

THE
DEAR
DEPARTED

by
Stanley
Houghton

TPI • TALLINN • 1964

Characters:

MRS. SLATER }
MRS. JORDAN } Sisters

HENRY SLATER }
BEN JORDAN } Their Husbands

VICTORIA SLATER A Girl of Ten
ABEL MERRYWEATHER

Note: The action takes place in a provincial town on a
Saturday afternoon

The scene is the sitting-room of a small house. On the spectator's left is the window, with the blinds down. A sofa is in front of it. On his right is a fireplace with an arm-chair by it. In the middle of the wall facing the spectator is the door into the passage. To the left of the door a cheap, shabby chest of drawers, to the right a sideboard. In the middle of the room is the table, with chairs round it. Ornaments and a cheap clock are on the mantelpiece; in the hearth a kettle. By the sideboard a pair of new carpet slippers. The table is partly laid for tea, and the necessaries for the meal are on the sideboard. Turning to the left through the door takes you to the front door; to the right, upstairs. In the passage a hatstand is visible.

(When the Curtain rises Mrs. Slater is seen laying the table. She is a vigorous, plump, red-faced, vulgar woman, prepared to do any amount of straight talking to get her own way. She is in black, but not in complete mourning. She listens a moment and then goes to the window, opens it and calls into the street.)

Mrs. Slater (sharply): Victoria, Victoria! D'ye hear? Come in, will you?

(Mrs. Slater closes window and puts the blind straight and then returns to her work at the table. Victoria, a precocious girl of ten, dressed in colours, enters.)

I'm amazed at you, Victoria; I really am. How you can be gallivanting about in the street with your grandfather lying dead and cold upstairs, I don't know. Be off now, and change your dress before your Aunt Elizabeth and your Uncle Ben come. It would never do for them to find you in colours.

Victoria: What are they coming for? They haven't been here for ages.

Mrs. Slater: They're coming to talk over poor grandpa's affairs. Your father sent them a telegram as soon as we found he was dead.

(A noise is heard.)

Good gracious, that's never them. (Mrs. Slater hurries to the door and opens it) No, thank goodness! it's only your father.

(Henry Slater, a stooping, heavy man with a drooping moustache, enters. He is wearing a black tail coat, grey trousers, a black tie and a bowler hat. He carries a little paper parcel.)

Henry: Not come yet, eh?

Mrs. Slater: You can see they haven't, can't you. Now, Victoria, be off upstairs and that quick. Put your white frock on with a black sash.

(Victoria goes out.)

(To Henry). I'm not satisfied, but it's the best we can do till our new black's ready, and Ben and Elizabeth will never have thought about mourning yet, so we'll out-shine them there.

(Henry sits in the armchair by the fire.)

Get your boots off, Henry; Elizabeth's that prying she notices the least speck of dirt.

Henry: I'm wondering if they'll come at all. When you and Elizabeth quarrelled she said she'd never set foot in your house again.

Mrs. Slater: She'll come fast enough after her share of what grandfather's left. You know how hard she can be when she likes. Where she gets it from I can't tell.

(Mrs. Slater unwraps the parcel Henry has brought. It contains sliced tongue, which she puts on a dish on the table.)

Henry: I suppose it's in the family.

Mrs. Slater: What do you mean by that, Henry Slater?

Henry: I was referring to your father; not to you. Where are my slippers?

Mrs. Slater: In the kitchen; but you want a new pair, those old ones are nearly worn out. (Nearly breaking down) You don't seem to realize what it's costing me to bear up like I am doing. My heart's fit to break when I see the little trifles that belonged to grandfather lying around, and think he'll never use them again. (Briskly) Here! you'd better wear these slippers of grandfather's now. It's lucky he'd just got a new pair.

Henry: They'll be very small for me, my dear.

Mrs. Slater: They'll stretch, won't they? I'm not going to have them wasted. (She has finished laying the table) Henry, I've been thinking about the bureau of grandfather's that's in his bedroom. You know I always wanted to have it after he died.

Henry: You must arrange with Elizabeth when you're dividing things up.

Mrs. Slater: Elizabeth's that sharp she'll see I'm after it, and she'll drive a hard bargain over it. Eh, what it is to have a low, money-grubbing spirit!

Henry: Perhaps she's got her eye on the bureau as well.

Mrs. Slater: She's never been here since grandfather bought it. If it was only down here instead of his room, she'd never guess it wasn't our own.

Henry (startled): Amelia! (He rises)

Mrs. Slater: Henry, why shouldn't we bring that bureau down here now. We could do it before they come.

Henry (stupefied): I wouldn't care to.

Mrs. Slater: Don't look so daft. Why not?

Henry: It doesn't seem delicate, somehow.

Mrs. Slater: We could put that shabby old chest of drawers upstairs where the bureau is now. Elizabeth could have that and welcome. I've always wanted to get rid of it.
(She points to the drawers.)

Henry: Suppose they come when we're doing it.

Mrs. Slater: I'll fasten the front door. Get your coat off, Henry; we'll change it.

(Mrs. Slater goes out to fasten the front door. Henry takes his coat off. Mrs. Slater reappears.)

I'll run up and move the chairs out of the way.

(Victoria appears, dressed according to her mother's instructions.)

Victoria: Will you fasten my frock up the back, mother?

Mrs. Slater: I'm busy; get your father to do it.

(Mrs. Slater hurries upstairs, and Henry fastens the frock.)

Victoria: What have you got your coat off for, father?

Henry: Mother and me is going to bring grandfather's bureaus down here.

Victoria (after a moment's thought): Are we pinching it before Aunt Elizabeth comes?

Henry (shocked): No, my child. Grandpa gave it your mother before he died.

Victoria: This morning?

Henry: Yes.

Victoria: Ah! He was drunk this morning.

Henry: Hush; you mustn't ever say he was drunk, now.

(Henry has fastened the frock, and Mrs. Slater appears carrying a handsome clock under her arm)

Mrs. Slater: I thought I'd fetch this down as well. (She puts it on the mantelpiece.) Our clock's worth nothing and this always appealed to me.

Victoria: That's grandpa's clock.

Mrs. Slater: Chut! Be quiet! It's ours now. Come, Henry, lift your end. Victoria, don't breathe a word to your aunt about the clock and the bureau.

(They carry the chest of drawers through the doorway.)

Victoria (to herself): I thought we'd pinched them.

(After a short pause there is a sharp knock at the front door.)

Mrs. Slater (from upstairs): Victoria, if that's your aunt and uncle you're not to open the door.

(Victoria peeps through the window.)

Victoria: Mother, it's them!

Mrs. Slater: You're not to open the door till I come down.

(Knocking repeated.)

Let them knock away.

(There is a heavy bumping noise.)

Mind the wall, Henry!

(Henry and Mrs. Slater, very hot and flushed, stagger in with a pretty old-fashioned bureau containing a locked desk. They put it where the chest of drawers was, and straighten the ornaments, etc. The knocking is repeated.)

That was a near thing. Open the door, Victoria. Now, Henry, get your coat on. (She helps him.)

Henry: Did we knock much plaster off the wall?

Mrs. Slater: Never mind the plaster. Do I look all right?

(Straightening her hair at the glass.) Just watch Elizabeth's face when she sees we're all in half-mourning. (Throwing him "Tit-Bits".) Take this and sit down. Try and look as if we'd been waiting for them.

(Henry sits in the armchair and Mrs. Slater left of table. They read ostentatiously. Victoria ushers in Ben and Mrs. Jordan. The latter is a stout, complacent woman with an impassive face and an irritating air of being always right. She is wearing a complete and deadly outfit of new mourning crowned by a great black hat with plumes. Ben is also in complete new mourning, with black gloves and a band round his hat. He is rather a jolly little man, accustomed to be humorous, but at present trying to adapt himself to the regrettable occasion. He has a bright, chirpy little voice. Mrs. Jordan sails into the room and solemnly goes straight to Mrs. Slater and kisses her. The men shake hands. Mrs. Jordan kisses Henry, Ben kisses Mrs. Slater. Not a word is spoken. Mrs. Slater furtively inspects the new mourning.)

Mrs. Jordan: Well, Amelia, and so he's "gone" at last.

Mrs. Slater: Yes, he's gone. He was seventy-two a fortnight last Sunday. (She sniffs back a tear)

(Mrs. Jordan sits on the left of the table. Mrs. Slater on the right. Henry in the armchair. Ben on the sofa with Victoria near him)

Ben (chirpily): Now, Amelia, you mustn't give way. We've all got to die some time or other. It might have been worse.

Mrs. Slater: I don't see how.

Ben: It might have been one of us.

Henry: It's taken you a long time to get here, Elizabeth.

Mrs. Jordan: Oh, I couldn't do it. I really couldn't do it.

Mrs. Slater (suspiciously): Couldn't do what?

Mrs. Jordan: I couldn't start without getting the mourning. (Glancing at her sister)

Mrs. Slater: We've ordered ours, you may be sure. (Acidly)
I never could fancy buying ready-made things.

Mrs. Jordan: No? For myself it's such a relief to get into the black. And now perhaps you'll tell us all about it. What did the doctor say?

Mrs. Slater: Oh, he's not been near yet.

Mrs. Jordan: Not been near?

Ben (in the same breath): Didn't you send for him at once?

Mrs. Slater: Of course I did. Do you take me for a fool? I sent Henry at once for Dr. Pringle, but he was out.

Ben: You should have gone for another. Eh, Eliza?

Mrs. Jordan: Oh, yes. It's a fatal mistake.

Mrs. Slater: Pringle attended him when he was alive and Pringle shall attend him when he's dead. That's professional etiquette.

Ben: Well, you know your own business best, but ...

Mrs. Jordan: Yes ... it's a fatal mistake.

Mrs. Slater: Don't talk so silly, Elizabeth. What good could a doctor have done?

Mrs. Jordan: Look at the many cases of persons being restored to life hours after they were thought to be "gone".

Henry: That's when they've been drowned. Your father wasn't drowned, Elizabeth.

Ben (humorously): There wasn't much fear of that. If there was one thing he couldn't bear it was water.

(He laughs, but no one else does.)

Mrs. Jordan (pained): Ben! (Ben is crushed at once.)

Mrs. Slater (piqued): I'm sure he washed regular enough.

Mrs. Jordan: If he did take a drop too much at times, we'll not dwell on that, now.

Mrs. Slater: Father had been "merry" this morning. He went out soon after breakfast to pay his insurance.

Ben: My word, it's a good thing he did.

Mrs. Jordan: He always was thoughtful in that way. He was too honourable to have "gone" without paying his premium.

Mrs. Slater: Well, he must have gone round to the "Ring-o'-Bells" afterwards, for he came in as merry as a sand-boy. I says, "We're only waiting Henry to start

dinner". "Dinner," he says, "I don't want no dinner, I'm going to bed!"

Ben (shaking his head): Ah! Dear, dear.

Henry: And when I came in I found him undressed sure enough and snug in bed. (He rises and stands on the hearthrug.)

Mrs. Jordan (definitely): Yes, he'd had a "warning". I'm sure of that. Did he know you?

Henry: Yes. He spoke to me.

Mrs. Jordan: Did he say he'd had a "warning"?

Henry: No. He said, "Henry, would you mind taking my boots off; I forgot before I got into bed."

Mrs. Jordan: He must have been wandering.

Henry: No, he'd got them on all right.

Mrs. Slater: And when we'd finished dinner I thought I'd take up a bit of something on a tray. He was lying there for all the world as if he was asleep, so I put the tray down on the bureau - (correcting herself) - on the chest of drawers - and went to waken him. (A pause.) He was quite cold.

Henry: Then I heard Amelia calling for me, and I ran upstairs.

Mrs. Slater: Of course we could do nothing.

Mrs. Jordan: He was "gone"?

Henry: There wasn't any doubt.

Mrs. Jordan: I always knew he'd go sudden in the end.

(A pause, they wipe their eyes and sniff back tears.)

Mrs. Slater (rising briskly at length; in a businesslike tone): Well, will you go up and look at him now, or shall we have tea?

Mrs. Jordan: What do you say, Ben?

Ben: I'm not particular.

Mrs. Jordan (surveying the table): Well then, if the kettle's nearly ready we may as well have tea first.

(Mrs. Slater puts the kettle on the fire and gets tea ready.)

Henry: One thing we may as well decide now; the announcement in the papers.

Mrs. Jordan: I was thinking of that. What would you put?

Mrs. Slater: At the residence of his daughter, two hundred and thirty-five Upper Cornbank Street, etc.

Henry: You wouldn't care for a bit of poetry?

Mrs. Jordan: I like "Never Forgotten." It's refined.

Henry: Yes, but it's rather soon for that.

Ben: You couldn't very well have forgotten him the day after.

Mrs. Slater: I always fancy "A loving husband, a kind father, and a faithful friend."

Ben (doubtfully): Do you think that's right?

Henry: I don't think it matters whether it's right or not.

Mrs. Jordan: No, it's more for the look of the thing.

Henry: I saw a verse in the "Evening News" yesterday. Proper poetry it was. It rhymed. (He gets the paper and reads)

"Despised and forgotten by some you may be
But the spot that contains you is sacred to we."

Mrs. Jordan: That'll never do. You don't say "Sacred to we."

Henry: It's in the paper.

Mrs. Slater: You wouldn't say it if you were speaking properly, but it's different in poetry.

Henry: Poetic licence, you know.

Mrs. Jordan: No, that'll never do. We want a verse that says how much we loved him and refers to all his good qualities and says what a heavy loss we've had.

Mrs. Slater: You want a whole poem. That'll cost a good lot.

Mrs. Jordan: Well, we'll think about it after tea, and then we'll look through his bits of things and make a list of them. There's all the furniture in his room.

Henry: There's no jewellery or valuables of that sort.

Mrs. Jordan: Except his gold watch. He promised that to our Jimmy.

Mrs. Slater: Promised your Jimmy! I never heard of that.

Mrs. Jordan: Oh, but he did, Amelia, when he was living with us. He was very fond of Jimmy.

Mrs. Slater: Well. (Amazed.) I don't know!

Ben: Anyhow, there's his insurance money. Have you got the receipt for the premium he paid this morning?

Mrs. Slater: I've not seen it.

(Victoria jumps up from the sofa and comes behind the table.)

Victoria: Mother, I don't think grandpa went to pay his insurance this morning.

Mrs. Slater: He went out.

Victoria: Yes, but he didn't go into the town. He met old Mr. Tattersall down the street, and they went off past St. Philip's Church.

Mrs. Slater: To the "Ring-o'-Bells", I'll be bound.

Ben: The "Ring-o'-Bells"?

Mrs. Slater: That public-house that John Shorrocks's widow keeps. He is always hanging about there. Oh, if he hasn't paid it.

Ben: Do you think he hasn't paid it? Was it overdue?

Mrs. Slater: I should think it was overdue.

Mrs. Jordan: Something tells me he's not paid it. I've a "warning", I know it; he's not paid it.

Ben: The drunken old beggar.

Mrs. Jordan: He's done it on purpose, just to annoy us.

Mrs. Slater: After all I've done for him, having to put up with him in the house these three years. It's nothing short of swindling.

Mrs. Jordan: I had to put up with him for five years.

Mrs. Slater: And you were trying to turn him over to us all the time.

Henry: But we don't know for certain that he's not paid the premium.

Mrs. Jordan: I do. It's come over me all at once that he hasn't.

Mrs. Slater: Victoria, run upstairs and fetch that bunch of keys that's on your grandpa's dressing-table.

Victoria (timidly): In grandpa's room?

Mrs. Slater: Yes.

Victoria: I - I don't like to.

Mrs. Slater: Don't talk so silly. There's no one can hurt you.

(Victoria goes out reluctantly.)

We'll see if he's locked the receipt up in the bureau.

Ben: In where? In this thing? (He rises and examines it)

Mrs. Jordan (also rising): Where did you pick that up, Amelia?
It's new since last I was here.

(They examine it closely.)

Mrs. Slater: Oh - Henry picked it up one day.

Mrs. Jordan: I like it. It's artistic. Did you buy it at an auction?

Henry: Eh? Where did I buy it, Amelia?

Mrs. Slater: Yes, at an auction.

Ben (disparagingly): Oh, second-hand.

Mrs. Jordan: Don't show your ignorance, Ben. All artistic things are second-hand. Look at those old masters.

(Victoria returns, very scared. She closes the door after her.)

Victoria: Mother! Mother!

Mrs. Slater: What is it, child?

Victoria: Grandpa's getting up.

Ben: What?

Mrs.Slater: What do you say?

Victoria: Grandpa's getting up.

Mrs.Jordan: The child's crazy.

Mrs.Slater: Don't talk so silly. Don't you know your grandpa's
dead?

Victoria: No,no; he's getting up. I saw him.

(They are transfixed with amazement; Ben and Mrs.Jordan left
of table; Victoria clings to Mrs.Slater, right of table;
Henry near fireplace.)

Mrs.Jordan: You'd better go up and see for yourself, Amelia.

Mrs.Slater: Here - come with me, Henry.

(Henry draws back terrified.)

Ben (suddenly): Hist! Listen.

(They look at the door. A slight chuckling is heard outside.
The door opens, revealing an old man clad in a faded but gay
dressing-gown. He is in his stockinged feet. Although over se-
venty, he is vigorous and well coloured; his bright, mali-
cious eyes twinkle under his heavy, reddish-grey eyebrows.He
is obviously either grandfather Abel Merryweather or else his
ghost.)

Abel: What's the matter with little Vicky? (He sees Ben and
Mrs.Jordan.) Hallo! What brings you here? How's your-
self, Ben?

(Abel thrusts his hand at Ben, who skips back smartly and
retreats with Mrs. Jordan to a safe distance below the sofa.)

Mrs.Slater (approaching Abel gingerly): Grandfather, is that
you? (She pokes him with her hand to see if he is so-
lid.)

Abel: Of course it's me. Don't do that, 'Melia. What the de-
vil do you mean by this tomfoolery ?

Mrs.Slater (to the others): He's not dead.

Ben: Doesn't seem like it.

Abel (irritated by the whispering): You've kept away long

enough, Lizzie; and now you've come you don't seem over-pleased to see me.

Mrs. Jordan: You took us by surprise, father. Are you keeping quite well?

Abel (trying to catch the words): Eh? What?

Mrs. Jordan: Are you quite well?

Abel: Aye, I'm right enough but for a bit of a headache. I wouldn't mind betting that I'm not the first in this house to be carried to the cemetery. I always think Henry there looks none to healthy.

Mrs. Jordan: Well, I never!

(Abel crosses to the armchair and Henry gets out of his way to the front of the table.)

Abel: 'Melia, what the dickens did I do with my new slippers?

Mrs. Slater (confused): Aren't they by the hearth, grandfather?

Abel: I don't see them. (Observing Henry trying to remove the slippers) Why, you've got 'em on, Henry.

Mrs. Slater (promptly): I told him to put them on to stretch them, they were that new and hard. Now, Henry.

(Mrs. Slater snatches the slippers from Henry and gives them to Abel, who puts them on and sits in armchair.)

Mrs. Jordan (to Ben): Well, I don't call that delicate, stepping into a dead man's shoes in such haste.

(Henry goes up to the window, and pulls up the blind. Victoria runs across to Abel and sits on the floor at his feet.)

Victoria: Oh, grandpa, I'm so glad you're not dead.

Mrs. Slater (in a vindictive whisper): Hold your tongue, Victoria.

Abel: Eh? What's that? Who's gone dead?

Mrs. Slater (loudly): Victoria says she's sorry about your head.

Abel: Ah, thank you, Vicky, but I'm feeling better.

Mrs. Slater (to Mrs. Jordan): He's so fond of Victoria.

Mrs. Jordan (to Mrs. Slater) : Yes, he's fond of our Jimmy, too.

Mrs. Slater: You'd better ask him if he promised your Jimmy his gold watch.

Mrs. Jordan (disconcerted): I couldn't just now. I don't feel equal to it.

Abel: Why, Ben, you're in mourning! And Lizzie too. And 'Melia, and Henry and little Vicky! Who's gone dead? It's someone in the family. (He chuckles)

Mrs. Slater: No one you know, father. A relation of Ben's.

Abel: And what relation of Ben's?

Mrs. Slater: His brother.

Ben (to Mrs. Slater): Dang it, I never had one.

Abel: Dear, dear. And what was his name, Ben?

Ben (at a loss): Er..er. (He crosses to front of table)

Mrs. Slater: (R. of table--prompting): Frederick.

Mrs. Jordan (L. of table -- prompting): Albert.

Ben: Er-Fred-Alb-Isaac.

Abel: Isaac? And where did your brother Isaac die?

Ben: In-er-in Australia.

Abel: Dear, dear. He'd be older than you, eh?

Ben: Yes, five years.

Abel: Aye, aye. Are you going to the funeral?

Ben: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Slater }
Mrs. Jordan } No, no.

Ben: No, of course not. (He retires to the left)

Abel (rising): Well, I suppose you've only been waiting for me to begin tea. I'm feeling hungry.

Mrs. Slater (taking up the kettle): I'll make tea.

Abel: Come along, now; sit you down and let's be jolly.

(Abel sits at the head of the table, facing spectator. Ben and Mrs. Jordan on the left. Victoria brings a chair and sits by Abel. Mrs. Slater and Henry sit on the right. Both the women are next to Abel.)

Mrs. Slater: Henry, give grandpa same tongue.

Abel: Thank you. I'll make a start. (He helps himself to bread and butter.)

(Henry serves the tongue and Mrs. Slater pours out tea. Only Abel eats with any heartiness.)

Ben: Glad to see you've got an appetite, Mr. Merryweather, although you've not been so well.

Abel: Nothing serious. I've been lying down for a bit.

Mrs. Slater: Been to sleep, grandfather?

Abel: No, I've not been to sleep.

Mrs. Slater }
Henry } Oh!

Abel (eating and drinking): I can't exactly call everything to mind, but I remember I was a bit dazed, like. I couldn't move an inch, hand or foot.

Ben: And could you see and hear, Mr. Merryweather?

Abel: Yes, but I don't remember seeing anything particular. Mustard, Ben.

(Ben passes the mustard.)

Mrs. Slater: Of course not, grandfather. It was all your fancy. You must have been asleep.

Abel (snappishly): I tell you I wasn't asleep, 'Melia. Damn it, I ought to know.

Mrs. Jordan: Didn't you see Henry or Amelia come into the room?

Abel (scratching his head): Now let me think

Mrs. Slater: I wouldn't press him, Elizabeth. Don't press him.

Henry: No. I wouldn't worry him.

Abel (suddenly recollecting): Ay, begad! 'Melia and Henry, what the devil did you mean by shifting my bureau out of my bedroom?

(Henry and Mrs. Slater are speechless.)

D'you hear me? Henry!'Melia!

Mrs. Jordan: What bureau was that, father?

Abel: Why, my bureau, the one I bought

Mrs. Jordan (pointing to the bureau): Was it that one, father?

Abel: Ah, that's it. What's it doing here? Eh?

(A pause. The clock on the mantelpiece strikes six, everyone looks at it.)

Brat me if that isn't my clock, too. What'the devil's been going on in this house?

(A slight pause.)

Ben: Well, I'll be hanged.

Mrs. Jordan (rising): I'll tell what's been going on in this house, father. Nothing short of robbery.

Mrs. Slater: Be quiet, Elizabeth.

Mrs. Jordan: I'll not be quiet. Oh, I call it double-faced.

Henry: Now, now, Elizabeth.

Mrs. Jordan: And you, too. Are you such a poor creature that you must do every dirty thing she tells you?

Mrs. Slater (rising): Remember where you are, Elizabeth.

Henry (rising): Come, come. No quarrelling.

Ben (rising): My wife's every right to speak her own mind.

Mrs. Slater: Then she can speak it outside, not here.

Abel (rising - thumping the table): Damn it all, will someone tell me what's been going on?

Mrs. Jordan: Yes, I will. I'll not see you robbed.

Abel: Who's been robbing me?

Mrs. Jordan: Amelia and Henry. They've stolen your clock and bureau. (Working herself up) They sneaked into your room like a thief in the night and stole them after you were dead.

Henry
Mrs. Slater } Hush! Quiet, Elizabeth!

Mrs. Jordan: I'll not be stopped. After you were dead, I say.

Abel: After who was dead?

Mrs. Jordan: You.

Abel: But I'm not dead.

Mrs. Jordan: No, but they thought you were.

(A pause. Abel gazes round at them.)

Abel: Oh! So that's why you're all in black to-day. You thought I was dead. (He chuckles.) That was a big mistake. (He sits and resumes his tea.)

Mrs. Slater (sobbing): Grandfather.

Abel: It didn't take you long to start dividing my things between you.

Mrs. Jordan: No, father; you mustn't think that, Amelia was simply getting hold of them on her own account.

Abel: You always were a keen one, Amelia. I suppose you thought the will wasn't fair.

Henry: Did you make a will?

Abel: Yes, it was locked up in the bureau.

Mrs. Jordan: And what was in it, father?

Abel: That doesn't matter now. I'm thinking of destroying it and making another.

Mrs. Slater (sobbing): Grandfather, you'll not be hard on me.

Abel: I'll trouble you for another cup of tea, 'Melia; two lumps and plenty of milk.

Mrs. Slater: With pleasure, grandfather. (She pours out the tea)

Abel: I don't want to be hard on anyone. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Since your mother died, I've lived part of the time with you, 'Melia, and part with you Lizzie. Well, I shall make a new will, leaving all my bits of things to whoever I'm living with when I die. How does that strike you?

Henry: It's a bit of a lottery, like.

Mrs. Jordan: And who do you intend to live with from now?

Abel (drinking his tea): I'm just coming to that.

Mrs. Jordan: You know, father, it's quite time you came to live with us again. We'd make you very comfortable.

Mrs. Slater: No, he's not been with us as long as he was with you.

Mrs. Jordan: I may be wrong, but I don't think father will fancy living on with you after what's happened to-day.

Abel: So you'd like to have me again, Lizzie?

Mrs. Jordan: You know we're ready for you to make your home with us for as long as you please.

Abel: What do you say to that, 'Melia?

Mrs. Slater: All I can say is that Elizabeth's changed her mind in the last two years. (Rising) Grandfather, do you know what the quarrel between us was about?

Mrs. Jordan: Amelia, don't be a fool; sit down.

Mrs. Slater: No, if I'm not to have him, you shan't either. We quarrelled because Elizabeth said she wouldn't take you off our hands at any price. She said she'd had enough of you to last a lifetime, and we'd got to keep you.

Abel: It seems to me that neither of you has any cause to feel proud about the way you've treated me.

Mrs. Slater: If I've done anything wrong, I'm sure I'm sorry for it.

Mrs. Jordan: And I can't say more than that, too.

Abel: It's a bit late to say it, now. You neither of you cared to put up with me.

Mrs. Slater }
Mrs. Jordan } No, no, grandfather.

Abel: Aye, you both say, that because of what I've told you about leaving my money. Well, since you don't want me I'll go to someone that does.

Ben: Come, Mr. Merryweather, you've got to live with one of your daughters.

Abel: I'll tell you what I've got to do. On Monday next I've got to do three things. I've got to go to the lawyer's and alter my will; and I've got to go to the insurance office and pay my premium; and I've got to go to the Registry Office and get married.

Ben }
Henry } What!

Mrs. Jordan: Get married!

Mrs. Slater: He's out of his senses.

(General consternation)

Abel: I say I'm going to get married.

Mrs. Slater: Who to?

Abel: To Mrs. John Shorrocks who keeps the "Ring-o'-Bells". We've had it fixed up a good while now, but I was keeping it for a pleasant surprise. (He rises.) I felt I was a bit of a burden to you, so I found someone who'd think it a pleasure to look after me. We shall be very glad to see you at the ceremony. (He gets to the door.) Till Monday, then. (Opening the door.) It's a good thing you brought that bureau downstairs, 'Melie. It'll be handier to carry across to the "Ring-o'-Bells" on Monday. (He goes out)

(The Curtain falls.)

ТАЛЛИНСКИЙ ПОЛИТЕХНИЧЕСКИЙ ИНСТИТУТ

Кафедра русского языка и иностранных языков

МНИМЫЙ ПОКОЙНИК

(пьеса в одном действии)

На английском языке

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