

## CHARACTERS

ARDY FAFIRSIN, a wealthy landlord  
ALICE FAFIRSIN, his young wife  
THOMAS MOSBY, her lover  
CECILY MOSBY, his sister, maid to Alice  
SHERIFF GODOLPHIN  
CURATE PRUNE/A FERRYMAN  
SEXTON CULLEN/GREENE, a grocer  
BLACK WILL, a fearsome murderer  
SHAKEBAG, his accomplice  
MICHAEL, servant to Ard  
MAG McREAD, tenant to Ard  
SUE McREAD, her sister

## SETTING

Mythological Tudor England. A set of broken Elizabethan architecture, suggesting the fragmented insides and outsides of houses, town, woods, fields and fences, a graveyard, rooms and benches, a gate, a door, a bed, a table, a cupboard large enough to walk into. All locations are present at once—there must be no pause for set changes of any kind. Characters will often remain onstage during scenes in which they are not

directly involved. The transitions from scene to scene should flow naturally and easily in full view of the audience—no blackouts, there should never be a moment in which we have to stop in the dark and wait. As the Sheriff speaks we are always watching the characters move into place for the scene that is to follow, unless of course they are already there, in which case, good for them.

On February 15, 1551, more or less, Thomas Arden was brutally murdered by his young wife and others, an event subsequently immortalized in Holinshed's *Chronicle* and later in an anonymous play once attributed to Shakespeare. This play is about someone else.

won't you be  
me valentine  
me valentine  
me valentine  
today for just  
today my love  
today for just  
today.

(All the PEOPLE are in place, her song ends, and just the scattered BIRDSONG.)

ARD. Birdsong whence the birdsong what? Spring again the birdies is yemen in and I am oh so dead my love yes I am rather dead.

ALICE. Sunday eve saint valentine, spater of blood in the parlor.

SHERIFF. Come we to the inn they call the Bunch of Grapes to look for murderers.

MAG. Foolscap.

SUE. Foolscap.

SEXTON. Post mortem—

CURATE.—and augmentations.

ALICE. Begin.

MOSBY. And end, my pretty one.

ARD. And yet begin again.

BLACK WILL. Aw, what is all this shiz?

SHAKEBAG. Be easy, Willy. Soon.

BLACK WILL. Pop faces. Dingle lickers.

SHAKEBAG. Easy, I say.

BLACK WILL. May the pig urinate in your Bosco.

CURATE. All in good time.

SUE. All in.

MAG. Good time.

MOSBY. And shall we wish a vengeance on his fatbears and his bears?

MICHAEL. And when did Will the Shakebag Black become to Londonderryo?

ALICE. Help me. In prison am I dying, love, in rare confusion. The iron bars make prison not, the prison is my body, love, the prison is my head.

MAG. Lovesong. Lovesong.

SUE. Twisted and begin.

MOSBY. Began.

MICHAEL. Began.

SEXTON. Again.

CURATE. World without end.

ALICE. We mend.

## Scene 2

As the SHERIFF speaks the PEOPLE form the scene, ALICE ARD and TOMMY MOSBY in bed under a pile of quilts.

SHERIFF. The thing began when Alice Ard, young wife to Ardy Fafrsin, enflamed by passion licking at the nether regions of her soul for Tommy Mosby, brother of her maid sweet Cecily, sits one sinful day in bed with Thomas and does speak—

ALICE. Oh, Tommy?

ALICE. You wouldn't need a job. I have my granny's money yet untouched, it isn't much, but we could live on it, and, anyway, when he is dead, he'll leave me all his wealth, the man is rich. He's rich.

MOSBY. Alice, I can't. I simply can't.

ALICE. You never loved me, did you?

MOSBY. Yes I did. I do. I always loved you.

ALICE. Then kill my husband.

~~MOSBY. I will not kill anyone.~~

~~ALICE. Pig's pizzle. Sheep's head. Horse tongue.~~

~~Worm. Worm food.~~

~~MOSBY. Take care. You go too far.~~

~~ALICE. Licksaddle. Cow flap. Worm flap.~~

MOSBY. If you want him dead so badly, kill him yourself, why don't you?

ALICE. I might. I think I will.

MOSBY. The woman jokes. I hopes.

ALICE. You think I can't.

MOSBY. I hope you won't.

SHERIFF. But Alice had some gumption in her pocket.

ALICE. I can feel the flames. Already I can feel the flames upon me, Tommy. Oh. She must needs go the Devil drives, is that not so?

MOSBY. Come back to bed, my love.

ALICE. Tommy, don't you worry. Your little Alice Ann will be just fine. She knows what she's about. Oh, yes she does. For she's the smartest girl that ever was.

SHERIFF. Now in this husband-killing Mistress Ard was something of a novice, she'd had no real experience in murder previous to this, but as a right industrious and clever woman, she did set out to do the matter properly,

and thus did Alice Ard bethink herself to go to Greene the grocer and apothecary man.

*(As the SHERIFF speaks we watch ALICE move into Greene's shop—actually perhaps he has wheeled up or merely opened the panels of a fruitwagon thing—.)*

Scene 3

*Greene's shop. ALICE is nervous. Other PLAYERS pass by in the street now and then, examine fruit perhaps, as the scene goes along.*

*from Greene  
\$ cherries  
them  
Special Fruit*

ALICE. Greene—

SHERIFF. —she says, there in his shop—

ALICE. I want some red ripe cherries, please, and passion fruit, and two firm melons, and a peach, some poison and four strawberries.

GREENE. Did you say poison?

ALICE. And four red strawberries, the kind that one can crush against one's mouth. You DO have poison? I heard that you have poison. Cecily, my maid, once said, I think it was a Tuesday, said—

GREENE. What kind of poison do you want?

ALICE. Rat poison. It's for rats.

~~GREENE. I know my cherries. I've had many cherries, every shape of suckly melons, for they come in many shapes, and the passion fruit. I've sold my share of peaches, oh, the peaches, yes, and strawberries, I've crushed~~

~~GREENE: Or you'll be sorry.~~

~~ALICE: I'll be sorry.~~

GREENE. You're not nervous, are you?

ALICE. No, I'm not nervous, no. (*Starting out the wrong way.*)

~~GREENE: Then don't go out the cupboard.~~

~~ALICE: I'll go out the door.~~

~~GREENE: A wise choice.~~

ALICE. (*Turning from the cupboard.*) Yes, I know. Well, ~~yes.~~ Hello.

GREENE. Goodbye.

ALICE. Of course. It's just a rat. That's all it is. It's just a little rat.

GREENE. Of course.

ALICE. Of course.

SHERIFF. So home she goes all troubledly but still intent to do, alas, the bloody deed.

Scene 4

ALICE moves into her kitchen, trying to keep her instructions straight, distracted and terrified, but determined.

ALICE. Take the poison in the fruit, put the cupboard in the milk, take the bowl in the poison put the rat in the porridge, take the—

ARD. (*Entering, to kiss her.*) Good morning, Alice.

ALICE. (*Greatly startled, jumping.*)  
AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH.

ARD. I'm sorry, dear, I've startled you.

ALICE. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

ARD. Uh, well, I'd rather hoped for breakfast.

ALICE. Oh. Of course. Well, sit down, then. I'm making it.

ARD. All right.

ALICE. All right.

ARD. All right.

ALICE. (*Mumbling to herself as SHE wanders back and forth in the kitchen.*) Porridge mumble mumble porridge. Mumble bowl in the mumble.

ARD. I beg your pardon?

ALICE. (*Snapping.*) WHAT?

ARD. I'm sorry, dear, I didn't hear you.

ALICE. I said, WHAT? I just said WHAT. I think you're going deaf.

ARD. Am I? Perhaps I am. Where did you go so early this fine morning, love?

ALICE. I went—to buy—a—

~~ARD: A cow?~~—I went to—buy a—cow.

ALICE. A goose. To buy a goose.

ARD. To buy a goose?

ALICE. Yes, GOOSE. To buy a goose.

ARD. I see no goose.

ALICE. It isn't here. It flew away.

ARD. It flew away?

ALICE. It wasn't dead. Well, I presume it wasn't dead. The dead do seldom fly, excepting souls to Heaven, praise the Lord—

ARD. That's true, my dear, I can't deny that's true.

~~THIS PORRIDGE. EAT IT.~~ (SHE controls herself. Sweetly.) I lost my head. Sorry. I am fine. How are you?  
ARD. I'll eat the porridge gladly, love. You know I love your porridge.

ALICE. I know you do. I know.

ARD. And I'd do anything to make you happy.

ALICE. I know you would.

~~ARD. When I awake, you know, in the morning, my mind full of rents and laws and such, and see you sleeping there curled up with shoulders bare and white, your arms over your breasts, you have such lovely breasts, I want to cry, I am so grateful, a common sort of man of middle age with wife so young and fat, I know I have been blessed by God when I do look at you, my love, and feel you warm against my ribs.~~

ALICE. ~~(In a shaky voice, barely getting the words out.)~~ So you don't like the porridge then?  
ARD. I'm sure I will

(*HE begins to eat, ALICE watching, eyes big, hands clucking her dress.*)

SHERIFF. And Ard begins to eat. But she had put, alas, the milk in bowl, and then the poison, backwardslike.

ARD. (*Aghast, choking, trying not to make faces.*) It's—quite unique.

ALICE. I knew you wouldn't like it.

ARD. I like it, oh, I like it, it's only that, um, don't you think the color's odd?

ALICE. No. I don't think it's odd. What's odd about the color?

ARD. Well, it's blue.

ALICE. What's wrong with blue? You like the color blue.

ARD. Not in my porridge. And it tastes—

ALICE. Like what? It tastes like what?

ARD. Well, frankly, my sweet, it tasteth a bit like— pig flop.

ALICE. You mislike my porridge.

~~ARD. But the pig flop, to be precise. Not that I'm not enjoying it, in a way.~~

~~SHERIFF. And seeing that the Ard misliked the taste and color of—and with the night—the mess she made—~~

ALICE. WELL, ALL RIGHT THEN, GO FIND

PORRIDGE, EAT A BREAKFAST, MAKE YOUR OWN

SHERIFF. So Alice feigns a fit of peak and seizes the

bowl of poison muck and pours the mess upon the floor forthwith and splat—(SHE does so. Splat.)—and silent then was Ard in all amazement.

(*THEY look at the mess on the floor.*)

~~ARD. It's on my shoe. My shoe is blue. It even smelleth like unto pig flop. In a good way, of course.~~

ALICE. OUT. GET OUT. GET OUT OF HERE.

ARD. Yes, dear, all right, I'll go, I've rents I must collect, persons to evict, debtors to imprison. I hope you're feeling better soon.

ALICE. I hope so, too, but to be frank, I doubt it very much.

~~ARD. (Moving to comfort her.) Poor thing.~~  
ALICE. GET OUT.

~~ARD. Not horses. Michael. Women. I understand horses.~~

~~MICHAEL. Well, we do the best we can, sir.~~

~~ARD. Yes, but it's not enough. God, the world's begun to spin.~~

MICHAEL. Is it your breakfast, sir? Do it not sit ye well? What did you have?

ARD. Blue porridge, Mike, was all I et, and now I can't decide if I had rather poop or puke.

SHERIFF. And by and by poor Ardy Faf was fallen in the most extremest purging, up and downwards both.

ARD. *(Running back and forth holding first his stomach, then his mouth, then his stomach.)* Oh, my. Oh, dear. Oh, no. Ygad.

MICHAEL. What is it, sir?

ARD. The Devil curses me in both directions, Michael, oh, uh, oh, uh oh, uh oh—*(HE disappears into the bushes.)*

CURATE. *(Coming out to make a special note to the audience.)* Which is of course to fulfill that which is writ of old, which is, to wit, that the way up and the way down are the same way, so, amen.

SEXTON. Amen.

ARD. *(From the bushes.)* Amen.

SHERIFF. And so did Ard arrive at Canterbury town a sadder but a wiser man, undead because she had forgot to put the milk therein before the poison so the lasie was vile and Ardy had not et enough to die, but made him twelve pounds lighter, and ever after Ardy did swear off porridges and all the feed. And Alice meanwhile back abed with Mosby did lament her ill success.

WORSELS RUN OFF TO GET

## Scene 6

*ALICE in bed with MOSBY.*

ALICE. It did not work.

SHERIFF. Says Alice, once again post-diddle, as before.

MOSBY. I did the best I could, love. I've had a busy day.

ALICE. No, I don't mean that. I did it, Tom.

MOSBY. Did what?

ALICE. I poisoned him.

MOSBY. You're joking.

ALICE. No, I did.

MOSBY. Oh, no.

ALICE. He isn't dead, though. Got a card by post today. Picture of Chaucer. Wish you were here. Love and kissing from your sweetie, Ard.

MOSBY. I hope you're sorry.

ALICE. Yes, I am, I'm very sorry, love, but do not fret, we'll get the bugger next time.

MOSBY. Alice, NO.

ALICE. Now don't go fishy on me, Tommy. We must kill this rat and that is that.

MOSBY. But should we? Can we? Is it crickets? Will they catch us? Is the Sheriff watching us? What are you doing under there?

ALICE. I'm feeling with your doodle, Tom, what do you think?

ALICE. I have forgot. But I will give you nothing till the creature turns up toes and croaks.

GREENE. It's not my fault he hasn't

ALICE. I don't care. Now, listen, Master Greene, I do not like this poison, and I wonder if you might not find some other means to squash this roach for me and gain your just reward.

GREENE. Oh, Alice, let me touch you just this once there once just once your lovely, lovely—

ALICE. SIR. Your vegetable-picking fingers OFF my <sup>we</sup> ~~person~~ ~~feet~~ ~~with~~

GREENE. I long to slip a carrot briefly in your basket.

ALICE. NO.

GREENE. Is this at least negotiable?

ALICE. Only if you assist in this endeavor.

GREENE. All right. I know a way. The vilest, lowest, most depraved of butchers in all England is Black Will McGump. ~~To him will go the money for disposing of this rat, and just for me the bonus of your person, legs and sheit—~~

ALICE. You can get this man right soon?

GREENE. I can. But please be sure it's what you want. He is a bloody, fearsome thing. There is no going back once we have set this clockworks running, love.

ALICE. Get him.

GREENE. We have a deal? And you are sure?

ALICE. We do. I am.

GREENE. It's done. You won't be sorry.

ALICE. Yes I will.

GREENE. Just one small kiss to seal the bargain?

ALICE. NO. NO KISSING, SIR. (SHE whacks him violently over the head with a two-hand cabbage shot.) Till after it is done. Good day.

SHERIFF. And off to London goeth Greene to meet the horrid, stinking, diabolic swine they called Black Will.

Scene 8

*Near London, the Rooky Wood. BIRD sounds, ominous. BLACK WILL sits eating chicken with his cohort SHAKABAG. He is a greasy performance. GREENE stands nervously to one side.*

get at least  
and form  
3 row  
a nice boy

SEC 4  
FOR  
YET  
S.D.  
SIS

BLACK WILL. Something you want from me, best puke it right out or go away. I ain't got time to fart about with grocers. You come here to the Rooky Wood, you'd best know why.

GREENE. I need somebody killed.

BLACK WILL. Um hmmm.

GREENE. Right quickly.

BLACK WILL. Ummmm.

SHAKABAG. What will ye pay?

GREENE. Six pounds.

BLACK WILL. Ten.

GREENE. Seven.

BLACK WILL. Ten.

GREENE. Nine.

BLACK WILL. Eleven.

GREENE. Ten.

BLACK WILL. Fifteen





SHERIFF. And so the party doth break up, and they prepare to go upon their ways, and I myself, out for a stroll, then happen by.

ARD. Hello, Sheriff.

MAG and SUE. Hello, Sheriff, sir.

SHERIFF. Hello—my friends. If ye be walking home, I'll walk along with you. Can't be too careful, nighs.

ARD. Why, thank ye, Sheriff. But please wait a moment, I've a private deed to do.

BLACK WILL. Here he comes at last. I'll kill him now.

SHAKEBAG. No, no, he's got the Sheriff with him.

ARD. I'm just about to burst meself.

BLACK WILL. Oh, no.

*(Here ARD goeth to the hoysenberry bushes and pisheth prodigiously, with the violence of a firehose, upon Black Will and Shakebag.)*

ARD. What a relief. Though I am always happy for your company, Sheriff, I do not think there be many cutthroat persons in these parts, but only good, clean, honest folk.

SHERIFF. You may be right. So, let's be off, and sing songs on our way. Yo ho.

*(THEY go. BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG emerge from the bushes, dripping wet. THEY stand there.)*

BLACK WILL. Umrr mmmr mrr.

SHAKEBAG. Easy, Will.

BLACK WILL. URRRRRRRRRR.

MICHAEL. *(Returning. HE almost stumbles into them.)* Oh, excuse me, sirs, I just—*(Getting a whiff of her, walks wide around them.)* You guys been swimmin' in horse pish, or what?

BLACK WILL. *(Going after him like a crazed gorilla.)* ARRRRRRRGGGGHHHHHHHHHH.

*(SHAKEBAG restrains him. MICHAEL runs off.)*

SHAKEBAG. Easy, Willy, easy. We will get him. We'll kill him several times, but easy does it now, my friend.

BLACK WILL. *(Sullen, all passion spent for the moment.)* I always liked me work before. I don't like this. I don't like this at all. I will slaughter this one slowly, slicing off little strips of flesh to feed the dogs. I do, egg.

SHERIFF. And word gets back to Alice Ard that once again the thing's been botched.

### Scene 10

*(ALICE and MOSBY walking in the churchyard, night.)*

ALICE. They botched it, Tommy. It's been botched again. I think if there is botching to be done, I might as easily be botching it myself.

MOSBY. Alice, my love—

MICHAEL. It hath a strong gate, sir.

GREENE. And who does keep the key that fits the gate?

MICHAEL. I do, sir.

GREENE. And do you think you might forget to lock the gate tonight?

MICHAEL. I'd never do that, sir.

GREENE. As a special favor to me, might you forget?

MICHAEL. No, I could not.

GREENE. As a special favor to Mrs. Fafirsin, then?

MICHAEL. No sir, and begging your pardon, sir, and no disrespect intended, but why would anybody want the gate unlocked at night, that was in their right mind, sir?

GREENE. We're planning a surprise for Ard, your master.

MICHAEL. Surprise? What kind of thing is this surprise?

GREENE. I couldn't tell you, Michael, for then if Ard did ask you, you'd be obliged to tell him, and it would spoil the fun of it. You see?

MICHAEL. I'm sorry sir, I can't.

GREENE. Michael, do you see you big dark fellow lurking there? (*HE points out BLACK WILL, sneering behind his cloak with SHAKEBAG.*)

MICHAEL. The one that smells as if he swum in horse pish?

GREENE. That's the one. Now, Michael, would you do it as a special favor to him?

MICHAEL. To him? I wouldn't cross the street for him, except to get upwind.

GREENE. But you see, Michael, my friend, that good fellow there is much desirous of surprising your master

Ard, and if you do not leave the gate unlocked for him, that fellow and his friend will be upset with you. He is abrupt of temper now and then, and bites the heads off chickens.

MICHAEL. He is a horse pish geek?

GREENE. Also a bit unhinged about the brain area, though he means well to Ard. Now, leave the gate unlocked, and here is a gift from me to you for doing this small service. (*HE gives Michael money.*)

MICHAEL. I wouldn't want nothing hurtful to happen to my master, sir. He's been so good to me.

GREENE. Hurtful? We? Do one hurtful thing to him? God forbid. And even if some unforseen or violent end should come to him, you would be free of blame, my son. And then, of course, you would become quite the important man with Mrs. Ard, I have no doubt.

MICHAEL. I would?

GREENE. I've heard her say myself she fancies you. A young man like yourself might find himself quite easily within that lady's bed and safe between her legs if he did play his cards the proper way. He might wake up some morning husband and heir to all the Fafr property, and landlord of it all. She's quite a beautiful woman, is she not? What do you think?

(*Pause.*)

MICHAEL. I think it might be possible I've lost the key.

GREENE. That would be most convenient, Michael, thank you very much.

SHERIFF. But when night came, did Michael have misgivings.

MICHAEL. Excuse me, sir, but if it's locked he must be sleeping with the key, there's nothing further I can do.

BLACK WILL. (*Trying to reach Michael's neck through the bars.*) ARRRRRRRGGGHHH. I WAS SPOSED TO BE TO SCARBOROUGH YESTERDAY TO SEE ME MOTHER, WHO'S GOT THE PRIVY ROT, AND NOW THE POOR THING PROBABLY WILL CROAK WITHOUT ME. LET ME AT HIS NECK, SHAKEBAG. Easy, Will. There'll be another time.

BLACK WILL. I don't want to kill him another time, I wants to kill him LAST WEEK. *v. o. l.*

SHAKEBAG. The Lord teacheth us patience.

BLACK WILL. THE HELL HE DO. THE LORD HAS GOT NO PATIENCE WHATSOEVER. HE KILLS US ANY TIME HE PLEASETH, SO WHY OH WHY CAN'T I? WHAT HAVE I DONE? DO I ASK FOR MUCH? JUST FOR AN UNLOCKED GATE SOS I MAY DO ME HONEST WORK. OOOOOO. IT DOT MAKE ME CRABBY. URRRRGGGHHH. ARRRRGGHHH.

(*He lunges at Michael through the bars, gets his neck for a moment, loses it, and MICHAEL crawls away.*)

MICHAEL. I must say goodnight now, sir.

BLACK WILL. SLUG. REPTILE. SUCKER OF CAMEL TONGUES. I'LL FEED YE TO DOGS! I'LL MAKE SOUP OF YER BRAIN MATTER! URRRGGHH!

(*SHAKEBAG manages to get Will away.*)

SHERIFF. So passed another day of Ardy's life. And back to Greene the frustrac murderers did slink.

Scene 13

At Greene's. GREENE, BLACK WILL, and SHAKEBAG.

GREENE. If the boy insists it was his master locked the gate, we might as well believe him.

BLACK WILL. I'll believe him. I mark him with me thumb. I do I care a notch in me thumb to remember that Michael person by.

GREENE. Listen. Tomorrow Ard must cross through Rainbow Down. We'll kill him there. Now, when the servant Cecily comes in to buy her vegetables, I'll send Michael word of it.

BLACK WILL. Why do ye waste yer breath warmin' the scud?

GREENE. I wish no harm to any extra person. This is the first and last and only murder I'll have aught to do with.

BLACK WILL. The first perhaps, but not the last. It's not a thing one stops.

GREENE. Just meet the man on Rainbow Down tomorrow eve and do your work, and mind, hurt no one else. Good day. I go. (*HE goes.*)

BLACK WILL. I like not this scrubgully posillaninous milksoopy skunk.

SHAKEBAG. The man has scruples, is all. Luckily, ~~so~~ many of them.

(ALICE goes. CECILY sighs, looks back towards where Michael has gone, then follows her.)

SHERIFF. And so she went, as if to meet her doom, and on the road to Eastern Rochester Black Will and Shakebag ate their bread and sausage in the cold, awaiting Ard to ambush him at Rainbow Down.

## Scene 15

Rainbow Down. BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG.

BLACK WILL. They takes my dignity, you see? I got a dignity they don't suspect. They take it from me. You take away a person's frickin' dignity and what's he got?

SHAKEBAG. (Eating.) Not much.

BLACK WILL. A man worketh hard at his chosen profession, he expect some respect from them about him. There's much skill involved in this work, it be a highly skilled occupation, and there's risk involved, high risk, this be not yer easiest job. Shake, and it do provide a useful service, ridding the land of excess peoples—it take a man of character to do this work, a man deserving of some small regard. Now, when there is creatures like these amateurs involved, which try and meddle in a man's work, that's a humiliation of the working man—a proud man don't like to be humiliated in his work, and there is no more degradin' thing for a professional man than to be forced to truck with a pack of hysterical amateurs, do you

~~see what I means, Shake?~~ Does you understand, Bagg? Does you receive ME BLOODY MEANING, BAGGO? DO YE? (HE has worked himself up into a froth and is clucking Shakebag hard by the coal.)

SHAKEBAG. You're creasin' up me skin again, Willy, you know.

BLACK WILL. Oh, I'm sorry. Can't I have perhaps another pigfoot, please?

SHAKEBAG. You eat them all, and the head, too, and the tail. Anxiety.

BLACK WILL. I'm a sensitive man, I am.

SHAKEBAG. Don't I know it.

SHERIFF. Hist, there he come, now we got 'em, continuing the loop from Rochester to Fafirsin, and there on Rainbow Down, in terror of Black Will did Michael prick his horse to a purpose, and say he must go back to find a smilthy, and as the horses grazed did Ard come over to sit and breed and Michael felt the pricks of gutt—

MICHAEL. It's not like I don't wish to go over to you, sir, but I have hurt me horse. I mean, my horse has hurt himself, through no fault of my own.

ARD. I can see it's not your fault.

MICHAEL. I'm awfully sorry.

ARD. I know you're sorry, Michael, and it's quite all right. Go back and find a smilthy, we can't abuse the animals.

MICHAEL. Yes. If you insist. But do be careful there along the way.

ARD. I'm always careful.

MICHAEL. Yes, you're a wonderful master. ~~Give me beer and nuts and talk to me like I was a~~  
400

CURATE. I must have been hallucinating once again. The devil often sends me visions, mostly naked women. Howsoever that may be, if ye are goin' on to Fafirsin, might I then join you, sir?

ARD. Of course you might.

(BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG begin to creep up on them with the awful knives.)

CURATE. I find a travelling companion such a comfort, and invaluable, for example, in informing one—  
just exactly what one's stepped in—don't you agree?

(The MURDERERS are just about to strike when another piercing SHOUT is heard.)

SEXTON. YO HO. I SAY. HELLO. WHAT? IS THAT YOU?

CURATE. What? Do I hear the Sexton? Is he come too? What a lark.

(BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG once again will and scuttle back.)

SEXTON. (Appearing.) Hello, Ard. Fancy meeting you here. Hello, Curate. My, we three are well met upon a strange road, eh? Who was them other two I thought I saw with you?

CURATE. It must have been the trees.

SHAKEBAG. There be three of them now, Willy. Shall we try again on Tuesday?

BLACK WILL. I'd just as soon now murder three as one.

SEXTON. I'm off to pick up bodies. You know how that does go. Much stink and little joy.

BLACK WILL. (Starting back towards them again.) Bodies, eh? I'll make you some bodies.

SHAKEBAG. But, Willy—

BLACK WILL. I am hot, don't stop me now.

SEXTON. Look there, is that not Mag and Sue a coming there? And they have got the Sheriff with them, too.

MAG. Landlord! Landlord!

SUE. Citizen's complaint!

BLACK WILL. Ye Gods, they multiply like roaches.

ARD. (As MAG and SUE approach with the SHERIFF, and BLACK WILL hesitates.) What is it now?

MAG. We've an ocean in the parlor.

ARD. Ocean? What ocean?

SUE. I think it's the Atlantic.

ARD. I can't control the ocean, now, girls, can I?

SHAKEBAG. Back, Will. You can't kill all of them. SHERIFF. Hello, Ard. I was just escorting these wenches along the way to see you, and here you are before us.

ARD. My lord, I've lost Michael, but I've gained an apparent army.

SEXTON. Good company, I always say, is better than a banging.

BLACK WILL. (Trying to get away from Shakebag.) I got to kill SOMEBODY. I just GOT to.

SHAKEBAG. We can't be killing crowds, Will, nor messing about with Sheriffs. Come on. Another time.

and left me unexpected coin, yet I am saddled with him, and now his gentleness does make me sick. Oh, Tommy, ~~Tommy, don't you see how fine it would be if you and me had all his hands and ears and such? Tommy? You'll not run out on me?~~

MOSBY. No. I will not.

ALICE. Not ever?

MOSBY. Never will I. No.

SHERIFF. So they did vow to keep on, when they might have stopped.

*(The PEOPLE have begun to drift off, leaving MOSBY and ALICE, CECILY humming her song.)*

ALICE. Soon it will snow. The snow will come down soon. All white, so very white. And we will kill him dead, my love. We'll kill him very dead, and we'll be free. We will. Be free.

*(ALICE and MOSBY alone among the shards. LIGHTS fade, Cecily's song.)*

END OF ACT I

## ACT II

### Scene 17

*To the sound of CECILY humming softly her song, the PEOPLE reappear one by one on the shadowy stage and find their places in the rubble. When THEY are all in place, the song ends.*

SHERIFF. Part the Second.

CURATE. And the last.

SEXTON. We hope.

SHERIFF. As Alice now her purpose steeled is much

determined that the deed be done once and forever more—

MAG. Foolscap.

SUE. Foolscap.

SEXTON. Port morrem—

CURATE. —and augmentations.

ALICE. Begin again.

ARD. And end.

SHERIFF. Arrived again at home, the Ard, exhausted, having still some unfinished business yet to do, did send his servant Michael to Lord Cheyney's house at Sheppievile with messages, and when the boy returned with the reply, fair Alice saw her chance.

ALICE. Michael, I see you've brought a letter back

MICHAEL. I have? Oh, yes, I do. Took him forever to write it while I stood and twiddled in the hall. I would

ARD. Why would you run to deliver something you'd lost along the way?

MICHAEL. Sir, I didn't know it was lost until I delivered it and it wasn't there.

ARD. Would you like to go and lie down, Michael?

MICHAEL. Very much, sir. May I take Cecily?

ARD. Does she want to go and lie down?

MICHAEL. Yes, she does, sir, very much, oh, thank you, sir, goodbye.

*(HE grabs the bewildered CECILY and runs off, jerking her behind him by the wrist.)*

ARD. Alice, dear, I think that boy is ill.

ALICE. No doubt.

ARD. And now he's lost the letter from Lord Cheyney.

ALICE. Why don't you just ride up to Cheyney's house and see what he did have to say? You need to get out now and then.

ARD. But, love, I've just got IN.

ALICE. Go on, you need the exercise.

ARD. I am exhausted, Alice.

ALICE. It seems you always are.

ARD. All right, then. I will go. Alice, my love, you are well, are you not?

ALICE. Of course I'm well. Why shouldn't I be well?

ARD. You're sure that everything is fine?

ALICE. Of course, my love. ~~Whatever could be wrong with me?~~

~~ARD. I don't know, dear. It's just, of late, odd things have been, it seems, about to happen.~~

~~ALICE. NOT TO ME. What things?~~

ARD. It's difficult to say. It's just that sometimes dear I wonder if perhaps there are things going on I cannot fathom all around me, and I feel, well, somewhat lost.

ALICE. We all feel lost.

ARD. I seldom did before.

ALICE. I, for example, have always been lost. It is the common state. One is born this way.

ARD. I think I've wandered thoughtless through my life until I knew you. You've made me see things other ways. You've made me—

ALICE. Lost? I've made you lost?

ARD. And also somewhat found. *(Moving to embrace her.)* Alice, you know, I think—

ALICE. *(Eluding him.)* Now, do go off to Cheyney's place and see what he did write, and when you are returned, perhaps you'll have a nice surprise.

ARD. A cherry tart?

ALICE. Perhaps a cherry tart.

ARD. That would be nice. It's been so long.

ALICE. Well, run along, and I will warm it up.

ALICE. You ask me a question like that?

ARD. Well, it's just that sometimes—

ALICE. You DAST ask me a question like that? How DAST you?

ARD. I'm sorry, love. I'll kiss you now goodbye.

ALICE. No, no, um, if you think I do not love you, you musn't get a kiss, not till you're sure.

ARD. Do you not like to touch me?

ALICE. That is a silly thing to say.

ARD. But I have noticed it, especially of late. Am I an odious man to you?

(*CECILY is looking all about the room for Alice, and has her back to the cupboard when ALICE speaks.*)

ALICE. GO AWAY.

CECILY. (*Jumping, startled.*) What?

ALICE. I SAID, GO AWAY.

CECILY. Is that you, mum?

ALICE. Yes, it's me. I think it's me. I don't know if it's me or not. It's dark in here.

CECILY. Are you in the cupboard, mum?

ALICE. YES, YOU MENTAL GIANT, I'M IN THE BLOODY CUPBOARD, IS THAT ALL RIGHT WITH YOU, CECILY?

CECILY. I suppose it is. Are you all right, mum?

ALICE. COULDN'T BE BETTER.

CECILY. But, mum, beggin' your pardon, if you're all right, then why are you, um, you know, in the cupboard with the door shut?

ALICE. BECAUSE I LOVE THE SMELL WHEN THE MICE FART.

(*Pause.*)

CECILY. Oh. I see. Very well, mum. Good afternoon. (*Going out. Troubled.*) It makes about as much sense as anything else, I guess.

(*SHE is gone. Then ALICE comes out, discouraged.*)

ALICE. It is no use. I cannot stop. I'm lost. I've gone to swim with scum and now I cannot get to shore. I've always been. As a child I was the queen of spades, I loved

the jack of clubs, we killed the king my father in the garden and subsequently buried him and ran away to the green stuffed chair in the parlor. But the king of diamonds caught us, he killed my love the jack of clubs and dragged me naked back through rooms filled with other cards, and they were laughing at me, and throwing toothpicks and small furry animals. I was impaled in the garden on a rose tree in a rainstorm, and I died there shuddering, shuddering, every night in my dreams, and the rain did rain and rain. In the game of hearts I play the monster still. I play the monster still. In the game. Of hearts. (*SHE stares out sadly.*)

Scene 18

*A storage house near Presleytown. GREENE, ALICE, BLACK WILL, and SHAKEBAG.*

SHERIFF. And Alice, fearing that the thing would somehow misconceive again, does guess that Ard will spend the night at Malvern Inn along the way, and does devise that Greene will hide the murderers in Presleytown, and kill the Ard in early morn when he goes on his way, so she does bring them food and drink and maketh sure that all goes well.

GREENE. So how's my love today, my love?

BLACK WILL. (*Eating voraciously and making revolting hoglike sounds.*) Ummm. Ugggg. Goody. Um. Oooh. Pignout. Ummm.



## Scene 19

SHERIFF. So Ard and Mike set out all unsuspecting in the morning while a fog rolls in to cover them.

ARD. Fog this morning, Michael. You seem troubled. Are you?

MICHAEL. I think, sir, I've forgot me purse.

ARD. Purse? Your purse?

MICHAEL. I have. Forgot. Me purse.

ARD. You're having many difficulties, these days, son.

~~MICHAEL. You don't know the half of it, sir.~~  
ARD. Michael, there's something you're not letting me.

MICHAEL. I tell you everything, sir.

ARD. But you said I don't know the half of it.

MICHAEL. The half of what, sir?

ARD. I don't know.

MICHAEL. Well, then, you know more than me, sir.

ARD. Are you in some—compromising situation?

MICHAEL. (*Perfected and trembling, dropping his hat repeatedly and trying without success to pick it up several times.*) Compromising? Situation? Me?

ARD. Michael, I've had suspicions.

MICHAEL. It isn't true, sir.

ARD. What isn't?

MICHAEL. What you suspect.

ARD. I fear it is.  
MICHAEL. (*On his knees, hysterical.*) It isn't, sir, it isn't, oh, I swear on me sister's left one it ain't.

ARD. I think I know what is going on here, and why my wife has been so strange, and wanted me out of the house, and why you've been acting so peculiar—  
MICHAEL. I didn't mean to, sir, it was all an accident, I swear.

ARD. The fact is, you've got poor little Cecily pregnant, haven't you?

MICHAEL. Pregnant? Cripe, is Cessie preggers?

ARD. That's it, isn't it?

MICHAEL. Uh, er, well YES sir, I'm afraid it is, but I promise you I will marry the wench, immediately, sir, just let me go back now and fetch me purse, all right?

ARD. You're a strange boy, Michael, and I wonder seriously what kind of father you will make.

MICHAEL. An old one, sir, I hope. Thank you.  
Goodbye. (*HE hugs Ard and runs off, giggling and frantic.*)

## Scene 20

SHERIFF. And Ard goes on alone as Shakebag and Black Will do close in all the while amongst the fog.  
BLACK WILL. He said left at the rabbit warren, did he not?

SHAKEBAG. I don't see a rabbit warren. I've borne hard on Twobley, as he said, and it ain't here.  
BLACK WILL. And what's a headless greenwort, anyhow?

SHAKEBAG. Perhaps 'twas Twombly and not Twobley.

SHAKEBAG. Don't kill him, Will, now, listen, he's ferried Ard across, he can ferry us. It cannot have been long ago. Now, let go, Willy.

BLACK WILL. (*Letting go reluctantly of the terrified and nearly dead FERRYMAN.*) Okey dokey.

SHAKEBAG. Here, sir, now, ferry us across to where you ferried Ard, all right?

FERRYMAN. I can't, sir.

BLACK WILL. (*Grabbing him again.*) YOU SAY YOU CAN'T?

FERRYMAN. Well, I mean, I COULD, sir, and I'd like to, but I can't.

BLACK WILL. WHY CAN'T YE?

FERRYMAN. Because me brother's got the boat on the other side o the river, and he's slayin' there till the fog do lif. There be no way across till he come back.

BLACK WILL. (*Shaking him back and forth.*) NO WAY? NO WAY ACROSS?

FERRYMAN. Unless perhaps you'd like me to swim across and tow you with a rope in me teeth. ~~Try it if you'll just stop shakin' me, sir, I have a young wife who'd be lonesome for several days if you killed me.~~

BLACK WILL. OHHHH, OHHHH, OHHHHH—

SHERIFF. And seeing he'd been foiled again, Black Will did swear a mighty, frightful oath—

BLACK WILL. OH, FIRK AND DOUBLE FIRK, AND TRIPLE FIRK, QUADRUPLE FIRK, OH, FIRK, FIRK, FIRK.

SHERIFF. Quoth he.

BLACK WILL. And also FRICK. FRACK. FRONK. (*All the while shaking the Ferryman.*) WHY AIN'T IT EASY, LORD? IT SHOULD BE EASY. IT'S ALWAYS

BEEN BEFORE SO EASY. I'VE TRIED TO BE A GOOD ~~CHRISTIAN~~ PERSON. I BEEN GOOD TO BE A MOTHER. ~~WHY IS GOD DOING THIS TO ME?~~ DO I DESERVE THIS? (*To the Ferryman.*) DO I DESERVE THIS?

FERRYMAN. Yes.

BLACK WILL. EH?

SHAKEBAG. (*Pulling Will away.*) Come on, Willy, let's have a look at the back of your hand, see if we can find our way home.

BLACK WILL. We shoulda brought me mother's rump.

SHERIFF. So Black Will's foiled again. But now, as time of Valentine Fayre approaches, is Alice all the more intent on getting this deed done.

### Scene 21

*ALICE and MOSBY at Ard's.*

ALICE. Tommy, I am beside myself.

MOSBY. No, I'm beside you, love. You're beside ME.

ALICE. For all our toil we've failed to make him dead.

MOSBY. It is, I think, a sign from God that we should stop.

ALICE. No, I think not. I think you've just misread the sign. God sent us bumbling murderers to show us we must take responsibility ourselves, and do our own sweet killing.

MOSBY. WE, you say?

ARD. I know you do. Everyone does. She is such a sweet thing, it is impossible not to love her, she is so good and kind. ~~I was just saying to Michael the other day, I often marvel at my luck in finding her, and that she should return my love—it seems miraculous to me. I thank God for her every day of my life.~~ Now, Tommy, dear friend, I don't know what's troubling you, but please sit down with me and have a drink, for I value your friendship beyond all speaking, and so does Alice, I know.

(*MOSBY looks at him, looks at Alice, sighs, sits down and has a drink.*)

SHERIFF. So Mosby could not rouse the wrath of Ard, what could he do? And all the while they drank as friends, poor Alice sits by, drumming her fingers on the table, horny as the night is long, while they two drink, and each man in his own thoughts privately is thinking of her tender breasts and soft white naked body.

ALICE. ~~I'm horny as the night be long~~ and those two bobos drink together. I must kill him. I must kill him. I cannot bear that he will live a day longer. Oh, how shall I get this doing done?

## Scene 22

*Ard's house.* ALICE, MOSBY, BLACK WILL, SHAKEBAG, GREENE, MICHAEL and CECILY huddle, frightened, in the back.

SHERIFF. After much consultation among murderers it was decided finally that on the even of the fayre's end they must butcher Ard in his own house, it were the only way, and so they all agreed.

MOSBY. Alice, I won't, I do not want him dead enough. I'm taking Cecily and going home.

ALICE. Michael, stop that man.

MICHAEL. Stop, sir, please, and listen.

MOSBY. Michael, do you want your master killed?

MICHAEL. No, sir, I don't know, sir, but it's gone so far I'm almost frightened not to.

MOSBY. Why then are we doing this? ~~Because—we started it?~~

ALICE. For me. For love of me.

BLACK WILL. Amateurs. They make me puke.

ALICE. Oh, Tommy, please, we need you, it is all worked out, he trusts you, Tom, oh, help us do the deed, oh, please. (*SHE falls to her knees and embraces his legs.*)

MOSBY. Get off your knees. Stop that.

GREENE. He's coming soon. Make up your mind.

ALICE. I will not stop until you promise me. ~~Let me not one more night be forced to lay beneath that smelly web of guls while he doeth paw and stubbet over me.~~ oh, please, oh, please.

CECILY. Tommy, we're not going to kill him, are we? ~~Not really?~~

ALICE. Cecily, be quiet Tommy, yes or no?

MOSBY. Well—

ALICE. Good. (*SHE gets up.*)

GREENE. Hurry up, it's time, he cometh.

ALICE. Black Will and Shakebag, in the cupboard.

ARD. Do you know, sitting here in my house with my wife, and my best friend Tom, gettin' warm from the cold, and the bit of snow melin' on my coat by the door, I think I am the happiest man on earth.

ALICE. Tell him what you say, Tom, when you have won.

MOSBY. You say, I've won.

ALICE. No, no, that isn't it. Tell him what you say, Tom. Tell him, Tommy. Now may I take you—

MOSBY. Now may I take you, sir, if I will?

ARD. Take me? Which way take me? How? Howtofore? Whence?

MOSBY. Now may I take you, sir, if I will.

ARD. Yes, but how?

MOSBY. Now may I take you, sir, if I will.

ARD. I heard that, Tommy, but what I want to know is—

MOSBY. NOW MAY I TAKE YOU, SIR—

ALICE. THAT'S YOUR PASSWORD, YOU BONEHEAD, GET OUT OF THERE.

ARD. I beg your pardon?

BLACK WILL. I CAN'T GET OUT, THE FRICKING DOOR'S STUCK.

(ALICE runs over to the cupboard and struggles to get it open.)

ARD. Alice, is someone in the cupboard?

ALICE. It's a surprise.

ARD. A surprise? What kind of surprise? Is this my valentine?

(The cupboard suddenly opens and BLACK WILL comes roaring out with a terrible bellow of frenzied pent-up murder.)

BLACK WILL. AAAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGGHHHHH!

(HE wraps a towel around Ard's neck and proceeds to strangle him.) DIE, DAMME YOU, DIE, YOU DIRTY SCUM, YOU SLUG, YOU FILBERSHUNGG, NOW DIE.

ARD. ACH. ACH. ACH. (After some struggle, ARD is motionless.)

BLACK WILL. (Relaxing.) It is done.

ARD. ACH. ACH. ACH.

BLACK WILL. (Jumping on him again.) AAAAAAAAAARRRRGGGGHHH. AAAAAAAAAARRRRGGGGHHH.

(Pause. ARD is motionless. BLACK WILL is panting heavily. ALICE and MOSBY look on, fascinated and horrified. One by one, SHAKEBAG, MICHAEL and CECILY come out from the kitchen to look. GREENE does not appear. THEY all look down at the body.)

MICHAEL. His troubles are over now.

ARD. (Sitting up abruptly.) ACH. ACH. ACH.

ALICE. AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH.

(THEY all jump and scatter, as ARD, towel over his head, a grotesque, doll-like Frankensteinian figure, stumbles blindly about the room.)

ARD. QUG QUG QUG QUG QUG QUG—

BLACK WILL. Can't be too soon. You folks should scrub yer jakes once or twice in a leap year. Cripe. SHAKEBAG. Goodbye, folk. God help you all. BLACK WILL. Yes, and good riddance, too. Have a nice day.

(BLACK WILL and SHAKEBAG go. ALICE, MOSBY, MICHAEL and CECILY look at the body.)

CECILY. There he be.

ALICE. Poor baby.

MOSBY. Poor baby? What do you mean, poor baby? ALICE. He looks so sad there, sitting all dead in the jakes. I feel sorry for him.

MOSBY. YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HIM? YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HIM? FOR CHRIST SAKE, WOMAN, YOU'VE JUST HAD US BLUDGEON OUT HIS VERY BRAINS, AND NOW YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HIM?

ALICE. I didn't do it. You did.

MOSBY. I DID? WHOSE IDEA WAS IT?

MICHAEL. For the love of Christ, be quiet, someone might be passin' by.

MOSBY. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR NO POOR BABY FOR A MAN YOU SCHEMED SIX MONTHS TO MURDER. NOW. YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? ARD. (Stirring.) Уттиг. Alice. Alice? (HE reaches out one hand blindly and clutches firmly onto Alice's arm.) Alice?

ALICE. AAAAAAHHHHHHH. GET HIM OFF. GET HIM OFF. GET HIM OFF ME. AHHHHHHH. MOSBY. I'll get the bastard.

(HE finds a shovel and begins beating Ard over the head with it—loud clanging noises as the shovel meets Ard's lowel-covered head. The OTHERS are trying to get out of the way.)

ALICE. (Screaming and sobbing.) AAAAAAHHHHHHH. AAAAAAHHHHHHH. BLACK WILL. (Running back in with SHAKEBAG.)

GOOD CRUD, WILL YOU PEOPLE SHUT UP, BEFORE WE CAN GET CLEAN AWAY. HERE—(One of Mosby's backswings catches BLACK WILL on the side of the head, and HE staggers head-first into the jakes hole.) DAMME AND DOUBLE DAMME—(HE pulls his head out—He brews.) THE RUTTER STILL AIN'T KILLED AND I AM KNOCKED SUBCONSCIOUS ALMOST HEAD-FIRST IN THE SHITHOLE. (Throwing Mosby to one side.) Get outa me way, fungus. This is the worst behaved individual alive or dead that ever I did have the pleasure to slit the very gullet of. (HE has pulled out his awful knife and cuts Ard's throat—this is masked from us by the towel.)

ALICE. What are you doing? Stop that. Stop it. STOP. ARD. Gakkkkkkkk..... (Silence once again from Ard.)

BLACK WILL. (Wiping the bloody knife on Ard.) Now, I will take the rings from all his fingers, to make it look like robbery, if you wants to make it look like somethin', other than he fell in the shithouse and cut his throat, but if you ask me, I shoulda left him BE, and

(*CECILY lets them in.*)

CURATE. Hello, hello.

SEXTON. Odd's groin, but it's cold out. And about to snow again as well, I think. So. Where is the Ard tonight?

ALICE. He isn't here.

CURATE. Perhaps then we should wait to eat.

MICHAEL. Your wait might be extremely long.

CURATE. Well, in that case, perhaps we should go right ahead and masticate the provender.

SEXTON. No, I think we should eat. What is for supper?

ALICE. Supper?

CECILY. I've roasted a duck, mum.

CURATE. Ah, the duck, the duck, the body of the duck reminds me always of the body of the human soul, about to be served to our Lord upon a platter. After all, we do devour the Lord's body. it be only fitting that in the end he do devour ours, don't you think? And the physiognomy of the duck is so remindful of our own. Thus does God manifest himself in his creation, even unto the lowly quacking thing. Mistress Alice, are you all right?

(*ALICE has wandered away and now stands looking sadly out the window.*)

CURATE. I hope my duck simile has not depressed you.

MOSBY. Alice. The Curate's talking to you.

ALICE. It snows. It snows upon him now. The poor boy must be cold. The snow is white. The snow will cover everything. Do you see the awfuf thing that God has done

~~to me? He has played the worst trick of all upon me. He has given me exactly what I wanted.~~

(*An embarrassed pause. The OTHERS all stand looking at her.*)

CURATE. I say, excuse me, folk, but before we eat, I think I must trip out to the jakes a moment. I won't be long. (*HE moves toward the back door.*)

ALICE. (*Suddenly jolted out of her reverie by the mention of the jakes. Imperial.:*) STOP RIGHT THERE!

SEXTON. What's the matter? Have I stepped in something?

MOSBY. Uh, you can't go out there, sir.

CURATE. I can't? Why can't I?

MOSBY. The, uh, well, uh, uh, the, uh—

ALICE. The rose bush. The current dry spell. The rose bush doth need watering, so we ask all our guests, the male ones, preferably, to water the rose bush for us when they needs do their personal watering.

CURATE. But it's February, mum, and it is snowing. ALICE. Yes, but the winter's made the bush despondent, and besides, we're having the jakes redecorated, and it's a mess.

CURATE. All right. Beside the house, then. Sexton, come.

SEXTON. I don't think nature calls me now at present, thank you.

CURATE. Come, Sexton, and keep me company, I say.

ALICE. Oh, look.

SHERIFF. Says she.

ALICE. The snow begins again to fall, to fall. How pretty is the snow. It's like confectionary sugar in the night. I'm young again, a child almost, to look up in the snow, so much white from so much darkness, so much cold up in the darker spaces where God lives. Tommy, you may kiss me now.

MOSBY. I do not feel like kissing you.

ALICE. I want a kiss. Just one.

MOSBY. Alice, the man is dead. I do not care to stand here in the snow and kiss his wife before him.

ALICE. He cannot see you, Tommy.

MOSBY. That's exactly what I mean.

ALICE. He is dead. He's dead. He's very dead, you know, exceeding dead. Ard? Are you dead? Ardy?

MOSBY. Are your wiis turned, woman? Do ye talk with the corpse after ye've killed it?

ALICE. He's my husband. I'll talk to him if I wish. Oh, he must be cold there, lyin' in the snow, a fallen snowman, he.

MOSBY. He's cold, but he's not feeling it.

ALICE. How can you be sure?

MOSBY. I'm sure.

ALICE. That's cruel of you. It's very cruel. I'm cold.

SHERIFF. And far apart there in the snow with Ardy's corpse between them stand the lovers, silently and cold, till Michael does return with key, and so they drag the body through the gate into the churchyard.

MOSBY. They'll think that robbers murdered him as he did make his way amongst the churchyard dark to get home by the garden, love.

ALICE. Yes. I suppose they will. They're awfully stupid.

MOSBY. Come on, we must get back.

ALICE. Oh, must we leave him all alone?

MOSBY. We cannot stay and wait with him, I would be a shade suspicious, don't you think?

ALICE. But with the snow upon him there he looks so very lonely, Tom. Poor Ardy. Poor little dead man Ard, my love.

MOSBY. Come with us now. Come on.

*(MOSBY and MICHAEL take her gently back with them, ALICE looking back all the while at the corpse. SHE waves at it a little secret wave with just her fingers.)*

SHERIFF. And back they go to the house to wait, for what, they do not know.

### Scene 26

*Back at the house. ALICE, MOSBY and CECILY. MICHAEL has slipped quietly away.*

ALICE. The snow was oh so lovely, wasn't it, when we did drag him through the tombstones, Tom.

MOSBY. Yes, my love, it was.

ALICE. And bit by bit it covered up the body, the white did cover up the red, oh, he was dead, but clean and pure and sleeping peaceful in among the graveyard there—

takes a deep breath, then opens the door, for the moment the picture of composure and sweetness.) Hello.

(It is the SHERIFF, with the CURATE and the SEXTON behind him.)

SHERIFF. Hello, Mistress Alice, I am sorry to disturb you, but I've heard your husband's missing, is that true?

ALICE. I'd ask him, but he isn't here. I'll ask him if you like when he comes back.

SHERIFF. Where is he, then?

ALICE. He isn't here.

SHERIFF. I see. Uh, might I use your jakes while I am waiting?

ALICE. You could, but we don't have one.

SHERIFF. You do not have a jakes?

ALICE. Well, we had one, but we gave it up for Lent.

(The SEXTON slips out quietly to the back and goes towards the jakes.)

SHERIFF. You've given up the jakes for Lent? I seem to remember there's a nice one right out back.

ALICE. No, it's out front.

SHERIFF. You have your jakes out front?

ALICE. We like to show it off. Also to look at the road whilst we do sit and muse. Wave to our passing friends. That sort of thing.

SHERIFF. I see. Yes, yes. I understand.

SEXTON. (Returning.) There is much blood in the jakes, sir.

ALICE. It's mine. I cut myself while shaving.

SHERIFF. Look you, there's a path here to the garden where the snow's discolored red. Let's go out through the garden gate. You'd best come with us, mum.

ALICE. Oh, it's so pretty out. Look at the pretty snow. Look at the snow.

### Scene 27

SHERIFF. So followed us the little drag-marks in the snow, and came thereby unto the churchyard gate.

CURATE. And here is the churchyard.

SEXTON. And the gate.

CURATE. And there is Ard.

SEXTON. The man is dead.

SHERIFF. Look at the footprints in the snow, they go back to the house. And here, in Ardy's shoe, a houserush nestled there.

ALICE. It must have been vandals. Robbers. That beat him over the head and strangled him with the iron and cut his throat. Or perhaps he fell and cut his throat on a tombstone.

SHERIFF. I think you must come with me, mum.

ALICE. Come with you to where?

SHERIFF. Mistress Ard, I am forced to arrest you.

ALICE. But should we not try to wake him? He must be cold.

SEXTON. He's dead, mum.

ALICE. I am innocent. I am purer than the warbler's tongue. I am a goodly girl. I've always been, my parents always said so, I have a pretty face, and pretty eyes and



him, rocking him, comforting, humming her song.  
 KNOCKING at the door. SHE ignores it. The  
 SHERIFF bursts into the room.)

SHERIFF. Tommy Mosby? Is that you in the gloom  
 there? What, do ye frok and pooly in the bed with your  
 own sistern? For shame on ye, Tommy, do ye?

MOSBY. Only when I can't help it.

SHERIFF. Your clothing's bloody, son. Do you  
 confess the death of Ard? Speak up. Do you confess?

CECILY. No.

MOSBY. Yes.

SHERIFF. Do you? What's that ye answer?

CECILY. Yes.

MOSBY. No.

SHERIFF. I think you'd both best come along with  
 me.

CECILY. Come along, Tommy, we got to go to jail  
 now. Come on, come on, sweet. (SHE gets him up.) My  
 brother's very delicate, you see. He needs a tender hand.

SHERIFF. (As CECILY takes TOMMY along to jail.)  
 And in the prison sits the Alice Ard, lamenting in the dark  
 alone, and speaking to herself, so sad, so beautiful and lost  
 she is. So lost.

Scene 29

Alice in prison, with the shadows of bars across her, sits  
 quietly. Unseen by her, as SHE speaks, the ghost of  
 ARD enters behind her, listening.

Alice. The Ard is dead. The worms do feast on him.  
 He is returning to the filth and muck. God must stir up his  
 cess pool soup continually. I see God in my dreams,  
 learning to make worlds, practicing upon us, failing. He  
 throws us away and tries another. We are his garbage, his  
 leavings, there is no other god to help us, we are dying,  
 and we are foolish, doomed things. This comforts me. I  
 sing like a skull in a box. I am the patron saint of  
 murderers, I have killed my love and he is dead.

ARD. Be ye now such a sad girl, Alice, my love?

Alice. I'm sad because you're dead.

ARD. But you're the one that killed me, dear.

Alice. It's true, I did, but I have changed my mind, I  
 think.

ARD. There's many that change their minds in jail.  
 Alice. Yes.

ARD. Do not trouble yourself about it, love, it isn't  
 worth the tears. Listen. They're about to read my will.  
 Listen.

SHERIFF. This be the will of Fafirsin the Ardyo. (HE  
 puts on spectacles and reads.) The land and money goes, he  
 says, to Mag and her body, and Sue and her body,  
 whichever cometh first, or most, and equal, my tenants,  
 and such of the other local tenants and poor as they do  
 need, and a thousand pounds to Alfred the woodman's cat,  
 for he was always glad to see me, and to the cow Belinda,  
 as long as she shall live and moo, because she was a  
 goodly cow, and gave sweet milk, and had sad eyes.

CURATE. Amen.

SEXTON. Amen.

BELINDA THE COW. Moooooooooooooooooooo.

~~sunne hath cleared the foggy mist. Now have we missed  
the mark of our intent. I wrote it in a play, but it's  
forgotten, now, and just as well. It's just as well.~~

ALICE. (As CECILY hums her song and the PEOPLE  
sit quietly like tombstones.) And I am with my love. In  
~~the narrow churchyard where they lay you there the grass  
would never grow where the body touched, between the  
legs it would grow, between the arms and body, about the  
hollowness of the neck, even between the finger parts, but  
no grass grows where any part of my love's body touched.  
The grass it does remember it, you see. For love is a  
remembering, and death's the only proof. What cannot be  
remembered, love, cannot be left behind. What cannot be  
remembered, love—what cannot be—what cannot—what—~~

(SHE stares out, silent, with the OTHERS, and CECILY  
sings quietly, herself a tombstone, too, as the LIGHTS  
fade slowly.)

## CECILY.

For God so loved the world  
for God so loved  
the world my love  
at his request  
I filled my breasts  
with poison wine  
the roses twine  
in the graveyard, oh

won't you be  
me valentine  
me valentine

me valentine  
today for just  
today my love  
today for just  
today.

(Sound of BIRDS singing softly. DARKNESS.)