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E. Vivian Edmunds, *Called Up*, 1918

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CALLED UP

A drama in four acts

by

E Vivian Edmunds

CHARACTERS

Mr Enoch Hargraves, keeper of the general stores and post office

Miss Rhoda Hargraves, his daughter

Miss Matilda Hargraves, his sister

Miss Mary Darling, his niece and poor relation

Alice Maude, their maid/servant

Billy Blane)

) assistants in Hargraves's store/post office

Sykes)

Mr Butterworth, a Yorkshire tradesman

Mr Smith, a wholesaler and undercover German spy

British soldiers:

Mr Reginald Travers, a private but nicknamed 'the Colonel'

Mr Eric Mullins, a costermonger

Archie Archibald

1st P(rivate)

A German soldier

A German sentry

ACT I SCENE 1

SITTING ROOM OF ENOCH HARGRAVES'S HOUSE.
GENERAL STORES AT SUNNYCLIFFE.

ENTER HARGRAVES FOLLOWED BY SMITH, A MAN
IMMACULATELY ATTIRED, WITH A SUGGESTION OF
FOREIGN ACCENT.

HARGRAVES: You're making me order a vast amount of goods,
Mr Smith. You must remember I am only in a small
way of business.

SMITH: I will guarantee you will have customers for all
you've ordered. Besides, my firm will give
unlimited credit.

HARGRAVES: You're a wonderfully enterprising man, Mr ...

SMITH: Smith.

HARGRAVES: To be sure, Smith. Common name for one to
forget, and so British too. When I first saw
you, I took you for a foreigner.

SMITH: My mother was Swiss.

HARGRAVES: Can't say I ever met a commercial traveller with
such enterprise, and so trusting.

SMITH: Ah. Sunnycliffe is a small place.

HARGRAVES: To be sure but it will be a big place in time.
We have one of the finest harbours on the east
coast, and when the new docks are built, it will
be a second Liverpool.

SMITH: You have already a natural accommodation.

HARGRAVES: Aye. Sunnycliffe in the old days was a big
seaport, but it got left behind. But I'm the
future mayor, and I'll make things stir.

SMITH: But you have been good enough to place such large
orders in my hands. Shall we adjourn for a
bottle of wine?

HARGRAVES: I never keep nowt in the house and being the
future mayor of Sunnycliffe, I can't afford to be

seen going into a public house. But to return to business. This order I've given you runs into £15,000. I feel nervous about it. I'm not worth half that sum.

SMITH: Not at present, my friend, but wait. My firm's maxim is to help the small trader. That is why we give you unlimited credit.

HARGRAVES: I shall want to build stores to put the stuff in.

ENTER MARY

MARY: Can you see Mr Butterworth?

HARGRAVES: Aye, show him in. I hope I'm not plunging too deep.

ENTER BUTTERWORTH, A TYPICAL YORKSHIRE
TRADESMAN

BUTTERWORTH: Hargraves, have you heard the news? There's a whole battalion of troops landed at Sunnycliffe and they're billeted on the town. Hundreds of 'em. I've already had a big order for forage. You sly dog. This is no news to you.

HARGRAVES: Eh.

BUTTERWORTH: Aye. I wondered what you were bringing in those big stores for. Aye, you're a wonderful business man, Hargraves.

SMITH: Soldiers in Sunnycliffe?

BUTTERWORTH: Aye, thousands of 'em.

HARGRAVES: This is Mr Smith, in the wholesale line. It was on his advice ...

SMITH: Er, exactly. I wish you good night. (EXIT)

ENTER MATILDA HARGRAVES

MATILDA: I won't have it, I tell you, I won't have it. I've always been a respectable woman, brought up with respectable people and I've always been careful with whom I have associated.

HARGRAVES: What's to do?

BUTTERWORTH: What's to do, Tilly?

MATILDA: Tilly? Don't you Tilly me, Mr Butterworth. I don't approve of familiarity. Miss Hargraves please, Mr Butterworth, as long as I don't call you Butty.

BUTTERWORTH: No offence, Tilly.

HARGRAVES: What's to do walking up and down like a caged giraffe?

MATILDA: Go on, insult me. I'm only a weak woman. First I'm Tilly, then I'm a giraffe.

HARGRAVES: For goodness sake, woman, stand still and tell us what has upset you.

MATILDA: Soldiers.

BUTTERWORTH: Oh, Tilly, at your time of life.

HARGRAVES: What have they been doing to you? Nothing wrong?

MATILDA: Wrong? I'd like to see a soldier speak to me. I, who have been a Sunday School teacher, an ardent chapel-goer for twenty years. A leading light in the YWCA, and Blue Cross and Ribbon Army. That I should have to live with soldiers.

BUTTERWORTH: Tilly, why don't you marry me?

MATILDA: Mr Butterworth, you've been drinking.

HARGRAVES: Come now, what's to do?

MATILDA: I was coming out of Tolson and Brown's after purchasing 16 yards of unbleached calico and I was stopped by Stiggins the policeman, who asked me how many soldiers I could do with.

BUTTERWORTH: Tilly. Matilda.

MATILDA: Silence. Before I could answer him, up comes a soldier swinging a cane, la di da, and Stiggins explained who I was, and the impertinent young puppy turned to another young soldier and said 'Put six men on to this woman,' and then he strode away, before I had time to answer him and tell him what I thought of him.

HARGRAVES: Six men. What do you want with six men?

MATILDA: I don't want them, but they are billeted here.

HARGRAVES: (REPEATING MATILDA'S WALK) I won't have it. I - I, the future mayor of Sunnycliffe, the leading tradesman in the town, a respected citizen, a deacon of the chapel. Where's my hat?

BUTTERWORTH: Soldiers in your house? Preposterous.

HARGRAVES: Tommies. Not even a sergeant. My dignity ...

MATILDA: Never mind your dignity, what about the carpets?

HARGRAVES: (WALKING ABOUT FINDING HAT ETC) Where's my hat? I'm going to the town hall. Aye, if needs be, I'll go to the House of Lords, to Bottomley. I'll go to the devil but I won't have soldiers in my house. (EXIT DOOR C IN GREAT RAGE)

MATILDA: Here, Mary, give me my apron. Come with me. I'll take down every spare bed in the house, pull down the curtains, and up with every carpet. If I'm to have soldiers, they shall sleep on bare boards.

BUTTERWORTH: But, Miss Hargraves, you are a Christian woman, a Sunday School teacher, an ardent attendant of the YWCA. These men are the defenders of the country.

MATILDA: Let 'em defend the country, I'm going to defend myself.

EXITS IN A HURRY, BUTTERWORTH AFTER HER,
TRYING TO CONSOLE HER. ENTER RHODA
HARGRAVES

RHODA: Mary, is tea ready?

MARY: Not yet.

RHODA: Oh, do hurry up, I've got a beastly headache. What's the time? Eight o'clock?

EXIT MARY

SMITH: You have a headache. I am sorry.

RHODA: It's that beastly shop. From eight in the morning till seven at night I combine the duties

of post mistress and cashier for my father's stores.

SMITH: Your father is fortunate in having such an able assistant.

RHODA: Oh, you leave that to father. You don't get any change out of him, or Aunt Matilda. He made a civil servant of me when I was a child leaving school, and the post office brings custom to the shop and clears the rent.

SMITH: Your father is a wonderful business man.

RHODA: Business. Oh, I'm sick of the word.

SMITH: A wonderful business man and a wealthy man shortly. I am determined on that.

RHODA: You, determined?

SMITH: Yes. Wealth means happiness for you. I don't wish to see you working 12 hours a day in a stuffy shop. You are too full of life to be penned up in a nerve-racking atmosphere of trade. No. You want luxury, freedom and pleasure. That's what you were born for and that's what you shall have.

RHODA: And that's what I want. To live in another world. To get out of this stupid place where no woman's imagination goes higher than a pound of margarine. But you seem to take exceptional interest in my welfare. Oh, I know you are pretending to love me but how am I to know that you're not married?

SMITH: Well, are you coming out?

RHODA: I can't.

SMITH: Not as far as my hotel?

RHODA: Hotel? Good gracious. I should have all Sunnycliffe down upon my head.

SMITH: Well, come as far as the front. I have a lot to tell you.

RHODA: I dare not.

SMITH: Nonsense. Get one of the girls to take your place.

RHODA: You forget the post office. I have already delayed sending three telegrams talking to you.

SMITH: (LOOKING THROUGH DOOR OF SHOP) So that is your apparatus? Behind the counter? Wonderful thing, telegraphy. I must ask you to give me a lesson some day.

RHODA: No one but government officials are allowed to touch the machine.

SMITH: I'll call round for you about nine.

RHODA: I can't get out. Father is so particular.

SMITH: Soon you will be under my protection.

RHODA: Oh.

SMITH: Yes. You know I care for you dreadfully ...

ENTER MARY

MARY: I beg pardon.

SMITH: It's all right. I'm going. (TO RHODA) Won't you walk as far as the front?

RHODA: I'll risk it. Father is out. (TO MARY) Get me my hat and gloves.

MARY DOES SO

SMITH: Your servant, right?

MARY: I'm not a servant.

SMITH: Oh?

RHODA: No. She is a sort of connection. A poor relation. Father keeps her out of charity.

SMITH AND RHODA EXIT

MATILDA: (OFF STAGE) Mary, have you laid the supper?

MARY: I'll get it ready. The shop will be shut soon.

MARY BUSIES HERSELF LAYING THE TABLE. ENTER
BLANE

BLANE: I beg pardon, is Miss Rhoda here?

MARY: She's just gone out for a little while but she won't be long.

BLANE: There's a woman wants a shilling postal order.

MARY: Well, can't you get it?

BLANE: No. She wouldn't like me to go behind the postal counter, though she has left the tills unlocked. Oh no. Sykes has served her. (LOOKS THROUGH DOOR)

MARY: Why don't you like to serve behind the postal counter?

BLANE: Because I'm afraid of temptation. I'm afraid of myself.

MARY: What's wrong with you, Billy? You've been as miserable as a wet afternoon for weeks. Are you in love?

BLANE GROANS

MARY: You've got it badly. Hope it's nothing contagious.

BLANE: It's fever.

MARY: (SHOWS ALARM) Oh, it is contagious.

BLANE: Yes. I caught it by putting one shilling on High Flyer. It won at 20 to one and I got a guinea. Then I thought my fortune was made.

MARY: They don't always win.

BLANE: No ...

MARY: And that's why you don't like going behind the postal counter? You've lost, Billy, but you haven't done anything wrong?

BLANE: No. Only borrowed.

ENTER MATILDA

MATILDA: Now then, what are you doing here?

BLANE: I only came for Miss Rhoda.

MATILDA: Miss Rhoda is in the shop, isn't she?

MARY: (QUICKLY) Yes, of course.

MATILDA: Is the supper ready?

MARY: Yes. It's on the table. It's only bread and cheese.

MATILDA: Only bread and cheese? What more do you expect? Hot pheasant for shop assistants? Now then, Alice Maude.

ENTER ALICE MAUDE

Have you taken those carpets up?

ALICE MAUDE: Yes 'm. (WIPES NOSE ON APRON)

MATILDA: Don't do that. Have you taken the curtains down, and bedstead?

ALICE MAUDE: Are we going to have soldiers in the house, 'm?

MATILDA: We are not. I've stripped the rooms so that they can't come in. Besides, the master has gone to settle the matter.

ALICE MAUDE: (SIGHING) Soldiers.

MATILDA: You brazen hussy. Let me find you so much as looking at a soldier.

ALICE MAUDE: (SIGHING) No, mum. But they do look at me. Oh. Oh.

MATILDA: Stop making that noise. What's the time?

MARY: A quarter past eight.

MATILDA: (TO ALICE MAUDE) Here. Run down to Peppercorns before they shut. I have forgotten to send ...

ALICE MAUDE: Where's my hat?

MATILDA: Never mind. I'll go myself. And Alice Maude, beware of the betrayers of innocence. (EXIT)

ALICE MAUDE: Ah, me.

MARY: Aren't you well?

ALICE MAUDE: I was taking down the curtains and he looked at me. How he laughed and says, 'What a chivvy chase.' I wonder what he meant. Something beautiful, I suppose.

MARY: They're closing the doors. Hurry up and get supper served.

COMEDY EXIT OF ALICE MAUDE. ENTER RHODA

RHODA: Has father been in?

MARY: No.

RHODA: Has anyone been in the shop?

MARY: Yes. Someone for a postal order but Sykes served them.

RHODA: Damn the shop. I'm going out tonight, Mary. I may not be in till late. Don't go to sleep. I'll throw a stone at your window. If father asks for me, say I've got a headache and gone to bed. I'm off.

MARY: Where?

RHODA: A motor ride to Winsea, a champagne supper at the County. (EXIT)

ENTER BLANE

BLANE: Mr Smith. Sir. I'm sorry I can't return the £10 you lent me.

SMITH: That's all right, my friend. I am only too pleased to help you.

BLANE: I think I've got a winner for tomorrow.

SMITH: Perhaps you will want a little ready money?
(OFFERS NOTE)

BLANE: A £10 note. I could never repay it.

SMITH: Nonsense, you have always a friend in me.

ENTER REGGIE TRAVERS, ARISTOCRATIC JUVENILE;
ERIC MULLINS, SHORT COMMON COSTERMONGER;
ARCHIE ARCHIBALD, BIG SOLDIER, RED NOSE AND

RED FACE, ALL CARRYING HEAVY EQUIPMENT WHICH
THEY THROW DOWN AS THEY ENTER.

ERIC: Mids't pleasures and palaces.

ARCHIE: Nice bit of skirt, what ho?

REGGIE: (TO MARY) I beg your pardon, Miss Hargraves, but
we are billeted ...

MARY: My name is Mary Darling. I'm afraid there'll be
awful trouble.

ARCHIE: (GOING TO TABLE) Now for supper. Oh, bread and
cheese.

BLANE: Here, I say, that's our supper.

ARCHIE: Where's the onions?

ERIC: Of course it is our supper and as my friend says,
where's the onions?

ARCHIE: And the beer?

MARY: We don't have beer here.

ERIC: No beer 'ere. Oh.

MARY: You'll get into trouble and you'll get me into
trouble.

REGGIE: Let us postpone the banquet until our host
arrives. So you are not Miss Hargraves?

MARY: No.

ERIC: Here, let's have some beer.

BLANE: We're all teetotallers here.

ARCHIE: (SINGS) My drink is water bright.

ERIC: Ain't there no pub in this blinky town?

BLANE: What?

ARCHIE: Pub. P U B. Where they sells Pig's Ear.

BLANE: Yes. There's the Sailor's 'ope opposite but they
close at nine.

ARCHIE: 'Ere, Eric, how much money have you?

ERIC: Four pence.

ARCHIE: Four pence. How dare you have a thirst with four pence?

ERIC: (TO REGGIE) Colonel, could you take pity on two of Haig's hopes?

REGGIE: Well, just this once.

ARCHIE: That's what you always say. Eh. A red 'un, ten bob for beer.

ERIC: Beer. 'Ere, give it to me. Here young feller, bring ten shillings' worth of beer.

BLANE: Me? Er ... I've never tasted.

ERIC: You've got a lot to make up. Come along, I'll treat you.

ARCHIE: 'Ere, what about my ten bob?

ERIC: Your ten bob? The colonel gave it for our joint consumption. 'Ere, come on.

BLANE: Excuse me. No. How shocking.

ERIC AND ARCHIE GET HOLD OF HIM AND DANCE
HIM OUT SINGING, 'TICKLER'S JAM, TICKLER'S
JAM. HOW I LOVE THAT TICKLER'S JAM'

MARY: So you are a colonel?

REGGIE: Hardly. The boys call me colonel for fun. They think I am different from the usual Tommy. Do you like soldiers?

MARY: I don't know. You are the first I've spoken to.

REGGIE: And yet the ordinary run of er ...

MARY: Ordinary run of what?

REGGIE: Well, you know, maids.

MARY: You mean servant girls?

REGGIE: Well, yes, they simply adore the Military.

MARY: Well, I'm not an ordinary servant girl.

REGGIE: No?

MARY: I don't think you are an ordinary soldier.

REGGIE: I am. I'm a full-blown private. Some people call me a gentleman ranker.

MARY: What does that mean?

REGGIE: One of those who have tasted the good things in the world. One, who, in a moment of patriotism, leaves idleness behind and throws up a life of indolence to rough it in the British Army.

MARY: You ought to be an officer. You speak so nicely.

REGGIE: And you something more than a little servant girl.

MARY: I beg your pardon ... Oh, yes, I am a servant girl. I get my wages. I am at everyone's beck and call, working from dawn to setting sun, and taught to bless those who give me food and shelter, and one dress a year. I am one of the thousands who live upon charity. A poor relation.

REGGIE: Very poor?

MARY: My mother died when I was very young. My father they called a ne'er-do-well. Some say he went abroad. Australia, I think. However, I can't remember him. I can only remember Uncle Enoch brought me up and I've had to work hard ever since I was a little girl.

REGGIE: You must forgive me for thinking you were a servant.

MARY: It's only natural.

ENTER ALICE MAUDE, WIPING HER NOSE ON APRON

ALICE MAUDE: Are they going to 'ave supper?

GENERAL ENTRANCE OF SHOP HANDS, BUSINESS OF
PUTTING UP SHUTTERS AND 'GOOD NIGHTS'.
SYKES REMAINS BEHIND

SYKES: I've been waiting to lock up and go home.

MARY: Well, good night.

SYKES: But what about the PO counter?

MARY: I'll see to that.

SYKES: (CALLING) Jenkins's got the keys. Where's Blane?

MARY: I'm sorry you are late.

SYKES: Yes. I've missed the rehearsal of our Philharmonic Society.

REGGIE: Musical?

SYKES: Aye.. Cornet. Hurry up with those keys.

ALICE MAUDE HELPS HIM ON WITH HIS COAT.
ENTER ARCHIE AND ERIC HOLDING UP BLANE WHO
IS VERY DRUNK, ALL SINGING WAR SONGS

BLANE: I feel fine. I've had two ports.

ARCHIE: (LOOKING AT ALICE MAUDE) Gawd. Venus de Milo.
(SINGS) Tell me, pretty maiden, are there any
more at home like you?

ALICE MAUDE: I'm one of twins.

ARCHIE: Impossible. There can't be two faces like that on
earth. Now then, let's get at it. Mr Sykes, give
us a taste of your cornet. Oh, Venus de Milo, will
you honour me?

ERIC: No. No. Me. (COMEDY BUSINESS, BOWING AND
OFFERING ARM TO ALICE MAUDE)

ALICE MAUDE: Oh, go hon. You soldiers are awful.

ONE SOLDIER SITS DOWN TO PIANO, PLAYS 'WE
WANT TO GO HOME'. SYKES MAKE A NOISE ON
CORNET. LOUD NOISE THEN THEY QUIETEN DOWN
AND STAND ROUND PIANO. REGGIE AND MARY COME
DOWN

REGGIE: And now do you think you will like soldiers?

MARY: I don't know.

REGGIE: Will you let me teach you?

MARY: It's all so strange to me. Are all soldiers like you?

REGGIE: Well, it strikes me, if they saw you, they'd all be like me in thought.

MARY: What do you mean?

REGGIE: That they would all think, like me, that you are one of the sweetest girls I have ever met.

MARY STANDS CONFUSED. ARCHIE COMES DOWN

ARCHIE: Now then, Sykes, come on.

SYKES PLAYS. ARCHIE CATCHES ALICE MAUDE AND DANCES HER ROUND. REGGIE TAKES HOLD OF MARY. ENTER MATILDA. SHE SCREAMS. ERIC TAKES HER, TWISTS HER ROUND. ENTER HARGRAVES. ALL SCREAM. MATILDA FAINTS. ALICE MAUDE FALLS ON HER KNEES. MARY STANDS CONFUSED.

HARGRAVES: What the 'ell's all this?

PICTURE: SOLDIERS LAUGHING

CURTAIN

ACT I SCENE 2

SAME ROOM AS SCENE 1. MATILDA, HARGRAVES, MARY AND BLANE DISCOVERED TO OPEN

HARGRAVES: All quiet at last. I never thought my house would be brought to the level of a pot-house. And as for you, Matilda, at your time of life, flirting with a soldier.

MATILDA: Oh, but let me explain.

HARGRAVES: Explain? What's to explain? My eyes can't deceive me. I saw you in the arms of that soldier ruffian.

VOICES FROM UPSTAIRS SING 'TICKLER'S JAM'
ETC

Tell those ruffians to shut up and send that young chap to me.

EXIT MATILDA.

(TURNING TO MARY) And you, you ungrateful besom, whom I've kept out of charity. Your mother was my sister, but you've got none of her in you. It's your father that's put all this wickedness in your heart.

MARY: Don't dare to speak of my father like that.

HARGRAVES: You dare defend him?

MARY: Yes, as any other girl would. He is my father and he is not here to defend himself.

HARGRAVES: And you, Mr Blane, out you go. Consider yourself discharged.

BLANE: Sacked?

HARGRAVES: Yes. You leave my service. I'll teach you. Now to bed with you.

EXIT BLANE. ENTER REGGIE

REGGIE: I'm afraid I'm the cause of all the trouble in your house.

HARGRAVES: Aye. You come into a respectable man's home ...

REGGIE: Yes, but you don't seem to have much charity about you.

HARGRAVES: What's that you say? I'm a regular Christian man.

REGGIE: Yes, but I suppose charity does not enter into your Christianity.

HARGRAVES: No. I'm a self-made man.

REGGIE: Yes, so I see. But you made a bit of a mess of the workmanship.

HARGRAVES: What? You insult me. Under my own roof. You that have [brought] sin into my house.

REGGIE: What sin? If to laugh, to dance, to be merry be sin, then I am a sinner.

HARGRAVES: You are a sinner. Bringing your play-acting into my house. I know the law is on your side and I can't turn you out. But the law can't compel me to endure your society and I insist on the privacy of my own house. And now straight to bed, all of you.

EXIT ALL EXCEPT REGGIE, HARGRAVES AND MARY

And as for you. If I have cause to complain again, relation of mine though you be, out of this house you go. I'll send you to a reformatory, or a home for fallen women, or some institute under our chapel. Unless I do summat, you'll end your days in shame and disgrace.
(EXIT)

REGGIE: Don't cry little woman. I'm afraid I'm the cause of all this. But I couldn't help being here, could I?

MARY: But I'm glad you came. You seem to have brought light and sunshine into this house.

REGGIE: Goodnight, little Cinderella, goodnight.

STAGE BUSINESS. MARY EXITS

HARGRAVES: (AT DOOR) What, not in bed yet?

REGGIE: I don't want to go to bed.

HARGRAVES: The rule of this house is that everyone is in bed by ten o'clock, and I'm not going to be talked to by a common soldier.

REGGIE: Common soldier? You owe a lot to the common soldier. But for him you would not have a roof over your head.

HARGRAVES: Don't you insult me. I'm a wealthy man. I could buy you up, Mr Shilling-a-day.

REGGIE: No doubt you are wealthy. A general dealer. Yes, man, you have had a fine time. Making fortunes out of the people's food, while we poor devils have been starving in the trench, and our wives suffering at home.

KNOCK AT DOOR. ENTER MR BUTTERWORTH

BUTTERWORTH: Mat. Matilda.

HARGRAVES: What's to do?

BUTTERWORTH: It's about that ...

HARGRAVES: Shut up. (TO REGGIE) And now are you going to bed?

REGGIE: Oh, I'll go to bed but I shall not sleep.

HARGRAVES: Then stop awake, but you'll be in the dark, you and your low companions.

EXIT REGGIE

And now what's to do?

BUTTERWORTH: Here, I've been trying to arrange for those stores, and, here, I've been hauled before the Commander of this regiment. I tell you, man, I don't like it. There's all this stuff going. It's fishy, man. It's fishy.

HARGRAVES: Fishy be damned. I tell you, we are in for making a fortune. We are in for making a fortune of £30,000.

BUTTERWORTH: But where's the stuff going?

HARGRAVES: To Holland.

BUTTERWORTH: But you can't get a clearing note through to Holland.

HARGRAVES: That's no business of mine. I've got the stuff here. I don't like the sound of this at all, but £30,000 is a fortune, and if there's owt wrong, I know nowt about it.

BUTTERWORTH: Here, Hargraves, I'm going. But I don't like it, man, I don't like it. Goodnight. (EXIT)

HARGRAVES: Goodnight. And now I'll go to bed. I'll just take the Bible upstairs, just to bring solace to my soul for I can always find some quotation to bring comfort for the troubles of the moment.
(TURNS OUT LAMP, LOOKS OUT OF WINDOW) By gum, but it's a dark night. (EXIT)

BLACK OUT. REGGIE ENTERS, COMES DOWN, SITS
BY FIRE, LIGHTS HIS PIPE

REGGIE: I can't go to sleep. There's Eric lying on his back just like a pig. Little Cinderella. Poor little girl. (LISTENS) What's that? What's that? Somebody trying to get a message through. (TRIES DOOR) Locked. A grocer's shop and a post office combined. The door's locked. What on earth is that ticking? Perhaps a message from the east coast. It seems as if this place has picked up a message. Keys. Why, they are here. I wonder if this one fits this door. (TRIES KEY IN DOOR. DOOR OPENS.) Yes. (EXIT INTO SHOP)

STONE THROWN AT WINDOW. MARY COMES DOWN IN
NIGHTDRESS, UNLOCKS DOOR. RHODA ENTERS

RHODA: What a time you have kept me waiting. I'm drenched through. Has father missed me?

MARY: No. He thinks you are in bed. Oh, Rhoda, where have you been to this time of night?

RHODA: Oh, shut up! Go to bed. Hush! Don't make a noise.

SMITH: (COMING IN) All right?

RHODA: Yes. Hush!

SMITH: Don't go in yet. I want to watch the beautiful tide come in. Send her to bed but ask her to leave the door open.

RHODA: But what will father say?

SMITH: Ah, he is in bed.

RHODA: I've given my life to you. You will keep your promise? You will make me your wife?

SMITH: Yes. Oh, what a beautiful night and there will be many more glorious nights for you. Champagne, laughter and pleasure.

RHODA: Oh, my head's in a whirl. It must be beautiful to be rich. No more stuffy old shops. Hush!

SMITH: What is it?

RHODA: Nothing. Fancy, I suppose.

SMITH: Get rid of her. Send her to bed.

RHODA: Mary, I'm going as far as the front again. Don't you wait up. Go to bed but leave the door unlocked.

MARY: Will it be safe?

RHODA: Yes, quite. I shall only be just opposite. Go to bed. Don't wait up. (EXIT WITH SMITH)

MARY: (LISTENS THEN GIVES A CRY) Someone is in there. Who can it be?

ENTER REGGIE

Someone working the telegraph. What shall I do? Shall I call Uncle? Oh, my God, what shall I do? Speak. Who are you?

REGGIE: (COMES DOWN) Hush!

MARY: Oh my God, you thief! You've broken open the post office. Put back the money you have stolen.

REGGIE: Stolen? A thief? You don't understand.

MARY: I understand. I find you here like a thief in the night. You've broken open the door of the post office. I know the safe was left open because my cousin went away tonight, without my uncle's knowledge. I know the keys were left in this room.

REGGIE: Hush, little woman.

MARY: Oh, I won't give you away. Only put back the money you have taken and go. I never want to see you again.

REGGIE: I only ask you to trust me. Listen, I know appearances are against me and I value your friendship more than anything on earth. I shall be able to explain all. Only keep silent, I beg of you. Hush.

THEY STAND BEHIND THE CURTAIN. ENTER RHODA AND SMITH

RHODA: And now goodnight.

SMITH: But I want to come in for a moment.

RHODA: No. No. If father hears you ... Where's Mary?

SMITH: Oh, she's gone to bed.

RHODA: Hush. Goodnight.

SHE LETS SMITH OUT, TURNS TO LOOK FOR THE KEY WHICH HE HAS QUIETLY TAKEN OUT OF THE DOOR. AS SHE TURNS, HE OPENS THE DOOR AND COMES QUIETLY DOWN AND HIDES. SHE FASTENS DOOR AND GOES SILENTLY TO BED. SMITH CREEPS ROUND, FINDS POST OFFICE DOOR OPEN AND ENTERS. REGGIE COMES DOWN ON HANDS AND KNEES AND LOCKS HIM IN. MARY COMES DOWN AND HE TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS

MARY: Hush.

HARGRAVES APPEARS AT DOOR WITH CANDLE.
FINDS THEM TOGETHER

HARGRAVES: My God. Out of this house you go tomorrow.

MARY: Uncle, uncle.

REGGIE: Let me explain.

ENTER MATILDA IN NIGHTDRESS AND WITH CURL PAPERS

MATILDA: Lord a mussy. Is the house on fire or is it burglars?

HARGRAVES: Worse, worse. It means that that hussy has brought shame upon this house.

MATILDA: I told you. I always told you what would happen.

HARGRAVES: Not one word. (TURNS TO MARY) I told you tonight what you would come to, but God help me, I didn't think my words would come true so soon, you woman of shame. Oh, me. The future mayor of Sunnycliffe, and deacon of the chapel, that I should be so disgraced and in my own house.

MARY: Uncle.

REGGIE: Sir.

HARGRAVES: Silence, sir. I'll not hear one word before my girl. Rhoda, my lass, get thee back to bed. This is no place for a respectable girl.

MARY: Rhoda. Speak and clear my name.

RHODA: I dare not. You swore not to give me away.

HARGRAVES: Go. Do you hear me? And tomorrow you leave this house and never darken its doors again.

REGGIE: Sir, you are unjust.

HARGRAVES: Don't you dare to speak after what you have done.

REGGIE: Done. Yes, after what I have done.

HARGRAVES: What do you mean?

REGGIE: I mean that I have done my country a service. I have stopped a damnable plot, and saved you from a crime.

HARGRAVES: Crime?

ENTER ERIC AND ARCHIE

REGGIE: Yes, crime. Boys, go in there (POINTING TO SHOP).

HARGRAVES: There. Who is in there?

ERIC AND ARCHIE GO INTO SHOP

REGGIE: Who? Why the man you have treated and trusted as a friend. A Germany Spy.

ERIC AND ARCHIE DRAG OUT SMITH. ALL STAND
ASTONISHED (PICTURE)

ACT 2 SCENE 1

SAME AS ACT 1, SCENE 1. DAYBREAK. MARY
DISCOVERED PACKING BOX ON KNEES. ALICE
MAUDE CRYING

MARY: Have I got all do you think, Alice Maude?

ALICE MAUDE: There ain't very much. Yes. Oh, Miss Mary, what
shall I do without you? The house won't seem the
same without you. Can't you ask your uncle to
forgive you?

MARY: Forgive me? For what? I've done nothing wrong.
I'll live on charity no longer.

ALICE MAUDE: But you've got no money.

MARY: I'll find work somehow. Anything better than
living here. Oh, Alice, he called my father names.

ALICE MAUDE: Where are you going to?

MARY: (RISES) I don't know. I'll make my way to
Bridlington, from there to Hull. There ought to
be plenty of munition work there.

ALICE MAUDE: You'll be a good girl, won't you?

MARY: Oh, you can trust me.

ALICE MAUDE: I'll go to the kitchen and get something to eat.
(EXIT R)

ENTER REGGIE STREET DOOR

REGGIE: Hallo, little woman. So you're going away.
Where?

MARY: To earn my own living. To be independent. I'll
no longer be a poor relation, but have wages for
what I do. I'll no longer be at anyone's beck
and call, simply a drudge, and not a bit of
thanks. Oh, you don't know what I've put up with
here. They hurt me when they spoke of my father.
I never knew him. He may have been a bad man,
but he's my father, and it makes my blood boil
when I hear them. I never knew how lonely I was
until now.

REGGIE: Come, come. You mustn't cry like that. We've all got our troubles in this world. I wish to God I wasn't going away.

MARY: Are you going away?

REGGIE: Expect to be called on any moment. We may leave for overseas any day. I, like you, have been lonely and when I saw you last night, you seemed to be the first true pal I've met. I've always longed for a pal. Shall we be pals, little girl?

MARY: Oh, yes. And when you are away, may I write to you as a friend?

REGGIE: Why not as a sweetheart?

MARY: Sweetheart? Why, I've only known you a few hours.

REGGIE: Why, I feel as if I had known you all my life. I feel as if you were born for me. In fact I feel as if we were born for each other.

MARY: How funny that you came to be billeted last night. Twelve hours ago I'd never met you and now you want me to be your sweetheart.

REGGIE: I don't want you to be my sweetheart. I want you to be my wife.

MARY: Your wife!!!!

REGGIE: Yes, dear. You know it will give me the power to watch over you and you won't be friendless and alone in the world then. You know, Mary, although I am only a common soldier, I have more than enough to keep a wife in comfort. Say yes.

MARY: Well, I'll think about it. But I think I do love you. You'll be good to me, won't you?

REGGIE: Until death do us part. See, here is my ring. It belonged to my mother.

MARY: What does that mean - MIZPAH?

REGGIE: The means Mizpah.

MARY: Mizpah. What does it mean?

REGGIE: May the Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent one from the other.

MARY: How beautiful. And am I to wear this?

REGGIE: Yes, dear.

MARY: And when you are away and I look at this, I will think, 'May the Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent one from the other.' Oh, I know He will.

REGGIE: There, dear, won't you give me a kiss? (STAGE BUSINESS) I've got business now to do. What's the time?

MARY: It's nearly seven.

REGGIE: Seven in the morning and I've not been to bed all night.

ENTER RHODA

RHODA: You'll get into trouble. You've locked Mr Smith up in the front bedroom. Where's the key? Where's the key of the front bedroom?

REGGIE: In my pocket. (EXIT)

RHODA: So you're going away, are you? Don't be a fool, Mary.

MARY: Yes. I am going away. I can't stand this no longer.

RHODA: What were you and that soldier man doing last night?

MARY: Nothing. I came down to let you in and he was sitting up.

RHODA: Did you give the game away and say that I was out with Mr Smith?

MARY: No. I said nothing.

RHODA: You know what it means to me? If he were to know, it would mean merry hell for me. It means that I shall be turned out, kicked out without a penny.

MARY: I'm not going to say anything.

RHODA: That's right. And when you're away, if you're hard up, I'll send you a few bob now and then.

MARY: Thank you, but I shan't need anything.

RHODA: Why did that man lock Smith up in the bedroom?

MARY: Because he found him in the telegraph office that you left open.

RHODA: God. Didn't I lock the door? Oh. He may have gone in there to look for me.

MARY: The soldier man, as you call him, told your father that Mr Smith was a German spy.

RHODA: What?

MARY: Yes, and Billy and Eric locked him in the bedroom and he can't get out because Archie is guarding the door with a loaded gun. I think Eric has gone out to see about things.

RHODA: To see about things? What can he see about? Mr Smith's a very nice man. A very rich man and he is always so polite and gentlemanly, especially to ladies. German spy, indeed. He's interested in England, I know, because he's always asking questions about the coast and the country. Even when motoring he's stopped and taken down sketches of the country he's so fond about it. German spy, indeed. Look here, this soldier man likes you. You must get round him to let Mr Smith go. He doesn't want all this worry. Father doesn't want this bother. Hush. Here's, here's father coming downstairs. Don't you breathe a word about last night.

ENTER HARGRAVES

HARGRAVES: What's all this nonsense about you clearing out?

MARY: You told me to go and I'm going.

HARGRAVES: Where?

MARY: Anywhere. I'm sick of being a drudge.

HARGRAVES: Drudge. You ungrateful hussy. Me that's brought you up, educated you, and this is my reward.

MARY: And I've earned my own living. Oh, you don't know how tired and sick I am of being a poor relation.

HARGRAVES: Oh, you'll come to a bad end. Where's that soldier chap gone?

RHODA: Out. And taken the key of the bedroom with him.

HARGRAVES: What? Oh, if I could only get at him. Here Mary, get me my boots. I'm going down to the town hall. I'm the future mayor of Sunnycliffe and I'll settle things.

RHODA: It's rather early, father. It's only seven.

HARGRAVES: Oh, so it is.

ENTER MATILDA

MATILDA: Nice night we've had. Not a wink of sleep, and that man slamming and jumping about the bedroom. I feel quite faint. Here, Alice Maude, get the breakfast.

HARGRAVES: Breakfast. I don't want any breakfast. The smell of ham and eggs would make me sick.

RHODA: Of course, father, you'll have this soldier man punished for his impertinence.

HARGRAVES: Oh, ah. Yes.

RHODA: I hope they'll shoot him.

ENTER REGGIE

REGGIE: Thank you very much for your good wishes.

HARGRAVES: So you've come back, have you? Where's the key of my bedroom?

REGGIE: Here.

HARGRAVES: Now then, see that door's unlocked at once. I'm going to have you punished for this, my lad. A shilling-a-day man. Coming to my home, upsetting everything and everybody. At ten o'clock this

morning I'm going to your CO. and you'll be punished for what you've done.

REGGIE: Very good. I'll come with you.

HARGRAVES: Yes, I'll see to that. Do you know I'm the future mayor of Sunnycliffe and my word counts in this town.

ENTER SMITH, DISHEVELLED AND ALMOST GROTESQUE, BOMBASTIC

SMITH: By God, I'll make you all suffer for this.

HARGRAVES: Now, Mr Smith, be calm.

SMITH: Calm. The way I've been treated has been disgraceful. I will have the law on you all. And as for that damn soldier.

REGGIE: Not so much of the damn please.

SMITH: I tell you that I will have you punished. A common British soldier, to so insult me. Disgraceful.

RHODA: Most horrible. Have no fear, Mr Smith. We are as much disgusted as you are. This man has brought nothing but trouble since he arrived.

REGGIE: The way you were going on last night, I should think you were bringing trouble on yourself. It's through you this poor girl has been driven from the house.

RHODA: Driven from the house?

REGGIE: Yes. I know you're well camouflaged behind your prayer books and your bibles.

MARY: Hush, Mr Travers.

REGGIE: Oh, I'm not going to give the game away. You are the poor relation but you're the only decent one among this set of rotters.

HARGRAVES: Rotters?

REGGIE: Oh, nothing out of the ordinary. Just the respectable middle-class family. I know you go to church with your bible under your arm. I know you

can find a quotation for any action, however shady it is.

HARGRAVES: He was a stranger and I took him in.

REGGIE: Yes, you did. And you've been sorry for it ever since. It's a mighty lot of groceries you've been buying here, Mr Hargraves, from Mr Smith, the ENGLISHMAN.

HARGRAVES: I buy what I like.

REGGIE: Certainly. But it's very dangerous under the Defence of the Realm Act.

SMITH: Damn you, sir, this is gross impertinence. Mr Hargraves buys from me.

REGGIE: I know he does. Unfortunately to the tune of £15,000 worth of goods. No one knows what they are for, or where they are going. There was a ship waiting outside the harbour to receive the goods. But I can tell you, Mr Smith, the ship was not loaded.

SMITH: Not loaded. What you mean, man?

REGGIE: That I stopped it.

SMITH: You stopped it?

REGGIE: That's what took me to the telegraph office before you arrived. You see, I've been out over a year. In the army I was a telegraphist. I was sitting here last night, quietly. I heard a message coming, so I took it down and sent the reply.

SMITH: What was the message?

REGGIE: The message was that an alien merchant ship was out at sea waiting for instructions. You see they tapped the cable. They expected you to be at the other end but I was there before you and I gave them their instructions.

SMITH: You gave them their instructions?

REGGIE: Yes. NOTHING DOING.

HARGRAVES: If that ship was out of the harbour, there was no harm in my sending groceries to Holland.

REGGIE: No. But I've been to the stores and got a sample of your groceries, and this kind of grocery would mean somebody being shot.

HARGRAVES: Shot?

REGGIE: Yes. Here is an innocent bag of sugar. Open it.

HARGRAVES:) Copper, by God!

BUTTERWORTH:)

REGGIE: Yes. Copper. You poor innocents. Tuck your bible under your arms and hold it fast, and pray on Sunday that the war may finish, but the other six days of the week, profiteer, swindle, cheat, double the price of every article the working man has to use. What does it matter if he has to starve as long as we can make money? Money. Money. It's out of the life-blood and suffering of our fallen soldiers.

HARGRAVES: What? Are you going to report this? I tell you I'm innocent. I thought they were groceries, provisions.

SMITH: I'm going out of here

REGGIE: I say you're not.

SMITH: I say I am. You've all had your say. Now you've got to bring proof I am a German.

HARGRAVES: Copper. Copper. By gum, copper.

SMITH: You are not going to say a word against me. You are going to prove that I am English. You must come with me at once to the town hall. You must tell them all I am English. You, Mr Hargraves. You, Mr Butterworth, and you my dear young lady. We must all fight this common soldier.

REGGIE: Now, Miss Mary, let me give you a hand with your box to the station.

MARY: You are going to see me off?

REGGIE: No, I'm going with you. My pal Eric caught the early train to Bridlington and he's waiting there for us. Come now, Mr Smith. I'm taking you before the Colonel.

SMITH: By God, you're not. Let me out.

REGGIE: Billy, seize him.

STAGE BUSINESS

Now I think we are all right. Mr Hargraves, you will hear from me again and don't forget to mention me in your prayers next Sunday in chapel. Now then, Mr Smith, left turn, quick march to the town hall. And you and I, Mary. Give us your box, old girl. We're going to catch the 8.31 train to Bridlington, to be married by special licence.

INTERVAL

ACT 3

SCENE 1

INTERIOR COTTAGE. MARY'S HOME. ALICE MAUDE
DISCOVERED TIDYING UP. ELAPSE OF ONE YEAR

BILL: (OFF R. SINGING) When you come home, dear.

ALICE MAUDE: There, I think that will do. She'll soon be home
from her work.

ENTER BILL

BILL: Does Mrs Travers live here?

ALICE MAUDE: That voice. I know it.

BILL: What, it's the little girl I met at Sunnycliffe.

ALICE MAUDE: Oh, my 'andsome 'ero.

BILL: Yes. Got seven days' leave and hearing Mrs
Travers was living here, in I called. My word,
do you remember the night when we were billeted
in the shop where you were working?

ALICE MAUDE: What became of the German?

BILL: Oh, he's interned. Enjoying himself as one of
His Majesty's guests.

ALICE MAUDE: Interned. Why, we've got a German prisoners' camp
about a mile away from here and law, it makes us so
nervy. They're an 'orrible lot, I can assure you.
The way they insult the [word missing], it makes
yer sick. They tried to get 'em to work on the
land but ...

BILL: Yes. They've a different way of treating
prisoners in Germany. They starve them there.
It's but a year ago since Reg got married to the
little girl. What's she doing?

ALICE MAUDE: Why, she's working on munitions.

BILL: What a strange marriage it were. I was the best
man. Came out of the registry office at two
o'clock and at two thirty he went in the train.

ALICE MAUDE: They never had a honeymoon, had they?

BILL: Well, I promised Reg when I met him out there that when I got my leave, I'd call on the missus and say he was applying for leave, and if he gets it, he may be home at any time. Then they'll have seven days leave for their honeymoon.

ALICE MAUDE: Hush, here comes Mrs Travers.

ENTER MARY IN MUNITION DRESS

MARY: Oh, I'm tired out. Is tea ready yet?

BILL: You remember me, Mrs Travers?

MARY: Yes, of course I do. Oh, have you brought me news of my boy?

BILL: Yes. Left him out in France yesterday. He expects to get seven days' leave.

MARY: Is he safe and well?

BILL: Yes, mum. But we've just had a hard time out there. It's only those who have been out and gone through it know how to appreciate the green lanes of England again. I'm glad I came to see you. (TO ALICE MAUDE) May I have the pleasure of escorting you to the pictures?

ALICE MAUDE: Well, after I have had my tea.

BILL: Well, I'll call for you about six. Oh, it's good to be home. (EXIT)

MARY: Fancy if my boy comes home. Oh, isn't it glorious. There's been an awful shindy up at the internment camp. The prisoners are getting out of hand.

ALICE MAUDE: Suppose one of them escaped. It makes me shiver down my back to think of it.

MARY: Well, you go up and dress, Alice. If you are going to the pictures with the soldier man, you won't have much time.

EXIT ALICE. ENTER RHODA WITH BABY

RHODA: May I come in?

MARY: Why, it's Rhoda.

RHODA: May I come in here? I heard you were living here. I want to rest a little while.

MARY: Whatever brought you down here?

RHODA: I've been to the internment camp to see the father of my child.

MARY: The German Smith?

RHODA: Yes. Oh, I'm not going to have anyone say a word against him.

MARY: Does your father know?

RHODA: No. I'm hard up, Mary. I haven't a penny in the world. My father has written to say I can go home but I daren't take baby. If he knew, it would kill him.

MARY: Poor little mite. Let me hold him.

RHODA: Mary, I treated you badly in the old days but I've come to you now, as woman to woman. I want to ask, Mary, can I leave my little baby here for a few days while I go and see father?

MARY: Poor little fatherless mite.

RHODA: Mary, if father knew the truth, you know he would cast me off forever. If I can only go back for a little while and get into his good graces again, I could get money and I want money. For both of us

MARY: You love this man?

RHODA: With all my heart and soul. He is the father of my child. Oh, Mary, let me do as I ask. Let me leave baby here for a few days.

MARY: Dear little mite. Why, of course you can. Alice can look after him.

RHODA: I'd only be away a day. God bless you. My baby. There.

MARY: What time are you going back?

RHODA: I'm going to see father tonight. I'll get some money and then I'll be able to take baby away.

ENTER HARGRAVES

HARGRAVES: I had a bit of pressing business in the town and, hearing you were here, I thought I'd just pop in and see you. Rhoda. My lass.

RHODA: Father.

HARGRAVES: No. Before you come near me I want an explanation. Where have you been and what have you been doing a whole year you've been away and no word, too? My only child.

RHODA: I've been out to service, father.

HARGRAVES: Why did you leave home?

RHODA: Because I wanted to be independent. Oh, father, you wouldn't understand.

HARGRAVES: Oh, well. It's mysterious enough. Everything seems to have gone wrong since that night the German was took away.

MATILDA: Yes. We've had our troubles. All on account of that soldier man being billeted in the house. Your father has been heavily fined, only just escaped imprisonment for trading with the enemy.

HARGRAVES: Shut up. I don't want to recall that. I am doing very well now. Provision trade looking up. Well, Rhoda lass, you're welcome to come home. Hello. Who's child is this?

MATILDA: A child. Oh dear. I understood that your husband left you directly after the service. I'm afraid, my brother, our Christian teaching is thrown away.

MARY: This is my house and I will not be insulted.

HARGRAVES: Mary, you're my brother's child and you have been most ungrateful to me. Well, come on, Rhoda. I hope you will be happy on your 12s/6d a week. How much do you get a week for the child?

RHODA: Come along. Father, we'd better be going.

EXIT HARGRAVES AND MATILDA

(TO MARY) For God's sake, not a word about the child. As woman to woman, you will help me, won't you?

MARY: Yes, but it's hard on me. Poor little mite!

RHODA: Oh, my baby. I am only leaving you for a little while.

MARY: I wonder if Alice Maude understands babies. I don't. Poor little mite. I know you can't help your father being a German. Come along, I'll take you to my room. I shan't be long, Rhoda.

BLACKOUT. MYSTERIOUS MUSIC. SMITH RUSHES IN AT DOOR

RHODA: Hush. Who's there?

SMITH: Hush. It's I, Smith.

RHODA: You.

SMITH: Yes. I've escaped. I cut the wire. There was a shindy but I got through. I want some money. You told me you were coming here. I followed. They've not missed me yet. You've got to help me to get away.

RHODA: I haven't a penny in the world.

SMITH: Then get it.

RHODA: How? Hush. She's upstairs.

SMITH: Who?

RHODA: My cousin, the wife of the man who gave you away that night.

SMITH: Damn him. Strafe him. I owe everything to him, the blasted Englishman. If I could only get my fingers round his throat, I'd kill him.

RHODA: Hush. I'm making use of her. She's promised to take care of the child. Our child.

SMITH: If I get away to Germany, I'll find means to send for you. Get you over by Holland.

RHODA: You'll marry me?

SMITH: When I come back to England with the Kaiser's army.

RHODA: That will never be.

SMITH: But you do love me, Rhoda? You are going to help, aren't you, for the sake of your little child?

RHODA: For the sake of our child, yes. The child will be safe here while I go home to father and get some money. I haven't a penny.

SMITH: Something must be done to get me out of this.

RHODA: Hush. Who's that? My God, it's Reggie Travers coming up the lane.

SMITH: If I could only find the means to punish him.

RHODA: I'll find the means myself. Quick, hide in there.

SMITH HIDES. REGGIE ENTERS

REGGIE: Here I am, Mary. Mary. You ...

RHODA: Yes

REGGIE: What are you doing here? Where is Mary, my wife?

RHODA: Oh, you come home unexpected.

REGGIE: The joy will be all the greater for her. Oh, I'm longing to hold her in my arms again. My wife, I'll call her.

RHODA STOPS HIM

RHODA: No, no. Don't go that way.

REGGIE: Why not?

RHODA: Because there is someone here.

REGGIE: What do you mean?

RHODA: You see you are unexpectedly home.

SMITH CREEPS TO THE DOOR, GETS OUT, BANGS DOOR. REGGIE RUSHES UP TO WINDOW

REGGIE: My God, a man. Who's that?

RHODA: I tell you you were not expected home.

REGGIE: Who was that man?

RHODA: It has been known when soldiers have been away at the war, that their wives have not been true to them. Your wife ...

REGGIE: Don't dare to say a word against her.

RHODA: Call her down. I think you will have a little surprise, when you see your child. (LAUGHS) Now I am sufficiently avenged for what he has made me suffer. (EXIT)

REGGIE: Great heavens, what a homecoming. Her child, that man in her house. My God!

MARY HEARD SINGING OFF 'WHEN YOU COME HOME,
DEAR'. MARY ENTERS

MARY: Reg.

REGGIE: Yes, Reggie. Come home to find my wife has been unfaithful. My God, men have been known to kill their wives, and I don't wonder at it.

MARY: Reg. Reg. What are you saying? Listen, dear. I have been a good, faithful wife to you, I have. I have. Only hear me explain. This child ...

REGGIE: No. We parted at the church door. You were my wife in name only and I come back to meet you with a child in your arms and a man in the house. By God, your paramour.

MARY: Reg, I never thought that you, my husband, could so insult me. You dare, you dare to think that of me. I'll plead no more if that is what your love is worth. You accuse me.

REGGIE: You do not deny.

MARY: My pride prevents me. If that is all you trust in me, go. I'll live my life alone.

REGGIE: Yes, I'll go. God help me, you need not be afraid I shall ever come back. Goodbye. This time, forever. (EXIT)

MARY: (REALISES WHAT SHE HAS DONE) Reg, Reg. My love. Come back. (FALLS C)

BLACK OUT

ACT 3

SCENE 2

COUNTRY LANE, SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE. ENTER
BILL.

BILL: Now where on earth is the road to Piccadilly? I've walked about three miles in the blooming mud and lost my blinking regiment. Why, what's that?

ERIC: (OFF) I tell you I don't know yer. I don't want to know yer. (ENTERS FOLLOWED BY LITTLE GERMAN)

GERMAN: Kamerad. Kamerad.

ERIC: I tell you I don't know yer. I haven't been introduced to you. And I won't know yer.

THE GERMAN RUBS HIS STOMACH

Yes, I know you're hungry but you're not going to have any of my iron rations.

GERMAN: I will give you watch, chain if you will take me prisoner.

ERIC: Ah, you're not a bad judge, boy.

BILL: No. They've heard all about the luxuries of the English camps.

ERIC: Yes, dammit. They've got [better] food and treatment than they ever had in their life. They know it's a blooming picnic and rest cure.

GERMAN: Ach, I am hungry. I give you my boots to take me prisoner.

ERIC: Oh, chuck it. Say, Bill, have you heard the news?

BILL: No. What is it?

ERIC: Poor old Reginald is missing.

BILL: Missing?

ERIC: Yes. They say he is a German prisoner.

BILL: German prisoner? Gawd help him. But he'd put up a big fight before [being] taken.

ERIC: He did. And he never would have been taken but he was badly wounded. I tell you, I saw the fight. The captain was killed, then the lieutenant took his place, and was bowled over. Reginald was sergeant and fought like hell but there wasn't a man in that fight but wasn't wounded or taken prisoner.

BILL: Poor old Reginald.

ERIC: Yes. And when I look at you, you scum, and think how you all treat our men, I'd like ...

GERMAN: Kamerad. Kamerad.

ERIC: Kamerad be damned. Let's be getting on. Say how do you sing that song of hate of yours?

GERMAN: Hoch. No.

ERIC: Sing it.

GERMAN: We hate you in the morning, we hate you in the night. But no, I do not hate, I love the English. I was in Belgium, beautiful Belgium. We blow up cathedrals. Bang. We kill little children. Hoch, it was funny.

BILL: What's that? (HITS HIM)

ERIC: (CLUTCHES HOLD OF HIM) Look here. If you want to save your skin, listen. A pal of mine was interned in Germany. He was taken last Tuesday. Where would he go?

GERMAN: He would not be taken very far. He would be near.

ERIC: Near?

GERMAN: Yes. In that camp over there, about two miles away.

ERIC: Say, Bill, what an adventure. If we could only get to him to help him.

BILL: It would be impossible.

ERIC: Nothing is impossible when a pal's in danger. Come on, my matey German, we're going to make use of you. Lead the way to that damned camp and don't you dare to play us false. Come on, Bill.

We're going to have a big shot to try and save our gentleman Tommy.

BILL: Right ho. I'm with you to the death.

EXEUNT

END OF SCENE

ACT 3 SCENE 3

A BARBED WIRE INTERNMENT CAMP, GERMANY.
PRISONERS LYING ABOUT. SENTRY ON GUARD.
ENTER SMITH WITH A GERMAN OFFICER

SMITH: What are those men lying down for?

SENTRY: They have been flogged, sir.

SMITH: Flogged. What have they done?

SENTRY: Said they were too weak to work on the land.

SMITH: Too weak eh? (LAUGHS)

SENTRY: Soup, sir? Nice thin soup?

VOICES OFF SINGING 'THE DEAR HOMELAND'.

SMITH: Why do we feed them at all? The great joy is to see them starving and dying in front of our eyes. These damned English. You may starve them, take their parcels from them, torture them, but you can't curb them. They won't give in but they fight, fight to the end. Ah, who have we here?

SENTRY: A lad that's been working and he's refused. Says he's too ill, so we flogged him.

SMITH: Too ill, eh? Here, get up.

BLANE: I can't. I can't. Oh, the pain.

SMITH: Can't, eh? So you refused to work?

BLANE: I -, I -. By God. It's Smith.

SMITH: Smith.

BLANE: Yes. You remember me. Blane. You are the German what was taken at Sunnyclyffe. But you were good to me in them days. Can't you help me now?

SMITH: Good to you, you fool? I was good to you to get you in my power but I was prevented by that cursed Englishman.

BLANE: That cursed Englishman is here.

SMITH: Here?

BLANE: Yes. Look, he's lying over there. I think he's dying, poor chap. They flogged him and took his food away. Oh, God, is there no help for us?

SMITH: So I've got you now in my power. I never dreamt of anything so good. But for you, that consignment of copper would have reached Germany. But for you, I should never have been interned in that cursed camp. Get up, you damned English cur.

REGGIE: Oh God, I feel so weak.

SMITH: Weak, eh? You'll be worse before I've finished with you. Look into my eyes. You remember me, don't you? You remember that night at Sunnycliffe when you gave me away? But for you, that consignment of copper would have reached Germany. And we want copper. I should have been decorated but now I've got you in my power, I'll make your life a hell. Do you remember the night you got back on your seven days' leave? A happy man, eh? But you saw someone in your house. It was me. Your wife did not know I was there and the child you found was my child.

REGGIE: Your child?

SMITH: Yes, and Rhoda was its mother. The woman you railed and cursed at was doing an act of charity by shielding Rhoda from her father.

REGGIE: My God.

SMITH: Yes. While you are lying here, you will have time to think of it. To think you will never get back, never be able to tell her that you know the truth. And she is breaking her heart in England, suffering from a wrong inflicted on her by you.

REGGIE: You cur. (GOES TO STRIKE HIM)

SMITH: Bind that man's arms.

SENTRY DOES SO

This is how I'm going to treat you daily. I'm going now to write home to England. Perhaps next week they'll hear of your death.

REGGIE TRIES TO FREE HIMSELF. SMITH HITS HIM ON THE FACE, LAUGHS AND EXITS

1ST P: Bear up, matey, bear up.

REGGIE: Oh my God, man, you don't understand.

1ST P: Don't show them you feel it. Don't show them you're suffering. Listen to the boys singing.

REGGIE: Yes. You're right, man, that's the spirit. They shan't see me suffer, and with God's help, I'll get out of this. I'm going to climb that barbed wire.

1ST P: You'll be shot.

REGGIE: Better to be shot trying to reach those I love than to die in this hell.

ENTER SMITH

SMITH: Sentry, I want that man put in solitary confinement and see that he has no food till I give orders. I've not finished with you yet. I'll make you suffer for the blow you struck me. I'll kill you, do you hear, but I shan't kill you quickly.

REGGIE: By God, this is beyond all human endurance.

DURING THIS BLANE HAS CREPT DOWN AND UNDONE HIS HANDS. VOICES OFF SINGING 'GOD SAVE THE KING'. REGGIE GOES FOR SMITH, STRUGGLES AND GETS REVOLVER. KNOCKS HIM DOWN. OTHER MEN OVERPOWER SENTRY

What's that? The boys are cheering. They're singing 'God Save the King'. They're giving us God Speed.

BILL AND ERIC CREEP ON AT BACK OF WIRE. GENERAL FIGHT. REGGIE CLIMBS OVER WIRE.

END OF ACT

ACT 4

MARY'S COTTAGE. ALICE MAUDE DISCOVERED TAKING WEDDING DRESS OUT OF BOX, SINGING 'WHEN YOU COME HOME'. ENTER BILL

BILL: Alice Maude, my angel, I've got my discharge. I've done my three years overseas. Now for the happy day.

ALICE MAUDE: Bill, it seems too good to be true. Us married. I can't get used to the idea.

BILL: Oh, you'll get used to it soon enough. But how's the missus getting on? Is she bearing up through all the trouble?

ALICE MAUDE: Bearing up, poor little soul, she's breaking her heart. All through a lot of liars. That I should call them such things.

BILL: Liars. What do you mean?

ALICE MAUDE: First comes her father, sees her with a baby, makes out it's hers. Then comes her husband and accuses her something awful, won't take no explanation but goes off and leaves her to face it and break her heart alone.

BILL: A baby. Whose baby?

ALICE MAUDE: That she won't say. But it's some poor little mite wot 'asn't no father and the mother seems to be someone she is protecting at the cost of her own happiness.

BILL: What become of it?

ALICE MAUDE: I don't know. One day when I was out, it disappeared and all I could get out of her was its mother had fetched it. Of course, she would come too late, when her husband had gone off and no knowing where to find him.

BILL: Don't know where to find him, eh? Well, my duck, look here. You just get on with your work. I've a little bit of business to attend to. I think I know where to clap my eyes on him and that ain't a thousand miles from here. (EXIT)

ALICE MAUDE: Oh what can he mean? (TAKES UP DRESS) Oh, isn't it lovely! Upstairs you go in my bottom drawer.
(EXIT)

RHODA AT DOOR, VERY POOR AND ILL

RHODA: May I come in? No one here. I had to come. I couldn't keep away. (GOES TO STAIRS, CALLS) Mary. Mary.

ENTER MARY

MARY: Who is it? What do you want? You. How dare you come here? Do you know what you have done? Wrecked my life, ruined my home, made the husband I love think I was a ...

RHODA: Hush, Mary. Oh, I know. I did it all for revenge. I hated him for injuring the man I loved but when I had done it, I was afraid. And then my baby died and he, oh God, he deserted me. Left me to starve. I think I'm dying, Mary, but I could not die without asking your forgiveness.

MARY: Forgiveness? There is no forgiveness for a crime like yours. I am glad. Yes, glad, that you have suffered as you have made me. Yes, I was an easy tool to wreak your vengeance on but you will not find me easy to win forgiveness from. Get out of this house.

RHODA: No, no, Mary. Is there nothing I can do to atone?

MARY: Atone? Can you give me back my lost name? Can you restore to me the husband I have lost? Can you give me back the last year of misery I have suffered? You're like all your class when you have done all the wrong you can. You think it is easy to atone.

RHODA: Mary, Mary. Don't turn me away without one word.

MARY: Not one. Go.

RHODA GOES TO THE DOOR

RHODA: My God, your husband. At last. At last I can atone.

ENTER REGGIE

REGGIE: Mary. (TO RHODA) What are you doing here?

RHODA: Making what small reparation I can for the past. Mr Travers, your wife is innocent. It was my child that she was helping. It was the father of my child you saw leave this house.

REGGIE: Your confession comes too late. I heard all from your betrayer. Mary, my wife, can you ever forgive the wrong I did you? Oh, when I think of what a blind, jealous fool I was. The last year has been such misery to both of us. I hardly dared ask your forgiveness.

MARY: You are my husband. The one man I have loved in all the world and that great love calls for forgiveness. My dear, my dear, let us forget the cruel past and start with God's help.

RHODA: The work I came to do is finished. I will go out of your lives forever.

MARY: No, stay. Ah, no. In my great happiness I cannot let you go without one kind word. Goodbye, Rhoda. God forgive you, as I do and help you to lead a new and happier life. (STAGE BUSINESS)

ENTER HARGRAVES

HARGRAVES: Mary, Mary. I had to come and tell you I've heard the news. I'm called up. I'm going away. Fancy a man at my time of life being called up. Rhoda. Mary.

MARY: Uncle. You were unforgiving in the past but forgive, as I do.

HARGRAVES: My child.

RHODA: Father. (STAGE BUSINESS AND EXIT)

REGGIE: Mary. The darkness has passed, the future is all before us. God bless, my dear wife.

MARY: My husband.

CURTAIN