you'd prefer I wore an armband?

AMBROSE: I'd prefer not to see a failed Englishman hanging around Hollywood.

*[AMBROSE exits. BLACKOUT]*

## ACT I SCENE 4

*[The Reception Room at Whispering Glades. An opulent setting - sombre yet sensational. Music continues under accompanied by unseen heavenly voices. MISS POSKI enters]*

POSKI: My name is Miss Poski – your Mortuary Hostess. Here at Whispering Glades, we dream of a New Earth sacred to Happiness. Here, amid all that Nature and Art can offer to elevate the Soul of Man is the Resting Place of Countless Loved Ones. You, the Waiting Ones, who still stand on the brink of that narrow stream that separates you from those that have gone before, be comforted in the certain knowledge that your Loved Ones are very near, in a beauty such as the earth cannot give. Enter Stranger and Be Happy.

*[The drapery ruches up to reveal the STAFF of Whispering Glades. Flooded with top light, they appear as a group of angels. A selection of caskets revolve slowly around them. The effect is reminiscent of Busby Berkeley]*

POSKI:

WELCOME TO ALL THE HAPPINESS  
OF WHISPERING GLADES  
WE GRIEVE WITH THOSE THEY LEAVE BEHIND  
AND PLAY AT CHARADES  
BE OF GOOD CHEER  
ENTER OUR WORLD  
OF PINK LEMONADES  
AT WHISPERING GLADES

WE HAVE A PILE OF BOOKS FOR YOU  
ON WHISPERING GLADES  
AND WHILE BEREAVEMENT LOOKS AT YOU  
WE SUMMON OUR AIDS  
PAPERBACK-SPINED CHEAPER TO BIND  
THEY CHART THE DECADES  
AT WHISPERING GLADES

CHORUS:

SO DON'T BE BROKEN HEARTED  
YOUR RECENTLY DEPARTED  
ARE HAPPY TO KNOW THEIR JOURNEY STARTED  
AT WHISPERING GLADES

POSKI:

WE'LL FIX YOU UP AT ANY PRICE  
AT WHISPERING GLADES  
LADIES IN BRAIDS MOSTLY OLD MAIDS  
PAY HOMAGE IN SPADES  
IF THERE'S A TEAR BE OF GOOD CHEER  
WHEN NEAR THE ARCADES  
SOMETIMES THE SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES  
AT WHISPERING GLADES

POSKI: You are now standing in our splendid authentic replica of an old English manor, surrounded on four sides by the Whispering Glades Memorial Park – a park so beautiful that it seems a bit above the level of this world – a first step up towards Heaven. To the north – Forest Pines; to the south – The Havens of Peace; to the east – The Gardens of Memory; and to the west – Babyland. Take a wander through the Glade. Take a friend. Take a picnic. Make a day of it. And before you go, whatever you do, don't miss the Good-Buy Gift Shop. You won't be able to resist our fold-out souvenir postcards, tea-towels and memorial ashtrays. You can just 'shop till you drop!'

POSKI:

WE LIKE OUR GUESTS TO FEEL AT HOME  
AT WHISPERING GLADES  
COME ALONG IN  
SMILING'S NO SIN  
IT TEASES THE SHADES  
FLASH US A GRIN  
WELCOME WITHIN  
THE OLDEST OF TRADES  
WELCOME TO ALL THE HAPPINESS  
OF WHISPERING GLADES

POSKI: (*To DENNIS, who has entered during this*) Now, Mr Barlow, is the funeral for yourself?

DENNIS: Certainly not. Do I look as if I were planning to die?

POSKI: Why, no. It's just that the Waiting Ones sometimes like to make Before Need Arrangements.

DENNIS: Pardon me?

POSKI: Pay now, die later. You may well think it morbid at this time in your life, but as Hamlet so beautifully writes: "Know that Death is common; all that live must die".

DENNIS: No, the purpose of my visit is to make burial arrangements for a friend who passed away recently.  
POSKI: In which case, let me hand you over to the Whispering Glades Plot and Monument Coordinator.

THE ITALIAN PLOT AND MONUMENT COORDINATOR:

THE BEAUTY OF STONE  
THOUGH MOST IS ON LOAN  
IS A FINE WORK OF ART  
TO TUG AT THE HEART  
A BEAUTY OR NOT  
ISSA POT TO BE SHOT  
ISSA GUY FULLA SNOT  
ISSA DIE WHEN ISSA HOT  
ISSA SIGH ON THE DOT  
WHEN YOU A-NO GOT A LOT  
I A-SHOW WHAT WE A-GOT  
FOR A PLOT  
YOU CAN A-BLOW IT OR NOT

*[Four ASSISTANTS join him in 'Barber-shop' style]*

QUARTET:

DOWN IN THE GLADE  
WE KEEP RODIN'S KISS  
TO KEEP YOU IN MIND OF  
THOSE LIPS THAT YOU MISS  
YOU'LL SEE UP THE HILL  
THE MANNEKEN PIS  
A WATERY PLACE TO GO

POSKI: What was your Loved One's business?

DENNIS: He was a writer.

POSKI: Ah, then Poets' Corner would be the place for him. Are you acquainted with the works of Amelia Bergson?

DENNIS: I know of them.

POSKI: We sold Miss Bergson a Before Needs Reservation only yesterday, under the statue of the Greek poet Homer. I could put your friend right next to her. But perhaps you would like to see the zone before deciding?

DENNIS: I want to see everything.

QUARTET:

WE'VE GOT DOUBLE PLOTS  
IN VALENTINE'S NEST  
AND WALL STREET TYCOONS  
UP AT VANDERBILT CREST  
BUT IF YOU'RE BROKE  
YOU'RE IN PILGRIMS REST  
THAT'S WHERE THE WILD ORCHIDS GROW  
THAT'S WHERE THE WILD ORCHIDS GROW  
WILD ORCHIDS GROW

ITALIAN COORDINATOR:

THAT'S WHERE THE WILD ORCHIDS GROW

DENNIS: What can one expect to pay for a plot in Pilgrims Rest?

POSKI: Fifty dollars – it's behind the crematory fuel dump.

DENNIS: Price is not a primary consideration.

POSKI: I'll have one of our guides take you round just as soon as I have all the essential data. Was your Loved One of any special religion?

DENNIS: He was agnostic.

POSKI: We have two non-sectarian churches in the Park and a number of non-sectarian pastors.

DENNIS: I believe Sir Ambrose Abercrombie is planning a special service.

POSKI: OH! Was your Loved One in films Mr Barlow? In that case he ought to be in Shadowland.

DENNIS: I think he would prefer to be with Homer and Miss Bergson.

POSKI: Very well. Let us now decide upon the coffin.

THE COFFIN-MAKER:

WE TAKE A PRIDE IN ALL THE MANY CASKETS THAT WE HAVE ON SHOW  
IT SEEMS A SHAME THAT MOST OF THEM WILL CERTAINLY END UP BELOW  
THE REST OF COURSE BEFORE YOU BLINK ARE NOTHING BUT A PILE OF ASH  
A HEAP OF DUST IS ALL YOU GET YOU'LL SEE YOUR CASH GO IN A FLASH  
MY CARPENTERS ARE SKILLED IN CRAFTING EACH AND EVERY TYPE OF WOOD  
CEDAR BEECH MAHOGANY SPECIFICATIONS UNDERSTOOD  
BUT WE KNOW FROM YEARS OF PRACTICE IN THE END YOUR GUILT WILL WIN  
YOU'LL ONLY WANT THE VERY BEST FOR YOUR LOVED ONE TO TRAVEL IN  
WE ACHIEVE A POLISH ON THE SURFACE THAT WILL MAKE YOU GLOAT A  
FINISH THAT IS WATERTIGHT AND EVEN GUARANTEED TO FLOAT  
NOW PREPARE YOURSELF TO MARVEL AT THE WORKMANSHIP INSIDE  
WELL BLESS MY SOUL IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THIS ONE HERE IS OCCUPIED

*[The coffin he has decided to demonstrate is already taken. He quickly closes the lid and moves to another]*

POSKI: How embarrassing.

COFFIN-MAKER:

AS YOUR LOVED ONE WAS A MALE WE THINK THE TWO PIECE LID WILL DO  
THE BOTTOM HALF IS CLOSED TO LEAVE HIS UPPER PART EXPOSED TO VIEW  
BUT IN THE CASE OF LADIES IF WE'RE ASKED WHY THEN OF COURSE WE WOULD  
GO FOR THE FULL EXPOSURE BUT THEN ONLY IF HER LEGS WERE GOOD  
CASKET LININGS ARE ESSENTIAL TO SET OFF THE PERFECT MOOD WE  
RECENTLY ENTOMBED AN ACTOR ON THE SIDE REVIEWS WERE GLUED  
WE HAVE FABRICS FOR THIS PURPOSE SATIN VELVET DENIM LACE  
WE MAKE SURE YOU'LL GET UPHOLSTERED FOR YOUR FINAL RESTING PLACE  
CHOOSE A COLOUR FROM THE SPECTRUM RUBY CRIMSON CHARCOAL GREY  
LUXURIOUS AND COMFY AS THE INSIDE OF A CHEVROLET  
BUT I SPY YOUR EYE HAS SETTLED ON OUR DELUXE WALNUT CHEST  
IF YOU'RE IN DOUBT I'VE TRIED IT OUT YOU WANNA TRY IT BE MY GUEST

POSKI: With or without brass handles?

DENNIS: Oh, with I think.

POSKI: Absolutely. Let us now decide on how the Loved One will be attired.

FRENCH TAILOR:

ALL THE FRENCH ARE MAD ABOUT THEIR FASHION  
IT GLOWS WITH PASSION  
MAIS OUI  
TAKE A STROLL ALONG THE CHAMPS ÉLYSÉE  
WHERE WINDOW SHOPPING IS FREE  
IF ALL YOUR LIFE YOU'VE BEEN A STUNNER  
TURNING HEADS AT EVERY CORNER  
WOULD YOU DISAPPOINT THE MOURNER  
NON  
JUST LEAVE IT ALL TO ME

CHACUN A SON GOUT  
WATCH MAMA SLIP AWAY IN CHRISTIAN DIOR  
A LITTLE NUMBER WE CAN ALL ADORE  
BIENVENU  
CHACUN A SON GOUT  
AND IF YOU WANT TO PAY A LITTLE MORE  
WE'LL COMB THE SHELVES FROM WHAT WE HAVE IN STORE  
CHACUN A SON GOUT

TAILOR: All our garments are designed to enable us to dress the Loved One without disturbing the pose.

DENNIS: Remarkable.

POSKI: With or without trousers?

DENNIS: What do you mean – without trousers?

POSKI: For Slumber Room wear. It depends whether you wish the leave-taking to be on the chaise longue or in the casket.

DENNIS: Oh, the casket most definitely.

POSKI: In which case, as you have chosen the half-open exposure, a jacket and shirt will be sufficient.

FRENCH TAILOR:

CHACUN A SON GOUT  
DRESSED IN A JACKET THAT IS CHIC AND CUTE  
SOMETHING TO COVER UP HIS BIRTHDAY SUIT  
COMPRENEZ-VOUS?  
CHACUN A SON GOUT  
AND SO WHATEVER THE CATASTROPHE  
WE'LL BURN HIM UP IN SOMETHING TRES JOLIE  
CHACUN A SON GOUT  
CHACUN

GIRLS:

AND WHEN THE TIME HAS COME TO WALK THE GOLDEN MILE

FRENCH TAILOR:

CHACUN

GIRLS:

JUST GIVE A WINK AS THEY TRANSPORT YOU DOWN THE AISLE  
CHACUN

FRENCH TAILOR:

IN YOUR CHAPEAU THE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT YOU'LL BE STEPPING OUT IN STYLE

FRENCH TAILOR & GIRLS:

CHACUN A SON GOUT

DENNIS: I must confess I am a little worried by the half-open bit. He doesn't look very sociable.

POSKI: Never fear, Mr Barlow. One of our cosmeticians is waiting to see you.

DENNIS: Cosmeticians? I'm not sure I like the idea of my friend being 'touched-up'. He was always very sensitive about that sort of thing.

POSKI: Don't worry. They have never failed yet. We had a Loved One last month who was found drowned – a 'floater' – been in the ocean a month and they only identified him by his wrist-watch. THEY FIXED THAT STIFF SO GOOD...! I'm sorry. Why, if he'd sat on a grenade, they'd make him presentable. May I introduce the Cosmetician from the Orchid Room.

*[AIMÉE THANATOGENOS steps forward]*

AIMÉE:

WE EXCEL IN RECREATING DETAIL  
CAPTURING EXPRESSION IN THE FACE  
WE REMOVE THE TRACES OF THE SUFFERING  
LEAVE THEM SLEEPING IN A STATE OF GRACE  
WITH A BRUSHSTROKE YOU WILL SEE THE LOVED ONE  
HAPPY AS IN YESTERDAYS GONE BY  
GIVING YOU THE HOPE THAT MAYBE ONE DAY  
YOU'LL BE REUNITED WHEN YOU DIE  
IN MY HANDS I'M LUCKY TO BE GIFTED  
SOMETHING PRECIOUS SENT FROM UP ABOVE

THROUGH MY FINGERS AND MY TOUCH MY SOUL IS LIFTED  
FILLING ME WITH LOVE

AIMÉE: Mr Barlow. Are you alright?

DENNIS: Yes, I . . . I just seemed to have lost my concentration for a second, that's all.

AIMÉE: I understand that this is a very difficult time for you. Perhaps we should continue with this tomorrow?

DENNIS: No, please carry on.

AIMÉE: I have some questions to ask you. If you find them too distressing, please ask me to stop.

AIMÉE:

WAS THE CAUSE OF DEATH EXSANGUINATION

DENNIS:

HOW MOST UNPLEASANT

AIMÉE:

WAS HE OFTEN PRONE TO SELF ABUSE

DENNIS:

IS THAT REQUISITE

AIMÉE:

ARE YOU IN POSSESSION OF HIS DENTURES

DENNIS:

NOT AT PRESENT

AIMÉE:

READY-MADES CAN WORK A LITTLE LOOSE

DENNIS:

HOW EXQUISITE

AIMÉE:

MY ASSISTANTS NEED TO KNOW EXPRESSION

DID HE KEEP A RAZOR BY HIS BED

WAS HE EVER PRONE TO DEEP DEPRESSION

WAS IT HIS OWN HAIR UPON HIS HEAD

WOULD YOU HAVE DESCRIBED HIM AS CONTENTED

WAS HE PHILOSOPHICALLY SAD

WAS HE PSYCHOLOGICALLY HALF DEMENTED

LUNATIC OR MAD

DENNIS:

WOMEN WERE MADE FOR PLEASURE

NO TWO OF THEM ARE THE SAME

THIS ONE IS MADE TO MEASURE

TO SOIL HER WOULD BE A SHAME

HER EYES ARE GREEN / HER SMILE IS SAD

HER TEETH ARE CLEAN / A TOOTHPASTE AD

STEADY DENNIS

SHE'LL DRIVE YOU MAD

*[For a second, their eyes meet]*

DENNIS: When shall I see you again?

AIMÉE: The day after tomorrow, at the leave-taking to see that everything is correct.

POSKI: I have our zone guide ready to take you to the site, Mr Barlow.

DENNIS: Who shall I ask for?

AIMÉE: Just say the Cosmetician from the Orchid Room.

DENNIS: The Cosmetician from the Orchid Room.

SOLO 1:

SORROW IS NOT A WORD THAT'S HEARD

AT WHISPERING GLADES

SOLO 2:

TAKE IT FROM ME OUR PHILOSOPHY

THAT DARKNESS PERVADES

POSKI:

SEEING HIS SMILE MAKES OUR JOB WORTHWHILE

ALL:

AS HE SERENADES WHISPERING GLADES

WE TAKE AN EXTRA HOLIDAY

AT WHISPERING GLADES

COME FOR THE FUN

TAKE IN THE SUN  
WE'VE GOT IT IN SPADES  
FLASH US A GRIN  
WELCOME WITHIN  
THE JACK OF ALL TRADES  
WELCOME TO ALL THE HAPPINESS  
OF WHISPERING GLADES  
WELCOME TO ALL THE HAPPINESS  
OF WHISPERING GLADES  
AAAAAH

[BLACKOUT]

## ACT I SCENE 5

*[The Orchid Room. Under the 'beady-eyed' supervision of MR VOGEL, the COSMETICIANS are busy shampooing and blow-drying and generally beautifying the Loved Ones. AIMÉE THANATOGENOS is intent on SIR FRANCIS when MR JOYBOY enters]*

JOYBOY: Good morning, Team.

ALL: *[with adoration]* Good morning, Mr Joyboy.

VOGEL: Are you free for the first pair of the day, Sir?

JOYBOY: As always, Mr Vogel, as always.

VOGEL: Will you be taking the infant yourself?

JOYBOY: Is it a mother and child?

VOGEL: No, Mr Joyboy. No relation.

JOYBOY: Very well. Will you take the adult please, Mr Vogel? Had they been mother and child I would have taken both. Not everyone would notice it but there is something in individual technique. If I saw a pair that had been embalmed by different hands I would know at once and would feel that the child did not properly belong to its mother. I shall take the infant myself. There is something in the innocent appeal of a child that brings out a little more than the best in me . . . *[he lays his hand on AIMÉE's shoulder]* Good morning, Miss Thanatogenos.

AIMÉE: Good morning, Mr Joyboy.

JOYBOY: Ah, the Lacerated One. Beautiful work. I can always trust you to carry out my intention. Did you have difficulty with the right eyelid?

AIMÉE: Just a little.

JOYBOY: A tendency to open in the inside corner?

AIMÉE: Yes, but I worked a little cream under the lid and then firmed it with number six.

JOYBOY: Excellent. I never have to tell you anything. Yes, I fancy he's coming up nicely. Supple.

AIMÉE: But Mr Joyboy, you've given him the Radiant Childhood Smile.

JOYBOY: Yes, don't you like it?

AIMÉE: Of course, but his Waiting One didn't ask for it.

JOYBOY: Miss Thanatogenos, for you the Loved Ones just naturally smile. It's true. It seems I am powerless to prevent it. When I am working there's something inside me says "He's on his way to Miss Thanatogenos" and my fingers just seem to take control. Haven't you noticed it?

AIMÉE: Well, I did say only last week "All the Loved Ones that come from Mr Joyboy have the most beautiful smiles".

JOYBOY: Bless you, Miss T, they are all for you. Just read the label.

*[He indicates an I.D. tag tied to SIR FRANCIS' big toe]*

AIMÉE: "To my own Miss T. With love J.B." (He turns back the sheet further to reveal a heart-shaped candy box on a silver plate) Oh, Mr Joyboy... *[Their eyes meet]*

JOYBOY: *[suddenly uncomfortable]* Yes. Um . . . I – *[Turning his attention to SIR FRANCIS]* I do believe he is firming. *[AIMÉE lets out a small shriek]* Carry on everybody. *[He exits quickly]*

SONG: CHOCOLATES

COS. 1: So, what are your plans this weekend, Val? I mean man-wise?

COS. 2: Hal's taking me to a movie.

COS. 3: Hal? He's new. Not heard you mention him before.

COS. 1: She's been keeping him under wraps, haven't you Val?

COS. 2: Yeah. He's really hunky.

COS. 3: Aren't they all?

COS. 4: So it'll be the back row at the Coronet for the third Saturday running. Hal and Val . . .

*[They roar with laughter. The lights fade leaving AIMÉE apart holding pen and paper. Music continues under]*

AIMÉE: *[writing]* Dear Guru Brahmin, you may remember that I wrote to you in May last for advice concerning a man who is head of the department in which I work. In case you do not remember, my letter appeared in your column together with your reply and, although I am grateful for this, I am enclosing a stamped address envelope this time as I should not like what I have to say referred to in print. Last time you said you did not consider I was in love. But recently, he has made it plain that he prefers me to the other girls and, though he has not said so yet, I feel sure he is trying to tell me something...

CHOCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
WITH EVERY CORPSE HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES ON A TRAY  
CHOCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
THEY'RE FAR TOO NICE AND HEAVEN KNOWS HOW MUCH I WEIGH

IT'S NOT THE PRALINES ON A PLATE  
THAT PUT ME IN THIS TORRID STATE  
BUT MORE THE PROSPECT OF A DATE THAT GIVES ME THRUSH

HE CALLS ME LITTLE HONEY BEE  
I KNOW IT SOUNDS A LITTLE TWEE  
BUT MR JOYBOY'S FULL OF GLEE TO SEE ME BLUSH

*(Spoken)* Last time - dear Guru - you said that esteem for a man's character and admiration of his business ability may form the basis of an improving friendship - but they are not Love. But since then my feelings in his presence incline me to believe that there is a physical affinity between us. How else then do I explain the...

CHOCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
AND SENDS A MESSAGE TIED DISCRETELY TO A TOE  
CHOCOLATES  
WHICH STATES QUITE FIRMLY  
FROM MR JOYBOY TO MISS T. I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW

IT'S NOT THE TOE THAT MAKES ME GAG  
THOUGH MR JOYBOY IS A WAG  
HE KNOWS I ALWAYS KEEP A BAG IN CASE I'M SICK

SO TAKE ON BOARD HE WRITES A NOTE  
AND SENDS A CORPSE SO FULL OF BLOAT  
THAT IN THE WATER IT WOULD FLOAT WITHOUT A BRICK

*(Spoken)* Last time - dear Guru - you said you knew of cases who only experienced love after several years' acquaintance. You said you knew of cases who only experienced love after several years of marriage - and the arrival of Junior. This worries me. Life isn't like that in the movies...



CHOCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCS TO DECORATE THE CORPSE'S FEET  
CHOCOLATES  
DELICIOUS CHOCOLATES  
DOES HE IMAGINE I DON'T GET ENOUGH TO EAT

DURING MAY WHEN WE WERE WORKING  
MR JOYBOY TOOK TO LURKING  
JUST TO SEE THAT WE WEREN'T SHIRKING AFTER LUNCH

AND THEN AT LAST THANKSGIVING NEARED  
AND THEN THE CHOLCOLATES FIRST APPEARED  
WHICH THOUGH AMAZINGLY WEIRD CONFIRMED MY HUNCH

*[Dialogue]*

CHOCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
MR JOYBOY ALWAYS LIKES TO SHOW SOME STYLE  
CHOCOLATES  
A LOAD OF CHOCOLATES  
TO EVERY MOUTH HE LENDS A RADIANT LITTLE SMILE

CHOCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
OH GURU BRAHMIN WON'T YOU TELL ME WHAT HE'S AT  
CHOCOLATES  
IT'S OVERWHELMING  
SO MANY CALORIES I'VE NEVER BEEN THIS FAT

CHOLCOLATES  
HE SENDS ME CHOCOLATES  
SO FULL OF SUGAR THAT I THINK I'D RATHER NOT  
CHOCOLATES  
SO MANY CHOCOLATES  
I'M SURE IF YOU WERE ME YOU'D GUZZLE UP THE LOT

*[Alternative/extra lyrics:]*

*CHOCOLATES  
A POUND OF CHOCOLATES  
YYOO-HOO GURU DO YOU THINK IT SETS A TREND  
CHOCOLATES  
SO MANY CHOCOLATES  
THEY KEEP ON COMING AND THEY DRIVE ME ROUND THE BEND*

*CHOCOLATES  
I'M OVEREATING  
SO MANY CHOCOLATES THAT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO  
CHOCOLATES  
I'M OVERHEATING  
I HALF SUSPECT THAT THERE IS RUM IN ONE OR TWO]*

GURU BRAHMIN YOU'VE A HEART OF GOLD  
YOU TEND TO ALL WITHIN YOUR FOLD  
TELL ME WHY IF LITTLE BLUEBIRDS FLY  
BEYOND THE RAINBOW WHY OH WHY CAN'T I

*[BLACKOUT]*

*[The next number is suggested to complement the preceding number. JOYBOY is alone]*

SONG: WOULD YOU MISS THANATOGENOS

JOYBOY

MISS THANATOGENOS  
I'M BESOTTED MISS THANATOGENOS  
HOW CAN I HELP IT MISS THANATOGENOS  
HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED MISS THANATOGENOS  
HOW I'VE HUNGERED FOR YOU FROM THE START  
MISS THANATOGENOS  
WOULD YOU MISS THANATOGENOS

ON OUR JUNE HONEYMOON  
WE WILL TRAVEL AWAY TO HONDURAS  
WHERE WE'LL SPOON TO THE TUNE  
OF SIGNORS MAKING HAY WITH SIGNORAS  
IF WE'RE ILL ON THE DAY  
I'VE A PILL HERE OR TWO THAT WILL CURE US

DEAR MISS T POM POM POM  
HONEY BEE POM POM POM  
WITH YOU HUMMING AROUND  
WHILE I'M SAFE ON THE GROUND  
ON MY KNEE POM POM POM  
LITTLE BEE POM POM POM  
WOULD YOU WALTZ TO THE ALTAR WITH ME

POM POM POM POM POM ETC.

ON OUR SOON HONEYMOON  
WE WILL SAIL ON A SHIP TO GIBRALTAR  
ON THE WAY WE WILL NIP  
ROUND THE BAY ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA  
WE'LL BE SHORT FOR A TIP  
HAVING PAID FOR OUR TRIP TO THE ALTAR

DEAR MISS T POM POM POM  
HONEY BEE POM POM POM  
IF IT'S YES TO OUR MARRIAGE  
I'LL ORDER THE CARRIAGE  
BE BRAVE POM POM POM  
LITTLE SLAVE POM POM POM  
WOULD YOU WALTZ TO THE ALTAR WITH ME

POM POM POM POM POM ETC.

FOR OUR THIRD HONEYMOON  
WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO SKIING IN SWEDEN  
ALL MY SHIRTS YOU CAN FOLD  
IN THE TRUNK WITH THE THINGS WE'LL BE NEEDIN'  
I AM TOLD IT'S SO COLD  
THAT THE SWEDES WEAR THEIR SOCKS WHILE THEY'RE BREEDIN'

DEAR MISS T POM POM POM  
DO YOU SKI POM POM  
FA LA LA HA HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA HE  
I'VE A CLUE POM POM POM  
THAT YOU DO POM POM POM  
WOULD YOU SKI THEN IN SWEDEN WITH ME

POM POM POM POM POM ETC.

FOR OUR FOURTH HONEYMOON  
I'M SO LONGING TO SEE CONEY ISLAND  
WHERE THERE'S PLENTY OF SEA  
BUT NOT MUCH OF A VIEW OF THE HIGHLAND  
THERE'LL BE SWELLS THERE'LL BE SHELLS  
AND SO MANY MOTELS MORE THAN THAILAND

BY THE SEA POM POM POM  
WE WILL BE POM POM POM  
BY THE DAY WE'LL BE LAZY  
ON DAYS WHEN IT'S HAZY  
WE'LL NOT POM POM POM  
DO A LOT POM POM POM  
WHEN WE WALTZ TO THE BAND ON THE QUAY

DEAR MISS T POM POM POM  
HONEY BEE POM POM POM  
LET'S GET CARRIED AWAY  
ON A BOAT TO BOMBAY  
LITTLE FLEA POM POM POM  
ON MY KNEE POM POM POM  
WOULD YOU WALTZ TO THE ALTAR WITH ME

POM POM POM POM POM ETC.

CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCOLATES  
TO A KING A BAR OF CANDY IS A TREAT  
CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCOLATES  
WITHOUT A CANDY BAR NO DAY WOULD BE COMPLETE

CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCOLATES  
TO MAKE HER FLUTTER WHEN I THROW THEM AT HER FEET  
CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCOLATES  
SO VERY TEMPTING AND SO VERY NICE TO EAT

CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCOLATES  
SHE'LL SOON DISCOVER I'M A SECOND HOWARD KEEL  
CHOCOLATES  
A BOX OF CHOCOLATES  
AS A LOVER I'M A MAN OF GREAT APPEAL

DEAREST MISS I HOPE YOU WON'T BE CROSS  
WITH THIS SMALL GESTURE FROM YOUR BOSS  
WEDDED BLISS WILL BE HOMOGENEOUS  
WILL YOU MARRY ME MISS THANATOGENOS

## ACT I SCENE 6

*[The Slumber Room at Whispering Glades. SIR FRANCIS lies in a half-open casket draped with a Union Jack flag and surrounded by floral tributes. SIR AMBROSE approaches]*

SONG: FRANK

AMBROSE:

A LAWYER ATTENDS A SESSION  
DREAMS OF A NEW PROFESSION  
DRAMA WAS MY OBSESSION  
NO NEED FOR A PROMPT  
I WOULD STAND UP ALONE

ONLY THE BEST PRODUCER  
ONLY MAE WEST WILL DO SIR  
THEN I SUGGEST YES YOU SIR  
I HELD THE STAGE IN A CLASS OF MY OWN

THOUGH AN ACTOR  
KNOWS GRIEF WITHIN A PLAY  
HE MAY NOT HAVE THE LEAST RESOURCE WHEN  
FRIENDS PASS AWAY

THOUGH AN ACTOR  
KNOWS PERICLES BY HEART  
HE MAY NOT HAVE THAT EXTRA SOMETHING  
TO PLAY THE PART

IT'S THE SECRET  
OF GETTING BY  
WE KEEP IT SHORTER  
WE'RE NOT COLE PORTER  
THOUGH WE MAY TRY

THOUGH BEHIND ME  
ARE YEARS UPON THE STAGE  
I NEVER HAD THE LEAST RESPECT FOR  
WHAT COMES WITH AGE

OLD FRIENDS PERISH  
EXPRESSLY OLDER FRIENDS I CHERISH  
IT'S ALL A LITTLE BIT NIGHTMARISH  
FRANK

*[DENNIS enters]*

DENNIS: Is he as you expected?

AMBROSE: Absolutely. These people really know their stuff. The studio's make-up department couldn't have done better. I think even Frank would be pleased with the splendid job they've done.

*[They move downstage and presumably outside into the Garden of Remembrance as the lights fade on the Slumber Room]*

DENNIS: Yes. So everything's set.

AMBROSE: Have you arranged the seating in the church?

DENNIS: Not yet.

AMBROSE: Remember, Megalopolitan will want the first four rows and the Knife and Fork Club must be together. The united front.

DENNIS: It's all on my list.

AMBROSE: And don't forget your ode. Is it finished?

DENNIS: [producing a notebook but deciding not to show it] It needs more work.

AMBROSE: Well, you'd better pull your finger out. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate – which should be easy for you. Something simple. I'll meet you back here at two-thirty sharp.

*[DENNIS sits in an alcove and opens his notebook]*

DENNIS:

They told me Francis Hinsley

They told me you were hung

With red protruding eyeballs

And black protruding tongue

I wept as I remembered

The times that you and I

Had laughed about Los Angeles

And now tis here you'll lie

Here pickled in formaldehyde

And painted like a whore

As pink as shrimps in mayonnaise

Not lost nor gone before

*[He rips out the page and screws it up. Taking out a pen, he starts to scribble. AIMÉE enters and sits in the adjacent alcove unaware of her neighbour. She takes out her lunch box and opens a packet of crisps]*

DENNIS: Hello.

AIMÉE: Oh! Pardon me. I didn't expect to find anyone here.

DENNIS: Have I taken your place?

AIMÉE: No, not at all. It's usually so deserted that I've taken to coming here during my lunch break. I'll go some place else and leave you in peace. *[Standing, she overturns her lunch box]* Oh! How stupid of me.

DENNIS: *[helping her brush the dirt off her sandwiches]* No, this is all my fault for startling you. I'll go. I only came here to write a poem.

*[Pause]*

AIMÉE: A poem? Did you say a poem?

*[Pause]*

DENNIS: Yes - I'm a poet you see.

AIMÉE: Why, that's wonderful. What have you written?

DENNIS: Oh - nothing you will have heard of. And anyway, the voice of inspiration is silent today I'm afraid.

AIMÉE: It must be wonderful to be a poet. I mean you write a poem and it's printed - or even read on the radio – and millions of people get to hear it. Maybe they'll still be reading it in hundreds of years' time, who knows? I wish I could do it.

DENNIS: But you have a very poetic occupation here.

AIMÉE: Yes, I suppose I have really. But my work is usually burned within a few hours. At best it's put in the mausoleum, and even then it deteriorates.

DENNIS: I wish you'd tell me about your work.

AIMÉE: But you've seen it.

DENNIS: I mean about yourself and your work. What made you do it? Were you interested in this sort of thing as a child?

AIMÉE: I've always been artistic. I took Art at college as my second subject when I was studying Beauticraft.

DENNIS: Beauticraft?

AIMÉE: You know – permanents, facials, wax – everything you get in a beauty parlour. We went in for history and theory too. I wrote my thesis on "Hairstyling in the Orient". I even studied Chinese. I thought it would help, but it didn't. But I got my diploma with special mention for Psychology and Art.

DENNIS: And all this time between psychology and art and Chinese, you had Whispering Glades in view?

AIMÉE: Not at all. Do you really want to hear?

DENNIS: If you've the time?

AIMÉE: Well, it all started with Mrs Komstock. She was one of my ladies when I worked at the Beverly Waldorf.

She came every Saturday for a blue rinse and set. She always asked for me – no one else would do – but she

never tipped more than a quarter. One day, Mr Jebb, the manager, came up to me and said: "I don't know exactly

how you feel about this, but Mrs Komstock has died and her son is very anxious to have you fix her hair just as it used to be." Well, I didn't know what to think. I'd never seen a dead person before and coming to Whispering Glades for the first time; I was really nervous. But when I saw her laid out in her wedding dress I was amazed. She looked transfigured. I hardly dared touch her at first but the cosmetician talked it through and then I was fine. She told me there was a vacancy for a new cosmetician. Well, I didn't need to think it over. I went straight back to Mr Jebb and gave my notice.

DENNIS: And you don't regret it?

AIMÉE: Not for a moment. And from the day Mr Joyboy arrived, the whole tone of the mortuary became elevated. Mr Joyboy's kinda holy. Of course, my contribution is only a tiny part of it, but it's a wonderful thing to know that you can bring joy into an aching heart.

DENNIS: You have a great regard for Mr Joyboy, I notice?

AIMÉE: He is a true artist, Mr Barlow. I can say no more. Only he made me realise the true importance of my work. I shall never forget one morning how Mr Joyboy said to one of my colleagues: "Mr Parks, I must ask you to remember you are not at The Happier Hunting Ground!" *[Pause]* It's a dreadful place here where they bury animals.

DENNIS: Is that so?

AIMÉE: I was never there myself but I've heard about it. They try and do everything the same as us. It sounds kinda blasphemous.

DENNIS: *[changing the subject]* And what do you think about when you come here?

AIMÉE: Just Death and Art.

DENNIS: "Half in love with easeful death".

AIMÉE: What was that you said?

DENNIS: I was quoting a poem.

"For many a time

I have been half in love with easeful death

Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme

To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain"

AIMÉE: Why, that's beautiful. Were you writing that when I arrived?

DENNIS: You like it? It was written long before.

AIMÉE: It's just what I've thought so often and haven't been able to express. "To make it rich to die, To cease upon the midnight with no pain".

*[Thunder rumbles in the distance]*

I'd better be getting back. Will you promise to send me the poem when you've finished it?

DENNIS: Where do you live?

AIMÉE: Send it here, to Whispering Glades. This is my true home. My name is Miss Thanatogenos. Aimee Thanatogenos.

DENNIS: Dennis Barlow.

AIMÉE: Thank you, Dennis. It's been - nice.

DENNIS: Yes. Yes it has.

AIMÉE: Goodbye.

*[She exits]*

DENNIS: Au revoir.

*[The Garden of Remembrance dissolves into Sir Francis' grave plot in Poets Corner]*

SONG: SOMEHOW

DENNIS:

Bingo

SO WHAT IS THIS  
A LITTLE FRIENDSHIP WITH THE PROMISE OF A KISS  
OF COURSE SHE DOESN'T SHARE MY INTELLECT  
HOW COULD SHE SHE'S A GREEK  
OF COURSE I DIDN'T GET A FIRST BUT THAT WAS OXFORD  
AND I DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

Bingo

WHAT OF HER FACE  
A LITTLE MAD BUT SO ARE MOST OF ALL HER RACE  
WE'LL PLAY AT BIRDS AND BEES  
AND WHERE DO BABIES COME FROM  
NO ONE TOLD ME  
SHUT YOUR EYES AND THINK OF GREECE AND APHRODITE  
WHILE I MODIFY MY IMPERFECTIONS

Bingo

WHO IS THIS GIRL  
HOW DO I GET TO HER  
WITHOUT SOMETHING OR OTHER TO SAY  
WHO IS THIS GIRL  
WHY BE SO SET ON HER  
KNOWING SHE'S ALREADY GIVEN AWAY  
SO WHO THEN IS SHE

JOYBOY:

SOMEHOW SHE'S DIFFERENT  
SOMEHOW SHE'S ONE OF A KIND  
SOMEHOW THIS GIRL  
THIS GIRL FROM THE ORCHID ROOM  
I CAN'T GET HER OUT OF MY MIND

SOMEHOW IT'S CRAZY  
HOW CAN IT EVER BE TRUE  
PLEASE LET ME BE  
YOUR FRIEND AND PROTECTOR  
IF ONLY I KNEW WHAT TO DO

WHO IS THIS GIRL  
HOW HAS SHE CAPTURED ME  
WHAT MAGIC TRICK DOES SHE KEEP UP HER SLEEVE  
WITH EVERY CURL  
SHE HAS ENRAPTURED ME  
SHOWN ME THE WEB SHE WAS CAREFUL TO WEAVE  
SO WHY NOT CHOOSE ME  
HELP ME AIMÉE

JOYBOY:

WHITE IN COMPLEXION

DENNIS:

BLACK AS A WIDOW

JOYBOY:  
WHITE AS A FRESH FALL OF SNOW  
DENNIS:  
BLACK TO THE ROOTS OF HER HAIR  
JOYBOY:  
WHITE AS THE CLOUDS  
DENNIS:  
BLACK WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES  
JOYBOY:  
THE CLOUDS THAT I'M FLOATING ON  
DENNIS:  
AND REMOVE HER DRESS  
JOYBOY:  
BECAUSE YOU'RE A PLEASURE TO KNOW  
DENNIS:  
AND NO ONE TO WITNESS HER THERE

JOYBOY:  
WHITE THAT'S SO PURE  
DENNIS:  
BLACK AS A SAPPHIRE  
JOYBOY:  
WHITE AS THE VIRGIN WITH CHILD  
DENNIS:  
BLACK AS A YEAR ON THE DOLE  
JOYBOY:  
WHITE YOU MUST STAY  
DENNIS:  
BLACK AS A SHEEP  
JOYBOY:  
A BEAUTY IN INNOCENCE  
DENNIS:  
THE MISFIT THE FOREIGNER  
JOYBOY:  
A FLOWER SO UNSPOILT AND MILD  
DENNIS:  
AND BLACK WHEN YOU SLEEP IN MY SOUL

DENNIS AND JOYBOY:  
WHAT WOULD SHE SAY  
HOW WOULD SHE ANSWER ME  
IF I SHOULD ASK HER WILL YOU BE MY WIFE  
WHAT WOULD SHE DO  
IF I SHOULD SAY TO HER  
STAY WITH ME PLEASE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE

JOYBOY:  
HOW CAN YOU BLAME ME?  
DENNIS:  
CLAIM ME  
DENNIS AND JOYBOY:  
AIMÉE

AIMÉE:  
DEAR GURU BRAHMIN  
SORRY BUT IT'S ME AGAIN  
SOMEHOW THIS GIRL  
THIS GIRL FROM THE ORCHID ROOM IS



*[spoken]* Thoroughly fed up with men

SOMEHOW IT'S CRAZY  
SOMEHOW IT CANNOT BE TRUE  
SOMEHOW THIS GIRL  
THIS GIRL FROM THE ORCHID ROOM  
THIS GIRL HAS FOUND SOMEBODY NEW

WHAT SHALL I DO  
NOW I'VE A CHOICE TO MAKE  
WHICH OF THE TWO WILL BE TRUE FOR MY SAKE  
AND IF I KNEW  
I'D KNOW WHICH ONE TO TAKE  
MAYBE THE ONE TO TURN OUT IS A FAKE  
SO WHO IS IT TO BE  
PLEASE ANSWER SOON

*[The stage is filled with black umbrellas as the funeral mourners shield themselves from the LA drizzle]*

PRIEST: Dearly Beloved. We have entrusted our brother Francis to God's merciful keeping, and we now commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Amen.

*[SIR AMBROSE steps forward]*

AMBROSE:

SHOULD YOU FORGET ME  
FORGET FOR ONLY A WHILE  
PLEASE DO NOT GRIEVE  
HAVING REMEMBERED ME  
BEST YOU FORGET AND SMILE

SHOULD YOU FORGET ME  
FORGET THE THOUGHTS THAT I HAD  
BETTER BY FAR  
YOU SHOULD FORGET AND SMILE  
THAN REMEMBER ME AND BE SAD

REMEMBER  
WHEN I AM GONE AWAY  
FAR FAR AWAY TO THAT PROMISED LAND  
REMEMBER  
WHEN NO MORE DAY BY DAY  
I TURN TO GO AND YET IN TURNING STAY  
REMEMBER ME  
REMEMBER ME

AIMÉE:

SOMEHOW HE'S DIFFERENT

DENNIS:

BLACK AS A WIDOW

JOYBOY:

SOMEHOW SHE'S DIFFERENT

CHORUS:

SHOULD YOU FORGET ME

AIMÉE:

SOMEHOW NOT PART OF THE HERD

DENNIS:

BLACK TO THE ROOTS OF HER HAIR

JOYBOY:  
SOMEHOW SHE'S ONE OF A KIND  
CHORUS:  
FORGET FOR ONLY A WHILE  
AIMÉE:  
SOMEHOW HE'S SWEET  
DENNIS:  
BLACK WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES  
JOYBOY:  
SOMEHOW THIS GIRL  
CHORUS:  
PLEASE DO NOT GRIEVE  
AIMÉE:  
YES SWEET AND POETICAL  
DENNIS:  
AND REMOVE HER DRESS  
JOYBOY:  
FROM THE ORCHID ROOM  
CHORUS:  
HAVING REMEMBERED ME  
AIMÉE:  
I'M HANGING ON HIS EVERY WORD  
DENNIS:  
AND NO ONE TO WITNESS HER THERE  
JOYBOY:  
I CAN'T GET HER OUT OF MY MIND  
CHORUS:  
BEST YOU FORGET AND SMILE

AIMÉE:  
SOMEHOW HE STIRS ME  
DENNIS:  
BLACK AS A SAPPHIRE  
JOYBOY:  
WHITE IN COMPLEXION  
CHORUS:  
SHOULD YOU FORGET ME  
AIMÉE:  
PASSION I'VE NOT FELT TILL NOW  
DENNIS:  
BLACK AS A YEAR ON THE DOLE  
JOYBOY:  
WHITE AS A FRESH FALL OF SNOW  
CHORUS:  
FORGET THE THOUGHTS THAT I HAD  
AIMÉE:  
WHY SHOULD I WAIT  
DENNIS:  
BLACK AS A SHEEP  
JOYBOY:  
WHITE AS THE CLOUDS  
CHORUS:  
BETTER BY FAR  
AIMÉE:  
I'VE WAITED FOR FAR TOO LONG  
DENNIS:  
THE MISFIT THE FOREIGNER  
JOYBOY:  
THAT I'M FLOATING ON

CHORUS:

YOU SHOULD FORGET AND SMILE

AIMÉE:

WE MUST GET TOGETHER SOME HOW

DENNIS:

AND BLACK WHEN YOU SLEEP IN MY SOUL

JOYBOY:

BECAUSE YOU'RE A PLEASURE TO KNOW

CHORUS:

THAN REMEMBER ME AND BE SAD

COMPANY:

REMEMBER

WHEN I AM GONE AWAY

FAR FAR AWAY TO THAT PROMISED LAND

REMEMBER WHEN NO MORE DAY BY DAY

I TURN TO GO AND YET IN TURNING STAY

REMEMBER

PONDER ON WHAT I'VE DONE

NOT WHAT I HOPED WHAT I FEARED WHAT I PLANNED

REMEMBER

SPEAK OF ENJOYMENTS PAST

NOT OF THE SORROW YET TO COME

CHORUS:

A MAN FULL OF ZEST

A MAN AT HIS BEST

THEY LET HIM FALL

THEY LET HIM CRAWL

THEY LAID HIM TO REST

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

*[AIMÉE exits. JOYBOY goes to follow but is tripped up by DENNIS. JOYBOY stumbles into the open grave as - the curtain falls]*

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT II SCENE 1

*[The Orchid Room. Three months later. AIMÉE sits alone reading her latest reply from GURU BRAHMIN. Sitar music under]*

GURU: *(Voice-over)*

My child, your constellation as written in the stars  
Displays a consternation twixt Jupiter and Mars  
The planets are in conflict now Saturn is involved  
I read the cosmic verdict as prophecy unsolved  
Three months you've heard me mention - your heart it rules your head  
The Englishman's intention revolves around the bed  
His poems are a decoy to lure you to his nest  
The astral choice is Joyboy – Americans know best  
My child you must distinguish twixt glamour and true worth  
All other thoughts extinguish or wait for your rebirth  
As Guru I advise you – see out another moon  
The aspect of this triangle will not be settled soon

SONG: WAIT AND SEE

AIMÉE:

SOMETHING IN MY MIND SAYS WAIT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIND SAYS GIVE IT TIME  
HIDDEN IN THE FOREST IS A TREE TO CLIMB  
YOU'LL CLIMB THAT TREE FOR CERTAIN  
SOMETHING IN MY MIND SAYS WAIT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIND SAYS LET HIM BE  
WHEN THE TONE IS DARKER YOU CAN SHIFT THE KEY  
UNTIL YOU KNOW FOR CERTAIN  
THOUGH YOU ARE EAGER TO GIVE  
YOU MAY LIVE TO REGRET IT IN TIME  
A LOVE THAT IS DEEP IS COSTLY  
TO COST YOURSELF CHEAP IS A CRIME  
LEFT ALONE TO SIT UP LATE  
LEFT TO SORT YOUR FEELINGS ON YOUR OWN  
ALL HIS DOUBLE DEALINGS YOU CAN LEAVE ALONE  
THAT'S GETTING BY WHATEVER  
TAKING STOCK WILL HAVE TO WAIT  
WHILE YOU SIT UP LATE HE'S ON THE LINE  
SETTING UP A DATE WITH SOMEONE RICH AND FINE  
WITH SOMEONE RICH AND CLEVER  
WHAT IF I'M SOME KIND OF FREAK  
OK GREEK SHOULD THAT KEEP US APART  
I WILL HAVE HIM KNOW FOR CERTAIN  
I CARRY HIM DEEP IN MY HEART

IN THAT MOMENT I SAW HIM  
I COULDN'T IGNORE HIM  
AND KNEW I'D ADORE HIM  
LIKE HELL  
HIDDEN IN A PINWOOD TREE  
SANG A BLUEBIRD NEXT TO ME  
LOVE HIM AS YOU DO BUT WAIT  
AND WAIT  
AND WAIT  
AND SEE

*[AIMÉE looks up and is startled by JOYBOY who has been standing unseen behind her. She quickly conceals the letter]*

JOYBOY: A secret admirer?

AIMÉE: Oh – no. Groceries. That sort of thing.

*[Pause]*

JOYBOY: I think this might be a good opportunity for you and me to have a little chat? It concerns the last two or three months.

AIMÉE: Oh yes?

JOYBOY: I have detected a slight - change in you.

AIMÉE: I apologise if I've seemed a little distracted. I don't feel it has in any way affected my work.

JOYBOY: Not at all. Quite the contrary. The slight change I speak of is more of a step forward in your technique.

AIMÉE: Oh?

JOYBOY: Indeed. You have proved yourself in the lowlier tasks to be worthy of the higher. After a great deal of thought, I have decided that the time has come when women should take their proper place at Whispering Glades. To be brief, Miss Thanatogenos, I intend to train a female embalmer and my choice has fallen on you.

*[Bells chime loudly]*

AIMÉE: Oh, Mr Joyboy! I don't know what to say.

JOYBOY: Say nothing. I take it you accept?

AIMÉE: Why yes, Mr Joyboy!

JOYBOY: Then this is the moment to take you behind the oilcloth curtains for - a masterclass!

#### SONG: MASTERCLASS

NOW PUT THIS ON  
SECURE THE TAPE  
NOW WASH YOUR HANDS  
I'LL DO THE DRAPE

*[AIMÉE looks round to see him dabbing liquid behind his ears. Showing her the bottle . . . ]*

YOU LIKE THE SMELL  
FORMALDEHYDE  
PERFUME MADE FAMOUS  
BY THE FAMOUS WHO HAVE DIED

*[Taking her in his arms, he waltzes her behind a low screen which masks a corpse laid out -beneath a sheet. JOY-BOY lifts the fabric]*

NOW FIRST THINGS FIRST  
THE EYES YOU CLOSE  
WHAT A SURPRISE TO SEE HIM DOZE  
WE MUST MAKE SURE TO WIPE HIS NOSE  
WE DON'T WANT DRIPPING ON A BRAND NEW SUIT OF CLOTHES

NOW SEARCH FOR SCARS  
SUSPICIOUS BUMPS  
TRACES OF JAUNDICE POX OR MUMPS  
WHEN WE HAVE DONE HE'LL COME UP TRUMPS  
SWEET LORD AND JESUS HE IS COMING OUT IN LUMPS

IN A WEEK OR TWO  
YOU'LL HAVE HEAPS TO DO  
SO NO EXTRA PALAVER  
FOR YOUR FIRST CADAVER  
FROM TOP TO TOE  
IT'S A LOT TO KNOW  
BUT A GIFT TO A NOVICE LIKE YOU

Always remember the Three S's - Strangling, Slashing and Stifling. The most common causes of death by a third party. No signs here? No gunshot wounds? Excellent. A simple, straightforward case for your first embalment, Miss Thanatogenos. And now – Transfusion Time!

STAND OVER THERE  
SO YOU CAN SEE  
HERE'S HIS CAROTID ARTERY  
IT'S REALLY BIG SO TAKE YOUR PICK  
YOU HAVE TO SNIP A LITTLE SNICK TO DO THE TRICK

NOW SLIDE THIS VIAL  
INTO HIS VEINS  
THEN GET HIM PLUGGED INTO THE MAINS  
THEN THROW THE SWITCH SEE HOW HE DRAINS  
THE STUFF IS FREEZING BUT HE NEVER ONCE COMPLAINS

DO YOU HEAR THAT SOUND  
OF IT GUSHING ROUND  
NOT A SIGN OF DECAY  
SLOWLY FADING TO GREY  
IT IS HARD TO WORK  
ON A YARD OF CLERK  
WHO'LL GET PLENTY OF PRAISE ON THE DAY

And now, if I may intrude a personal note, I think this calls for a little celebration? Would you do me the honour of taking supper with me this evening? At my home?

AIMÉE: Oh, Mr Joyboy. I did make a sort of date.

JOYBOY: Never fear, Miss Thanatogenos, it was not my intention that we should be alone. It will be my very great privilege to present the first lady embalmer of Whispering Glades - to my Mom!

AIMÉE: Oh.

JOYBOY:

YOU'RE UNIQUE MISS T  
LITTLE HONEYBEE  
THERE'S NO CAUSE FOR ALARM  
YOU'LL DISARM HER WITH CHARM  
SHE'S SO SWEET YOU SEE  
WITH HER REPARTEE  
THERE'S NO WITTIER GIRL THAN MY MOM

You'll just love her.

MY SPECIAL TOUCH  
THE FAMOUS SMILE  
A SECRET NOT KEPT HERE ON FILE  
A PIECE OF CARD BETWEEN HIS TEETH  
THE LITTLE SECRET OF A TRICK LIES FAR BENEATH

IT TAKES SOME TIME  
TO DRAIN THE SCULL  
TIME FOR A MOMENTARY LULL  
AS YOU CAN SEE WE'RE QUITE ALONE  
I LIKE TO GIVE THEM HALF A MINUTE TO ATONE

HE'S OF GAY DESCENT  
TRÉS ÉTABLISSEMENT  
SUCH AN AQUELINE NOSE  
A COIFFEUR D'YOU SUPPOSE  
HE'S A SYMPHONY  
IN A WOEFUL KEY  
TIME TO PUT HIM IN CLOTHES  
AND PREPARE FOR THE POSE

WHAT A PROPER GENT  
WITH A TEMPERAMENT  
JUST A TOUCH UP WITH PAINT  
AND HE'LL LOOK WHAT HE AINT  
AN AMAZING FEAT  
IT WAS SUCH A TREAT  
NOW YOUR WORK IS COMPLETE  
HE LOOKS LIKE A SAINT

*[BLACKOUT]*

## ACT II SCENE 2

*[Aimée's bedroom/The Happier Hunting Ground office. AIMÉE sits at her dressing table preparing for her evening out. She turns off her portable transistor radio when the phone rings]*

AIMÉE: Burbank 897.

*[Lights up on DENNIS at The Happier Hunting Ground. He is alone]*

DENNIS: Sweetheart.

AIMÉE: I was beginning to think you'd forgotten me.

DENNIS: Oh, come on now. It's only been four days. I've been awfully busy, you know.

AIMÉE: So busy, you missed our date.

DENNIS: I'll make it up to you. How about tonight?

AIMÉE: I'm going out to supper.

DENNIS: Who with?

AIMÉE: It's a kind of celebration. Someone from work.

DENNIS: The Joyboy?

AIMÉE: Yes. I've been promoted. *(SCHULTZ enters)*

SCHULTZ: Dennis, have you seen the tapers? *[DENNIS signals to him to keep quiet. SCHULTZ tiptoes out]*

AIMÉE: Is there somebody with you? Dennis?

DENNIS: No - no. I'm still here. So, promotion and supper with the Joyboy. That should be amusing. How much is it worth?

AIMÉE: I don't know. I didn't go into the question.

DENNIS: It's bound to be worth a hundred a week.

AIMÉE: Oh, I don't suppose anyone except Mr Joyboy gets that.

DENNIS: Well, fifty anyway. Fifty is pretty good. We could get married on that.

AIMÉE: What did you say?

DENNIS: Well, it can't be less than fifty, can it?

AIMÉE: What makes you think I should suddenly marry you?

DENNIS: Aimee, darling, it's only the money that's been holding me back. Now you can keep me, there's nothing to stop us.

AIMÉE: An American would despise himself for living off his wife.

DENNIS: Yes, but I'm European. There's a difference. We have none of these prejudices in the older civilisations.

AIMÉE: I think you're utterly contemptible!

*[AIMÉE slams down the receiver. Blackout on DENNIS]*

AIMÉE: Just who does he think he is? "It's only the money that's been holding me back."

I SEE I'VE BEEN DUPED  
A PUSH-OVER BRIDE  
I MAY BE SIMPLE-MINDED  
BUT I'VE NOTHING TO HIDE

WHAT'S IN IT FOR HIM  
I HAVEN'T A DIME  
TO MARRY JUST FOR MONEY  
IS A TERRIBLE CRIME

*[Furious now, she gets out pen and paper. Sitar motif returns]*

GURU I'M WRITING A FINAL REPORT  
THIS MÉNAGE À TROIS IS FAR WORSE THAN I THOUGHT  
AND NOW I'VE AT LAST SEEN THE WOLF THROUGH THE TREES  
I WOULDN'T SAY YES WOULD HE DO AS HE PLEASE

*[Lights down on AIMÉE. Cross-fade to DENNIS and SCHULTZ]*

SCHULTZ:

YOU'RE LEFT ON THE SHELF  
A TWO-TIMING DAME  
I'D LIKE TO FAULT MYSELF  
IF YOU WEREN'T CLEARLY TO BLAME

SO SEND ROUND A NOTE  
AND TELL HER FROM ME  
SHE'S TOTALLY BEREFT YOU  
OF YOUR DIGNITY

*[SCHULTZ EXITS. DENNIS ponders it over. He rises from the desk and removes The Oxford Book of Verse from its hiding place. He thumbs through the pages]*

DENNIS: *[reading]*

How shall ever one like me / Win thee back again?  
God set her brave eyes wide apart  
So now my summer task is ended, Mary – Aimee?  
With buttocks broad and – definitely not.  
Laid was she upon a sack / Strike soft, she said / Hurt not my back

*[DENNIS looks for another poem, begins to type, speaking in rhythm to the music]*

WHO - IS SYLVIA - WHAT - IS SHE  
THAT ALL - OUR SWAINS - COMMEND HER  
HOLY FAIR - AND WISE - IS SHE  
THE HEAVEN SUCH GRACE - DID LEND HER

*[He rips the sheet from the typewriter]*



WHO THEN IS AIMÉE OH WHAT THEN IS SHE  
THAT ALL HER ADMIRERS COMMEND HER TO ME  
HOLIER FAIRER AND WISER IS SHE  
THE HEAVEN DID LEND HER ADMIRÈD TO BE

*[Slowly fade on DENNIS as he begins to copy it out in his own handwriting]*

### ACT II SCENE 3

*[The Joyboy's living room. AIMÉE and JOYBOY stand side by side facing a high-backed swivel armchair in which is seated the unseen figure of MRS JOYBOY. A caged parrot sits beside her. A column of cigarette smoke spirals upwards as she watches television. From the soundtrack of gunfire, she is obviously close to the climax of a Western or gangster movie]*

JOYBOY: Mom, I would like to introduce you to...

MOM: *[Sharply]* Sit down till this is over.

*[JOYBOY shows AIMÉE to a chair]*

JOYBOY: The old lady hates to miss...

MOM: QUIETLY!

*[The pair sit in silence. AIMÉE is clearly uncomfortable]*

MOM: He's right there behind you! Shift yer ass, you pansy putz! *[A shot; a bloodcurdling scream]* Serve you right!

TV VOICE: "Hotshot in Havana" will continue after this commercial break:

KAISER GIRLS: *(Voice-over)*

THEY'RE FLUFFY SWEET AND FUN TO EAT  
THE FLAVOUR OVERREACHES  
YOU MAY TRY BUT YOU'LL NOT . . .

MOM: Turn it off.

*[JOYBOY does so]*

JOYBOY: Mom, I would like to introduce you to Miss Aimée Thanatogenos.

*[The swivel armchair swings round to reveal the alarming figure of MRS JOYBOY. From her frilly but down-at-heel dress, and her excessive make-up, it is clear that Mom tries to present a vision of radiant youth – to disastrous effect]*

MOM: Supper's in the kitchen. Get it when you like.

JOYBOY: Hungry, Aimée?

AIMÉE: *[thrown]* No. Yes. I suppose a little.

JOYBOY: Let's go see what surprise the little old lady has been cooking up for us.

MOM: Just what you always have. I ain't got time for surprises.

*[JOYBOY exits to the kitchen; AIMÉE shifts in her seat]*

AIMÉE: That's a very beautiful and exotic cockatoo you have there, Mrs Joyboy.

MOM: It's a parrot. *[Ignoring Aimée; to the bird]* Sambo? Sambo? Won't you speak to me?

*[JOYBOY enters with two TV meals on trays]*

JOYBOY: Why, Mom, you know that bird hasn't spoken in years.

MOM: He speaks plenty when you're away!

JOYBOY: *[chuckling]* Mom loves a joke.

MOM: JOKE! Call it a JOKE to keep house on what you give me and visitors coming in? *[To Aimée]* I wouldn't let any daughter of mine do the job you do. What about your mother? What does she think?  
AIMÉE: She went East.  
MOM: That's where we came from.  
AIMÉE: I think she died.  
MOM: Better dead there than live here. You can't find anything in LA. Look at that lettuce. There's more things and cheaper things and better things where we came from. It's like this dearie . . .

SONG: COMPANY

WE CAME FROM OUT EAST  
I WISH THAT WE'D STAYED  
EIGHT BUCKS FOR A FEAST  
FOUR MORE FOR A MAID  
AND NOW THAT WE'RE HERE  
WE MIGHT AS WELL STAY  
BUT IF ANYONE LISTENED TO ME  
THEN WE'D BE STILL THERE TODAY

WE HAD A NICE HOME  
A MODISH ABODE  
A KITCHEN IN CHROME  
AND FRIENDS DOWN THE ROAD  
BUT JUNIOR KNEW BEST  
"LET'S MOVE TO LA"  
AND NOW AS YOU SEE WE'RE HERE  
AND IT'S RIGHT HERE THAT WE'LL STAY

COMPANY  
WE'RE JUST NOT USED TO HAVING COMPANY  
THERE'S ONLY HIM OF COURSE MY SON AND ME  
WE JUST DON'T NEED NOBODY ELSE YOU SEE

COMPANY  
WE'RE JUST NOT USED TO HAVING COMPANY  
A LACK OF FACES IS JUST FINE BY ME  
AND THAT IS JUST THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE  
AIN'T THAT RIGHT BIRDIE?

WE HAD A NICE CAR  
VACATIONS IN MAY  
NEVER WENT VERY FAR  
THE ODD WEEKEND AWAY  
HE HAD TIME FOR ME THEN  
LIKE A LIMPET HE CLUNG  
I WAS NICKNAMED THE VAMP OF VERMONT  
IN THE DAYS I WAS YOUNG

OUR TROUBLES WERE FEW  
NO PROBLEMS IN SIGHT  
A VIEW OF THE PEAKS  
ALL SMOTHERED IN LIGHT  
HE SAID TO ME "MOM –  
LET'S LIVE WITH THE STARS"  
SO NOW AS YOU SEE I'M STUCK HERE  
LIKE THE BIRD BEHIND BARS!

COMPANY  
WE'RE JUST NOT USED TO HAVING COMPANY  
IF HE'S NOT HERE HE'S DOWN THE ROTARY  
OR SO HE SAYS – IF NOT HE'D BETTER BE!

COMPANY  
MY SON HE KEEPS ME UNDER LOCK AND KEY  
WE'RE IN A CAGE-FOR-TWO THE BIRD AND ME  
BUT GIVE US HALF A CHANCE AND YES WE'D FLEE  
BACK TO VERMONT

THE FOLKS THERE WOULD STARE  
AT HOW I WOULD DRESS  
BUT NOW I DON'T CARE  
IF I LOOK A MESS  
COS I'M STUCK IN THIS DUMP  
THIS DUMP CALLED LA  
SO IF I'M SEEMIN ANTI-SOCIAL  
THAT'S THE PRICE YOU MUST PAY . . .

*[Stage action continues – during which MOM turns on the TV full blast, trundles the electric Hoover under their feet, puffs cigarette smoke in their direction, etc. Finally, she picks up the phone and yells down the line:]*

GET ME OUT OF HERE!

THERE'S ONLY MY SON  
TO HELP SEE ME THROUGH  
I'VE ONLY THE ONE  
AND NOW THERE IS YOU

THERE'S SIMPLY NO SPACE  
NO SPACE IN THIS SLUM  
THERE'S ONLY THE ROOM FOR THE ONE GIRL  
AND THAT GIRL IS HIS MOM

COMPANY  
WE'RE JUST NOT USED TO HAVING COMPANY  
THERE'S ONLY HIM OF COURSE MY SON AND ME  
WE JUST DON'T NEED NOBODY ELSE YOU SEE

COMPANY  
NO SIREE  
NO NO NO COMPANY  
WE'RE DOING FINE  
IF YOU JUST STAY AWAY FROM ME

*[Spoken]* How's your meal, sweetie?

*[BLACKOUT]*

## ACT II SCENE 4

*[The Garden of Remembrance. AIMÉE, in dark glasses, sits reading the GURU's latest reply. Sitar motif returns]*

GURU: (Voice-over)  
My child, your latest letter  
Displays a change of mood  
I hope you're feeling better  
It may have been the food

I see your mind has altered  
And left you feeling raw  
But if your love has faltered  
You must tell him the score

*[AIMEE hides the letter as DENNIS enters]*

DENNIS: I thought I'd find you here. Everything alright?

AIMÉE: Everything's fine.

DENNIS: Dinner OK?

AIMÉE: Yes, thank you.

DENNIS: Did you stay - for dessert?

AIMÉE: I don't want to discuss it. What do you want anyway?

DENNIS: *[producing a bouquet that looks like a wreath]* I came to give you these and say I'm sorry about last night.  
I hope . . .

AIMÉE: Dennis. I don't think we should see each other any more.

DENNIS: I was afraid you'd say that.

AIMÉE: What's left for me to say? "You can support me now."

DENNIS: I know. It was stupid of me. It just came out all wrong. I was so excited to hear your news.

AIMÉE: What about you? What is this secret job of yours that you can't tell me where you work and how much you earn? If I'm honest, I don't really know the first thing about you.

DENNIS: But that's what attracts you to me.

AIMÉE: Husbands and wives shouldn't have secrets from each other.

*[Pause]*

DENNIS: I still meant what I said.

AIMÉE: What?

DENNIS: About you and me getting married.

AIMÉE: Just forget it, Dennis. Forget you ever mentioned it.

DENNIS: But Aimee, I can't just forget. You mean everything to me.

AIMÉE: *[softening]* Dennis, don't.

DENNIS: You do. You're - beautiful.

*[Pause]*

DENNIS: I've written you a poem.

*[He hands it to her. AIMÉE reads:]*

AIMÉE:

Who is Aimée? what is she  
That all our swains commend her?  
Holy, fair, and wise is she;  
The heaven such grace did lend her,  
That she might admirèd be.

*[DENNIS takes the poem from her and continues to read it out loud himself]*

DENNIS:

God set her brave eyes wide apart  
And painted them with fire;  
They stir the ashes of my heart  
To embers of desire.  
Her body is a flower, her hair  
About her neck doth play;  
I find her colours everywhere,  
They are the pride of day.  
Her little hands are soft

And when I see her fingers move,  
I know in very truth that men  
Have died for less than love.

*[AIMÉE goes to leave but cannot]*

SONG: OR SHALL WE DIE

DENNIS:

IS THIS THE TIME TO SAY GOODBYE  
DON'T TURN YOUR BACK AND WALK AWAY  
OR HAVE WE NOTHING LEFT TO SAY  
AM I TO LIVE  
OR SHALL WE DIE

I BELIEVE OUR SOULS ARE MADE IN HEAVEN  
I BELIEVE IN REACHING FOR THE SKY  
I BELIEVE IN REAPING SEVEN TIMES SEVEN  
WHEN YOU TRY

IS THIS THE TIME TO SPEAK OF LOVE  
FOR IF IT'S TRUE THAT WORDS CONCEAL  
THE TRUTH BENEATH THE WAY WE FEEL  
LET SILENCE SPEAK  
UNTIL WE DIE

I BELIEVE FOREVER MEANS FOREVER  
I BELIEVE IN BETTER HOW THAN WHY  
I BELIEVE IN NEVER TO SAY NEVER  
TILL WE DIE

SO TEACH ME HOW TO SAY GOODBYE  
FOR IF YOU TURN AND WALK AWAY  
I MAY NOT SEE ANOTHER DAY  
AM I TO LIVE  
OR SHALL WE DIE

*[They embrace. Blackout]*

**ACT II SCENE 5**

*[The Orchid Room. The COSMETICIANS are busy at work when two of them enter excitedly]*

SONG: WHO'D'VE THOUGHT IT

COSMETICIANS 1 AND 2:  
HEY GIRLS HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS

VARIOUS *[in the musical gap]* No, what/What's it about/Something happened?

COSMETICIANS 1 AND 2:  
TIME TO STAND BY WITH THE RICE

COS. 1:  
YOU TELL THEM FIRST I'M SO EXCITED

COS. 2:  
YOU'LL NOT BELIEVE WHAT WE'VE HEARD  
THIS TIME HER LOVE HAS BEEN REQUESTED

COS. 1:  
OUR AIMÉE IS TO BE UNITED

COS. 2: I wanted to say that.

ALL:  
ARE YOU JOKING  
WHO'D'VE THOUGHT IT  
IT'S AMAZING  
CAN'T BELIEVE IT  
WE THOUGHT SHE'D NEVER DECIDE

VOGEL:  
DO I HEAR BELLS

ALL:  
YOU SURE SHE'S GOT THE RIGHT GUY

VOGEL:  
SO WHERE'S THE RING

*[AIMÉE enters]*

HERE COMES THE BEAUTIFUL BRIDE  
WITH HER FACE JUST GLOWING WITH PRIDE

VOGEL:  
I'M GONNA CRY I'M SO DELIGHTED

*[They all crowd around her]*

COS. 2 *[ASIDE]*:  
OF COURSE THIS MOOD CANNOT LAST

COS. 1:  
WHY WHAT ON EARTH DO YOU MEAN

COS. 2:  
I HEAR THAT JOYBOY'S NOT INVITED

COS. 1: Are you kidding?

ALL:  
WHAT'S HIS NAME AND  
IS HE GORGEOUS  
YOU'LL BE FINE SO  
DON'T BE NERVOUS

AIMÉE:  
HE'S FOUND A PLACE HERE IN MY HEART  
AND CARVED HIS NAME FOR EVER MORE  
NO ONE WOULD DARE FORCE US APART

VOGEL:  
IT SOUNDS SO LIKE A CRIB FROM EVELYN WAUGH

*[They all roar with laughter. Grabbing a sheet and a towel they place AIMÉE in an imaginary wedding dress]*

ALL:  
IT'S TIME TO GET OUT THE RICE  
LET'S PUT THE CHAMPAGNE ON ICE

VOGEL:  
SAVE SOME FOR ME

*[AIMÉE walks down a 'human tunnel']*

CHORUS A (BOYS):  
HERE COMES THE BEAUTIFUL BRIDE  
WITH HER FACE JUST GLOWING WITH PRIDE

ALL:  
NOW ALL SAY CHEESECONGRATULATIONS

CHORUS (GIRLS):  
MAKE SURE THEY DRESS YOU IN WHITE

CHORUS (BOYS):  
A HOTEL ROOM WITH A VIEW

CHORUS (GIRLS):  
YOU'LL BE A FABULOUS SIGHT

CHORUS B (BOYS):  
A BRIDAL SUITE JUST FOR TWO

WE KNOW YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT GUY  
YOU'VE GOT THAT GLEAM IN YOUR EYE  
A BY-THE-SEA HONEYMOON / SO WE'LL BE THERE CHEERING YOU ON  
YOU'LL STAY IN BED UNTIL NOON / YOU'LL LOVE YOUR WEDDING DAY

*[A PORTER wheels in a covered corpse and with a flourish whips off the sheet to reveal JOYBOY. A scream – the group divides into horrified onlookers. AIMÉE slowly approaches the body, but as she nears the trolley, JOYBOY suddenly opens his eyes]*

JOYBOY:  
PLEASE EXCUSE THIS RUDE INTRUSION  
NO NEED FOR THE JOY TO CEASE  
PRIVATE WORDS I SEEK WITH AIMÉE  
LEAVE US NOW TO SPEAK IN PEACE

*[They leave. A tense moment passes]*

AIMÉE: Are you alright?

JOYBOY: Things are not so good today.

AIMÉE: I know. All of this must be very hard for you.

JOYBOY: A tragedy!

AIMÉE: I understand.

JOYBOY: *[close to tears]* You will never know the anguish.

AIMÉE: *[sympathetically]* No . . .

JOYBOY: Overwhelming. Things will never be the same again.

AIMÉE: In time – you'll get over it.

JOYBOY: But she won't.

AIMÉE: Who?

JOYBOY: MOM!

AIMÉE: *[realising she may be at crossed purposes]* Oh! *[Slowly it dawns on her]* There hasn't been an accident?

JOYBOY: Fatal.

AIMÉE: Oh, how terrible. I'm so sorry.

JOYBOY: *[blowing his nose]* Thank you.

AIMÉE: I don't know what to say. *[Pause]* Do you want to tell me how it happened?

JOYBOY: Just - old age. It comes to us all, I suppose.

AIMÉE: Of course.

JOYBOY: Even the feathered kind. Do you know, that parrot must have been over a hundred, but the end was still so - sudden?

AIMÉE: Mm.

JOYBOY: I've never seen Mom so cast down. She doesn't know many people in LA...

*[Music under]*

JOYBOY: I was wondering, Miss Thanatogenos - it seems kinda bitter there shouldn't be anyone at the last rites. She certainly would appreciate someone at the funeral.

AIMÉE: *[resignedly]* Why, Mr Joyboy, of course I'd be glad to come.

JOYBOY: Would you? Well. I call that real nice of you.

*[BLACKOUT]*

## ACT II SCENE 6

*[The Happier Hunting Ground Chapel of Rest. DENNIS, SCHULTZ and a PRIEST are preparing for the next funeral]*

DENNIS: Mr Schultz, I'm getting married so I want to improve my position.

SCHULTZ: No way. Not at present. You're getting five bucks more than the man before you. I don't say you ain't worth it but the money just ain't here. If business looks up, you'll be the first to know. *[Producing his cheque book]* Sorry, Father. Did we say twenty bucks?

DENNIS: My girl doesn't know I work here. She's a bit of a romantic. I'm not sure she'd think well of this business.

SCHULTZ: Well, you tell her to lay off being romantic. Forty bucks a week regular is forty bucks. Now hurry up. The next bus load will be here any minute. *[He exits]*

DENNIS: Tell me - how does one become a clergyman?

PRIEST: One has the Call.

DENNIS: I think I might have the Call.

PRIEST: Think twice about answering it. The competition gets hotter every year.

*[SCHULTZ enters hurriedly]*

SCHULTZ: Goddammit! They're early!

DENNIS: They're here already?

SCHULTZ: Coming up the drive. Three of them - and you're not even changed. Do I have to be your mother as well as your goddamn provider? 'Scuse us, Father.

*[DENNIS and SCHULTZ exit. Pause. The door flies open as SCHULTZ propels MRS MELLY, an elderly organist, into the room]*

SCHULTZ: Mrs Melly. PLAY!

*[He exits. As she begins, the doorbell chimes. The PRIEST opens the door to reveal AIMÉE, JOYBOY and MRS JOYBOY, who is beside herself with grief]*

PRIEST: Be at peace, good woman. Sambo is at rest.

*[As they all assemble around a curtained niche, the PRIEST glances nervously towards the door where SCHULTZ made his exit - the trio follow his glance. Seen only by the PRIEST, SCHULTZ appears behind a curtain and gestures for the funeral to begin]*

PRIEST: Dog that is born of bitch - sorry. Wrong service. Parrot that is born of - parrot, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cutteth down like a flower.

*[DENNIS and SCHULTZ, their heads bowed, slip in behind the group]*



He fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay. We now commit his body to the flames in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Amen.

*[The PRIEST taps a button – the curtains open to reveal a ‘curled’ Sambo lying in a small open casket, his head resting on a lace pillow. MRS JOYBOY swoons into the arms of SCHULTZ. AIMÉE sees and recognises DENNIS]*

AIMÉE: Dennis!

DENNIS: Aimee!

JOYBOY: Dennis?

MOM: *[to SCHULTZ]* Sidney!

SCHULTZ: *[to MRS JOYBOY]* Phyllis! Well – if it isn’t the Vamp of Vermont!

#### SONG: COMPANY: REPRISE

SCHULTZ

YOU’VE NOT CHANGED A BIT

MRS JOYBOY:

YOU’VE GOTTEN SO FAT

SCHULTZ:

YOU GET TO MY AGE

IT JUST GOES KER-SPLATT

THE KIDS HAVE GROWN UP

MRS JOYBOY:

I DON’T FEEL BEREFT

BOTH:

SO LET’S GO PAINT THE TOWN

IN ALL THE TIME WE HAVE LEFT

COMPANY

MRS JOYBOY:

THE LAST I HEARD YOU’D GONE TO KAYSERI

SCHULTZ:

IT’S NOT THE KINDA PLACE YOU WANNA BE

PERHAPS YOU WANNA HAVE A DRINK WITH ME

MRS JOYBOY:

THIS VAMP’S ON VERMOUTH

BOTH:

COMPANY

MRS JOYBOY:

AND ALL THE TIME YOU’D NOT FORGOTTEN ME

SCHULTZ:

THIS DAME SHE REALLY HAD THE HOTS ON ME

BOTH:

WE JUST FORGOT TO TIE THE KNOT – THIS TIME WE’LL

MRS JOYBOY:

YOU’RE MY CLUCKY-DUCKY

SCHULTZ:

I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY

BOTH:

I’LL BE YOURS ETERNALLY

MRS JOYBOY: Don’t wait up, Junior.

*[They exit followed by the PRIEST and MRS MELLY]*

DENNIS: *[to AIMÉE, making light conversation]* Were you acquainted with the late parrot?

JOYBOY: So – this is Dennis Barlow. The Poet Laureate.

AIMÉE: What do you mean?

JOYBOY: I’ve been doing some detective work. Those poems he’s been sending you. I’ve had it confirmed – classics - all of them. He didn’t write a single line.

DENNIS: You've set all this up.

AIMÉE: What's going on?

DENNIS: You sanctimonious pest!

AIMÉE: You work here!

JOYBOY: Come on, Aimée.

DENNIS: *[as they depart]* My dear, as an American, you should be the last person to despise a man for standing at the bottom of the ladder. But what would you know – other than the ins and outs of psychology and Chinese? I cannot claim to be as high in the mortuary world as the Joyboy – but at least I wear my own teeth!

*[Music continues under into]*

## ACT II SCENE 7

*[The Orchid Room. As before]*

COS. 1 AND 2:

HEY GIRLS HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS  
TIME TO STAND BY WITH THE RICE

COS. 1:

I NEVER KNOW WHICH WAY WE'RE HEADING

COS. 2:

YOU'LL NOT BELIEVE WHAT WE'VE HEARD  
JOYBOY IS LAYING OUT THE BEDDING

COS. 1:

THERE'S GONNA BE ANOTHER WEDDING

ALL:

ARE YOU JOKING  
WHO'D'VE THOUGHT IT  
IT'S AMAZING  
CAN'T BELIEVE IT  
WON'T THIS GIRL EVER DECIDE

VOGEL:

DO I HEAR BELLS  
YOU SURE SHE GOT THE RIGHT GUY

VOGEL:

MORE WEDDING BELLS

*[AIMÉE and JOYBOY enter]*

ALL:

HERE COMES THE BEAUTIFUL BRIDE  
WITH A FACE JUST GLOWING WITH PRIDE

JOYBOY:

I KNOW THAT MOM WILL BE DELIGHTED

AIMÉE AND JOYBOY:

THIS TIME IT'S GOING TO LAST

ALL:

OH YES WE'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE  
WE'RE SO RELIEVED AND SO EXCITED

*[Lights up on The Happier Hunting Ground where DENNIS is packing his belongings into a box. SIR AMBROSE hovers]*

AMBROSE: Sorry to see you're moving on, Barlow.

DENNIS: Things have changed rather since we last met.

AMBROSE: I suspected as much. That is where the Knife & Fork Club comes in. They hope the time will never come when the Club is not ready to help a fellow countryman in difficulties. We had a committee meeting last night. Your name was mentioned. To put it in a nutshell, old boy, we will send you home.

DENNIS: First class.

AMBROSE: Tourist. I'm told it's jolly comfortable. I have the cheque with me. We signed it last night.

*[Lights up on The Orchid Room]*

BOYS:

HERE COMES THE BEAUTIFUL BRIDE  
WITH HER FACE JUST GLOWING WITH PRIDE

GIRLS:

MAKE SURE THEY DRESS YOU IN WHITE  
YOU'LL BE A FABULOUS SIGHT

ALL:

NOW ALL SAY CHEESE CONGRATULATIONS

*[Cross-fade to DENNIS and SIR AMBROSE]*

AMBROSE: As they say in the movies - I guess 'that's a wrap'. Oh yes. I cut this clipping out for you and saved it.

DENNIS: Look, if it's another one of your glowing reviews, I'm not interested.

AMBROSE: No, no. It's more your field. There's going to be a big society wedding up at Whispering Glades. Thought you might know them that's all. Anyway, best of luck old chap, safe journey.

*[He leaves DENNIS staring at the cutting. Cross-fade to The Orchid Room]*

BOYS:

A BY-THE-SEA HONEYMOON

GIRLS:

A HOTEL ROOM WITH A VIEW

BOYS:

YOU'LL STAY IN BED UNTIL NOON

GIRLS:

A BRIDAL SUITE MADE FOR TWO

BOYS:

SO WE'LL BE THERE CHEERING YOU ON  
YOU'LL LOVE YOUR WEDDING DAY

GIRLS:

WE KNOW YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT GUY  
YOU'VE GOT THAT GLEAM IN YOUR EYE

ALL:

LET'S GET THE CHAMPAGNE ON ICE  
TIME TO STAND BY WITH THE RICE  
LET'S GET THE CHAMPAGNE ON ICE  
TIME TO STAND BY WITH THE RICE  
LET'S GET THE CHAMPAGNE ON ICE  
TIME TO STAND BY WITH THE RICE

*[Dead segue to AIMÉE and DENNIS]*

## ACT II SCENE 8

*[The gates to Whispering Glades. Moonlight. AIMÉE opens the gate on her way home. She is alone. DENNIS emerges from the shadows]*

SONG: DENNIS & AIMÉE

DENNIS: Aimee -

AIMÉE: Oh, leave me alone, Dennis.

AIMÉE:

I NEATLY CAUGHT YOU AT YOUR GAME  
LIKE HELL YOU'RE ON THE ROAD TO FAME

I WAS A FOOL FOR BEING SO SHORT-SIGHTED  
YOU KNOW I'LL LIVE TO RUE THE DAY  
WHEN JOYBOY FIRST GOT IN THE WAY  
AND THEN YOU STUCK YOUR NOSE IN UNINVITED  
NOW ALL THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER  
IT'S DEAD AS FAR AS I CAN SEE  
WHAT'S THERE TO TALK ABOUT  
EXCEPT THE WEATHER

DENNIS:

YOU KNOW YOU'RE VERY HARD TO TRACK  
YOU NEARLY HAD ME TURNING BACK  
I ONLY CAME TO SAY CONGRATULATIONS  
AND WHEN HE'S MADE YOUR STOMACH CHURN  
IT IS TO ME YOU'LL HAVE TO TURN  
I OFFER CONFIDENTIAL CONSULTATIONS

SEEING IS BELIEVING  
BUT YOU DO ME A DISCREDIT  
MY PURPOSE WAS TO LOVE YOU  
HEAVEN KNOWS I EVEN SAID IT

AIMÉE:

YOU ONLY SAW ME AS A GAME  
AN EASY TARGET TOOK YOUR AIM  
YOU KNEW I'D FALL FOR ANY TALL GO-GETTER  
AND WHILE YOU HAD YOUR LITTLE LAUGH  
I STUMBLED BLINDLY UP THE PATH  
BUT YOU'RE AN ENGLISHMAN  
I SHOULD KNOW BETTER  
AND I WANTED TO BELIEVE IT

FAIRY STORIES AS A CHILD  
WITH A RIDDLE AND A RHYME  
JUST A STORY ON A PAGE  
THERE'S NO ONCE UPON A TIME

DENNIS:

SEEING IS BELIEVING  
BUT BELIEF HAS NO FOUNDATION  
YOU CLING TO YOUR BELIEF  
BUT WHERE THERE'S TRUTH THERE'S NO NEGATION

BOTH:

SEEING IS BELIEVING  
BUT PERFECTION'S HARD TO FOLLOW  
YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT IT TELLS YOU  
IT'S A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW

STAY ALERT UNTIL I CALL  
SO SAID WISDOM TO THE SAGE  
YOU'LL BE TEACHER TO US ALL  
WHEN YOU TURN THE FINAL PAGE

SEEING IS BELIEVING  
WITH THE WHOLE WORLD RIGHT BEHIND YOU  
WITHOUT IT YOU DOUBT IT  
ONLY LOVE CAN TRULY BIND YOU  
YOU PAY UNTIL YOU DRAW YOUR LAST BREATH

AIMÉE:

BUT THE WEeping WILL END  
IT COMES TO AN END  
IT ALL HAS TO END  
IN DEATH

DENNIS:

BUT THE WEeping WILL END  
IT COMES TO AN END  
IT ALL HAS TO END  
IN DEATH

DENNIS:

JOYBOY CLAIMS MY POETRY WAS LIFTED  
PARODY'S THE NOBLEST FORM OF ART  
ALL MY FATHER'S PROGENY ARE GIFTED  
PARAPHRASING SHAKESPEARE'S PRETTY SMART  
EVERY SECOND-RATER IS A SPIDER  
FEEDS ON OTHER POETS WHERE HE CAN  
EVEN MEDIOCRITY'S A STOCK PROVIDER  
I'M IT'S GREATEST FAN

SO IF IT'S TRUE  
THAT WORDS CONCEAL  
THE TRUTH BENEATH  
THE WAY WE FEEL  
LET SILENCE SPEAK

*[AIMÉE goes to leave]*

HAVE YOU ANY NOTION WHERE YOU'RE HEADED  
JOYBOY'S NOT A PLEASANT MAN TO CROSS  
THINK OF THAT BEFORE YOU'RE WED AND BEDDED  
TO YOUR BOSS  
NOW LISTEN TO ME  
HE'S FULL OF EXCUSE  
ONCE HE HAS YOU SNARED  
HE'LL ONLY TIGHTEN THE NOOSE  
YOU'RE LIVING A LIE  
HE WON'T LET YOU GO  
JOYBOY IS THE KINDA GUY  
ONE SHIVERS TO KNOW

AIMÉE: You don't really love me. How can you? You're cold, English. You just want to play with me for your own amusement. I am not as lucky as you to have had a privileged education, but I know who I am. Everything about you is a lie and a fake. Where are you? When I turn away I can't even remember what you look like. When you are not there, I don't think of you at all.

*[DENNIS strikes her. AIMÉE recoils into the darkness]*

DENNIS:

THEN GET ON YOUR BIKE  
THERE'S NO MORE TO SAY  
YOU MET A GUY YOU REALLY LIKE  
AND THREW HIM AWAY

*[He exits. BLACKOUT]*

## ACT II SCENE 9

*[The Orchid Room. AIMÉE sits at a desk. She turns on a lamp, lifts the telephone and dials]*

JOYBOY: *(Voice over)* Hello. Joyboy here.

AIMÉE: It's me.

JOYBOY: Speak up, honey. I can't quite get you.

AIMÉE: I'm so miserable.

JOYBOY: It isn't easy hearing you, honey. Mom's got a new bird and she's trying to make him talk. Can't we talk about it tomorrow?

AIMÉE: Please, I need to see you.

JOYBOY: I couldn't leave Mom. Not tonight. This is a big evening for her, honey. How would she feel? I have to be with her.

AIMÉE: It's about our marriage.

JOYBOY: Honey, plenty of little problems come up. Just go to sleep. They'll all look easier in the morning.

AIMÉE: I must see you.

JOYBOY: Now, Aimée - I'm going to be firm with you. Do as Poppa says or Poppa will be real mad at you.

*[AIMÉE hangs up. She dials a number from a newspaper. The sitar motif returns]*

SECRETARY: L.A. Post.

AIMÉE: I want to speak to the Guru Brahmin.

SECRETARY: Who?

AIMÉE: You know. He writes "Wisdom of the Guru Brahmin – Solace and Solution".

SECRETARY: Oh. The spooks page. You mean Mr. Slump.*[The sitar theme cuts out discordantly]*

AIMÉE: But I thought . . .

SECRETARY: They're the same person.

AIMÉE: His real name is Slump?

SECRETARY: That's what they tell me, sister. Anyway, as of today he doesn't work here any more.

AIMÉE: Couldn't you give me his home number?

SECRETARY: Sorry. Not policy. Try Mooney's Saloon. He spends most of his life there.

*[AIMÉE hangs up and dials again]*

BARMAN: Mooney's.

AIMÉE: Is the Guru Brah - Mr. Slump there?

BARMAN: *[calling off]* There's a call for you. Are you here?

SLUMP: *[on the line; disinterested]* Yeah?

AIMÉE: At last I've found you. I'm Aimee Thanatogenos. You remember me?

SLUMP: Sure.

AIMÉE: I'm in great distress and need your advice. You remember the Englishman I told you about? Well, I said goodbye to him for ever but he's managed to place doubts in my head about my marriage to Mr. Joyboy. I'm just not sure any more. What am I to do? Hullo? Mr Slump, are you there? Hullo?

SLUMP: Yeah.

AIMÉE: You heard what I said?

SLUMP: Sure.

*[Pause]*

AIMÉE: Well – what should I do?

SLUMP: Do? I'll tell you what to do. Just take an elevator to the top floor. Find a window and jump. Okay?

*[Pause]*

AIMÉE: Thank you.

*[The line goes dead]*

SONG: OR SHALL WE DIE: REPRISE

AIMÉE:

I LIFT MY EYES  
TO FACE THE DAWN  
THE MORNING SKY IS ALL I SEE  
I WISH THAT SLEEP WOULD COMFORT ME  
SO I CAN REST  
OR SIMPLY DIE  
BLUEBIRD WON'T YOU TELL ME WHERE WE'RE GOING  
FAR BEYOND THE RAINBOW SO I'M TOLD  
BLUEBIRD I AM BLIND AND I AM GROWING  
VERY COLD  
AND IS THIS ALL  
WHAT TRUTH REMAINS  
FOR IF YOU STUMBLE AT MY SIDE  
WHO THEN IS LEFT TO BE MY GUIDE  
IF I SHOULD FALL  
OR SIMPLY DIE

*[AIMÉE walks to the window. A moment passes. She then walks to a cupboard and takes out a syringe and a bottle. She draws off the liquid and rolls up her sleeve. AIMÉE turns out the light. Darkness and silence]*

**ACT II SCENE 10**

*[The Happier Hunting Ground. DENNIS is alone when JOYBOY enters. For a moment JOYBOY stands motionless in the doorway]*

DENNIS: Another parrot?

JOYBOY: It's Aimée.

DENNIS: You're not coming through, Joyboy?

JOYBOY: She's dead. Killed herself.

DENNIS: Oh. That is sad. Very sad indeed. This must be a very hard time for you, Joyboy. Your fiancée. Still, I never thought her quite sane, did you?

JOYBOY: *[exploding]* You killed my honey!

DENNIS: These are wild words, Joyboy.

JOYBOY: I loved her.

DENNIS: I've no time for sentiment. Take a page from your Whispering Glades rule book and gloss over the loss.

*[Pause]* Why have you come to me? *[JOYBOY is weeping]* I can't hear you.

JOYBOY: I need your help.

DENNIS: She's your fiancée.

JOYBOY: It's your fault.

DENNIS: Your problem, Joyboy.

JOYBOY: It's the scandal. A girl under my supervision. I'll be ruined.

DENNIS: You selfish bastard. And you said you loved her.

JOYBOY: Please - I need you to help me get rid of her.

DENNIS: How much?

JOYBOY: Four thousand dollars.

DENNIS: Make it five, plus a first-class ticket home. I want to return in the same style as I arrived. I have my image to consider as well you know.

JOYBOY: Agreed.

DENNIS: You really are desperate, aren't you? Okay – as I see it, you have two problems, and let me emphasise they are yours. You are in possession of the corpse of your fiancée and your career is under threat. You therefore need to dispose of the body and to explain the disappearance. You come to me for help and it so happens that in both these things I, and only I can help you. We are happy-go-lucky people at The Happier Hunting Ground. There are no formalities. If I say "Mr Schultz, I've a sheep here to incinerate", he says "Go ahead". Once you seemed in-

clined to look down on us – now perhaps you feel differently. All we have to do is collect our loved one, if you will forgive the expression, and bring her here. Where have you put her, by the way?

JOYBOY: She's outside. In the trunk.

DENNIS: Good. Now, secondly, to explain the disappearance. She had few friends and no relations. She disappears on the eve of her wedding. What could be more plausible than her eloping with her former lover? Natural good taste triumphing at the eleventh hour. All that is necessary is for me to disappear at the same time. No one in Southern California ever inquires what goes on beyond the mountains. There the matter will end.

JOYBOY: *[handing over the money]* I can't bear to think of her going out like this.

DENNIS: Bit late now. Go fetch, Joyboy.

*[JOYBOY exits. DENNIS turns out the lights and ignites the oven. Through its frosted glass door the flames jump and dance, illuminating the room with their glow. JOYBOY enters struggling with a body-bag. DENNIS puts on leather gloves and opens the oven. He pulls out a tray, and together they slide AIMÉE into the flames and close the door. A moment passes]*

DENNIS: "God set her brave eyes wide apart And painted them with fire . . ."

JOYBOY: That's the phoney poem!

DENNIS: "They stir the ashes of my heart, To embers of desire."

JOYBOY: How can you say that?

DENNIS: It's really remarkably apposite, is it not?

*[As the music swells, AIMÉE's body combusts. The room is filled with dancing shadows. JOYBOY exits in horror. DENNIS waits for the inferno to subside. He turns off the oven. In the silence, only the sound of the hissing gas can be heard dying away. He goes to the desk and takes out a remembrance card and writes:]*

VOICE 1:

DEAR MR JOYBOY

VOICE 2:

OUR CONDOLENCES TO YOU

VOICE 3:

THE ASHES OF YOUR LATE DECEASED

VOICE 1:

BY WAY OF COMMISERATION

VOICE 2:

I ENCLOSE THIS LITTLE THOUGHT

DENNIS:

YOUR LITTLE AIMÉE

IN HEAVEN TODAY

IS THINKING OF YOU

AND WAGGING HER TAIL

*[Smiling to himself, DENNIS places the card in an envelope. He goes to the cupboard, chooses a large urn, places it on the desk and leans the card against its side. Hands in pockets, he walks over to the oven and peers through the glass. He looks at his watch then lights a cigarette. He puts on his coat, picks up his suitcase and takes a final look around the room. Seeing the urn, he moves to the desk and, with deliberation, flicks his ash into it. He turns out the lights and exits. The glow of the oven slowly dies as - the curtain falls]*

**THE END**