

## **What Ho, Jerusalem?**

A comedy in three acts by Craig Payst

### **Cast**

**Sir Ruprecht Gallworthy** - A miser

**Roland "Rolie" Pffefingleigh** - Nephew to sir Ruprecht

**Constance Pffefingleigh** - Sister to Rolie.

**Hermenaut Katablepsides** - An artist.

**Flora Nickelodia** - A bohemian.

**Basil "Barky" Barquwhaite** - A twit.

**Lavinia, Lady Croth** - Aunt to Rolie and Constance.

**Colonel Merrywether** - One of his Majesty's finest.

**Mandala** - Servant to Colonel Merrywether.

**The Vicar** - Local man of the cloth.

## Act I

**Scene:** *England, sometime between the wars. The well-manicured front lawn of Frottaging Manor. A few lawn chairs are sitting beside a table holding a few glasses, a bottle of gin, an ashtray, a case of cigarettes, and a lighter. Sir Ruprecht Gallworthy sits napping in one of the lawn chairs. He is soon interrupted by his nephew, Roland "Rolie" Pffefingleigh who comes bounding onto the stage.*

**Rolie:** What ho, Uncle?

**Gallworthy:** Hmmph...what?

**Rolie:** I said, "What ho, Uncle?"

**Gallworthy:** What do you mean, "What ho"?

**Rolie:** I mean... you know... what ho?

**Gallworthy:** Yes, I heard you, boy. What I mean is what do you mean by "What ho"?

**Rolie:** What ho? Well, how are, sort of...things? A bit of the old how's your father?

**Gallworthy:** How's my father?

**Rolie:** Yes, that sort of thing.

**Gallworthy:** He's dead. You should know that, boy, he was your grandfather.

**Rolie:** Quite.

**Gallworthy:** Tell me, nephew, where exactly did this degeneracy of which you seem so prime an example enter our bloodline? It's certainly not your mother's fault. My sister Margaret was a solid enough woman.

**Rolie:** Well yes - from what I remember.

**Gallworthy:** All the Pffefingleigh women seem generally sound. Perhaps it was your father. Your father was an idiot, wasn't he, boy?

**Rolie:** Father? An Idiot? I think I may have heard someone mention that. Perhaps it was Aunt Lavinia.

**Gallworthy:** Lavinia! God know she's a rock of a woman!

**Rolie:** Indeed. Something of a Gibraltar.

**Gallworthy:** Now I alone bear the consequences of this diminution of the blood. If only my sister hadn't had herself done in up the Kush along with that idiot husband of hers I wouldn't be burdened with supporting you and finding a suitable man on whom to pawn off that unmarketable sister of yours.

**Rolie:** Connie, you mean?

**Gallworthy:** Have you any other sister?

**Ronnie:** Not strictly speaking, No. Certainly not any that I'm aware of. But one can never be too sure about these things. Then again, I'm never too sure about anything. Not as bad off as some, though. There was this chap who used to come round the club, Runcible Faughteringhay something, hired a new valet and it completely slipped his mind to

dismiss the old one. Took him years to remember who the rather formal chap who sat around reading newspapers and a collecting a pay packet was. Funny thing, valets.

**Gallworthy:** Oh, do shut up, Rolie.

**Rolie:** Right ho.

**Gallworthy:** Is that damned Greek here yet?

**Rolie:** Sorry?

**Gallworthy:** That damned Greek, is he here yet? That artist friend of yours!

**Rolie:** Artist? Oh - Hermenaut Katablepsides, you mean?

**Gallworthy:** Whatever he's called - he's a damned Greek, that's all I know.

**Rolie:** I'm not sure I'd call him a damned Greek, uncle. I think I could stretch so far as to say dashed Greek, but I don't believe that I could go so far as to fill in all the letters.

**Gallworthy:** Never mind what you'd fill in, boy. Is he here?

**Rolie:** Well, not so much, no. I say, uncle, what do you want Hermenaut K. for anyway?

**Gallworthy:** You sister. He's an artist, isn't he? I need him to paint a portrait of you sister. To send to India.

**Rolie:** Ah. I see. Too much room on the walls.

**Gallworthy:** What walls?

**Rolie:** In India. Too much room on the walls. Need something to fill them up with. I suppose tigers have eaten all the other paintings. A portrait of old Cons should do the trick nicely.

**Gallworthy:** It's for the colonel, Roland.

**Rolie:** Yes, well, there you are then. Someone that high up in the ranks is bound to have some particularly spacious walls.

**Gallworthy:** The colonel she's supposed to be marrying. He won't take her until he's gotten a decent look at her, God help us all. So I'm having that damned Greek friend of yours paint a dashed portrait of her, which I shall then promptly ship off to Colonel Cuthbert Merrywether, and God willing then send Connie hard on its heels. One less useless relation on my hands. Do you understand, boy?

**Rolie:** Quite.

**Gallworthy:** Thank heavens for that.

**Rolie:** Except...

**Gallworthy:** Oh, balls.

**Rolie:** Well, there are these rather remarkable things called photographs these days, uncle. Produce a jolly fine likeness. Spitting image, really.

**Gallworthy:** Which is precisely the problem. Spitting is just the sort of reaction which your sister's image is likely to provoke.

**Rolie:** I say! Steady on, Uncle Ruprecht...

**Gallworthy:** Oh, don't be such an ass, Rolie. You know as well as I it's a perfectly fair characterization of that thing she calls a face. Photographs don't lie. And your sister is in dire need of deceit.

**Rolie:** Fair enough. It's just that one does feel a certain consanguinial obligation in these matters, just the same. Blood being thicker than the other stuff. Still, are you sure Hermenaut's the man for the job?

**Gallworthy:** I thought that this Hermenaut - What did you call him?

**Rolie:** Katablepsides. Rhymes with - ehm - "What a lot of knees."

**Gallworthy:** What a lot of Knees?

**Rolie:** Hmm. Perhaps that wasn't the best what-do-you-call-it. Catastrophes! That's the thing! Hermenaut Catastrophes!

**Gallworthy:** Yes, well I thought this Hermenaut Catastrophe was all the talk of the smart set. That whole Chelsea bunch. You know, the sort of people who genuinely pretend to care about this sort of thing.

**Rolie:** Oh, he is, he is. It's just that...well, his work is a bit modern, isn't it? I mean, chins do all sorts of odd things in his paintings.

**Gallworthy:** Chins do all sorts of odd things on her, as well. With any luck the sums will even out. Besides, if he's as much the talk of the town as you say he is, this painting might be worth something in a few years! The Colonel can have it over his mantle and point it out to whomever drops by. He can point proudly and say "Yes, that's my wife, and let me tell you something else - it's a genuine Catastrophe!"

**Rolie:** Quite. I say, uncle - here comes Connie now.

*(Constance enters, dressed in full riding gear and carrying a crop)*

**Constance:** Do you know, I think there's nothing I love more than a good ride. It's quite the thing to have such a magnificent beast beneath you, it really gives ones thighs something to do. And I find one's thighs are so often looking for something to do when one is in the country.

**Rolie:** What ho, Connie!

**Constance:** Oh, hello, Rolie. Uncle Ruprecht. I say, any more of that gin?

**Gallworthy:** There's a man coming to see you this afternoon, Constance.

**Constance:** A man? Well, I have no idea what he could possibly want with me.

**Gallworthy:** An artist. He's coming to paint your portrait.

**Constance:** What, this afternoon?

**Gallworthy:** He'll be here any minute now.

**Constance:** Well, he'll just have to wait. I certainly don't have time to sit for a portrait this afternoon.

**Gallworthy:** This afternoon, Constance.

**Constance:** Oh, but uncle, I've already made plans. I was going to go shoot something.

**Gallworthy:** You're having your portrait painted by a damned Greek as soon as he gets here and that's the last word!

**Constance:** What on earth for, uncle? I've had my portrait done lots of times, what's the emphasis on this effigy?

**Gallworthy:** It's for Colonel Merrywether. It may be the last chance we have of getting you married off and hence off my hands.

**Constance:** But I'm doing fine in your hands, uncle. Don't marry me off on my account.

**Gallworthy:** It's not your account I'm worried about, it's my account. My bank account. Having you gadabouts gadding about here is costing me a pretty penny.

**Constance:** Oh, really Uncle Ruprecht, you're such a miser. We all know perfectly well that you're rolling in the stuff. You've got more of it than can possibly spend until you die, which won't be that long anyway, so I really don't see what all the fuss is about.

**Gallworthy:** Well what about your inheritance, then? You know the terms of your father's will well enough. His first daughter to be married inherits a considerable sum and this house the moment she marries. Otherwise, Frottaging Manor reverts back to the -

**Constance:** Reverts back to the distaff side and to Lord Streitchleigh, who not only despises you, but takes a very active interest in letting the world in on just how much. So the minute this house is back in Streitchleigh hands, you're applying for a vacancy at the nearest Gypsy caravan.

**Gallworthy:** It's your duty to your family, Constance! Having more or less raised you single handedly -

**Constance:** With the assistance of a small army of servants. You're competely useless on your own. Sometimes I think the

only reason I come back from town is the way one can always rely on the chambermaids here to keep up Frotaging.

**Gallworthy:** And the thought of Clinkerdagger Streighleigh going about Frotaging with our chambermaids certainly rubs me the wrong way. This marriage will secure both of our futures!

**Constance:** But why does it have to Colonel Merrywether, Uncle? India, of all places. I could never live in India. Especially after what happened to mum and dad. I'll have you know full well that I've no intention of having anyone do me in up the Kush.

**Rolie:** Nor me neither.

**Constance:** Do shut up, Rolie.

**Rolie:** Right ho!

**Constance:** Besides, from what I hear the man's an absolute idiot.

**Gallworthy:** Of course he's in idiot, Constance, How else do you expect he could have made Colonel? You don't get ahead in the army by having brains, my girl. The only thing that's holding the man back from making Brigadier is that he can still successfully brush his own teeth. But this particular idiot, my dear, also happens to be the son of Sir Maywell Merrywether, the great India rubber baron.

**Constance:** So I shall never want for tennis balls. There's a comfort.

**Gallworthy:** His father was one of the three biggest men in rubber this empire has ever produced!

**Constance:** He was still a tradesman. It's hardly respectable.

**Gallworthy:** Colonel Merrywether stands to inherit the sort of fortune that buys respectability. In this case - ours.

**Constance:**.. But he's still an idiot, uncle, no matter how much he's got tucked away in rubber.

**Gallworthy:** A rich idiot. It's a situation which works distinctly to your advantage.

**Constance:** I suppose you do have a point. So who's this chap who's coming around to immortalize me?

**Gallworthy:** Some damned Greek. Friend of your brother.

**Constance:** Rolie?

**Rolie:** Hermenaut Katablepsides. More of an acquaintance, really. Met him one night dining at the Trocadero with Barky Barquwhaite. He and old Barky are as thick as thieves. Had a rather remarkable young girl with him as well - wearing more scarves than one would have thought possible - you know the sort. Never caught her name. To tell the truth, I think Barky rather fancied her.

**Constance:** Is he any good, Rolie?

**Rolie:** Not good enough, apparently. Went home alone.

**Constance:** The painter, Rolie. Is the painter any good?

**Rolie:** I suppose. Of course I know very little about art -

**Gallworthy:** You know very little about anything.

**Rolie:** I'm led to believe that he's top of the old whatever in the sort of set who make a fuss over knowing more than I about this sort of thing.

**Ruprecht:** He means he's the talk of that Chelsea set.

**Rolie:** He's really the talk of anywhere that prefers its tobacco stuffed in a pipe. Barky's bought two or three of his canvases, thought I'm rather sure he only wanted them because that girl he fancies is the model in them. Must be quite the thing for a chap to come down in the morning after a shave and find his *pomme d'amour* pointing an arrow at him.

**Constance:** An arrow?

**Rolie:** That's the sort of thing he paints - nymphs and fauns and all that sort of modern stuff. Girls in sheets being propositioned by swans.

**Gallworthy:** Oh, Bother! I detest that sort of thing!

**Constance:** For once I'm with you, uncle. Can't he paint a decent fox hunting scene, or some ships heading off to give the wogs what for? Doomed foxes and dead darkies, that's real art.

**Rolie:** One could ask, I suppose. As a matter of fact, I believe that's him coming up the path. Oh, and I say he's got that girl with him. The one Barky fancies. Hang about, two girls! Never seen the other one before.

*(Hermenaut Katablepsides enters, followed closely by **Flora Nickelodia**)*

**Hermenaut:** Come, come - I have been sent for by commission. These good English people await my genius, and your slow movement with my luggage is delaying my genius.

*(**Barky Barquwhaite** enters, disguised in drag as **Prudence**, weighed down with luggage.)*

**Rolie:** Hermenaut, old bean!

**Hermenaut:** Ah, Mr. Pffefingleigh! How lovely it is to see you again! You no doubt remember my companion and fellow bohemian Miss Flora Nickelodia.

**Rolie:** Certainly! Though I don't believe we were introduced properly last time. Roland Pffefingleigh, at your service.

**Flora:** Pffefingleigh! What a lovely old English name! How is it spelled?

**Rolie:** P-F-F-E-F-I-N-G-L-E-I-G-H. The P is silent, you see. As is one of the Fs, though I can never recall which one.

**Flora:** It's the sign of a real gentleman to have a couple of Fs after a quiet P.

**Hermenaut:** Miss Nickelodia travels with me and poses for any background figures in my paintings. She's quite remarkable. The only other woman I've ever known who could stay as absolutely still for so long is my wife. Though

that is only in bed. And this is Miss Prudence Barquwhaite.  
I believe you know her brother, Basil.

**Rolie:** I say, Barky never let on he was possessed with  
siblings.

**Constance:** Here, let me give you a hand with those bags.  
What an awful lot of them you're carrying.

**Barky:** Most kind.

**Constance:** I say, you're a strapping thing, aren't you?

**Barky:** Oh, no more than the other girls in my family.

**Constance:** What I wouldn't give for arms like that. I'll  
bet your a real demon on the clay.

**Barky:** I did play for my school.

**Constance:** Well, I'm always up for a game. Let's get these  
things put away and then you can show me your backhand.

**Rolie:** Mr. Katablepsides, may I present my sister, Miss Constance Pffefingleigh.

**Hermenaut:** Ah, the young lady who is to be transformed beneath my brush. Delighted, delighted.

**Constance:** Charmed, I'm sure. Come on, Prudie, let's get you gear stowed!

*(Constance exits into the house, carrying some suitcases)*

**Rolie:** And, Mr. Katablepsides, this is my uncle, Sir Ruprecht Gallworthy.

**Hermenaut:** Sir Ruprecht, a great pleasure to meet you. I am honored to have been commissioned by such a great man as yourself, a great man with a gorgeous house.

**Gallworthy:** You're most kind. It's an honor to have the great Catastrophe in my home.

**Hermenaut:** Eh - *Epharisto*. Thank You.

**Gallworthy:** And I'd like to welcome you, and this fine young lady. Miss Nickelodia, delighted.

**Flora:** Oh, Sir Ruprecht, you must call me just Flora.

**Gallworthy:** And you must call me just Ruprecht.

**Flora:** Names are such awful things, aren't they? How I long to be as anonymous as a tree, or a cloud, or even a vole.

**Gallworthy:** Don't we all, my dear?

**Hermenaut:** Sir Ruprecht, I have brought all of my brushes and paints, all I need is the studio space. You have somewhere which I may make use of as a studio?

**Gallworthy:** Oh, indeed, indeed. The place is huge. Tack your pick of any room you like.

**Hermenaut:** It must have very much light.

**Rolie:** Oh, you'll want barmy Great Uncle Clarence's room, then. The whole ceiling's made of glass. Poor fellow. He was quite mad. Thought he was Jupiter.

**Flora:** The god?

**Gallworthy:** The planet. We had to have that whole part of the roof replaced with glass so he could see the night sky. Then one night the planet Venus moved into sight and the poor chap refused to come out of the corner. Said he wasn't due for a conjunction for another eighty seven years.

**Flora:** How extraordinary. What happened to him?

**Gallworthy:** Oh, he never came out of the corner. Died there. Come on, I'll show you up.

**Hermenaut:** I understand that these days they are doing quite remarkable things in Vienna with the feebleminded.

**Gallworthy:** I shall have to bear that in mind for Rolie.

*(Gallworthy, Hermenaut, and Flora exit into the house.*

*Rolie starts in but is stopped by Barky.)*

**Barky:** Psst! Rolie!

**Rolie:** Hmm?

**Barky:** Rolie, it's me, Barky!

**Rolie:** Barky! I thought you were rather solid looking for the fairer sex. What on earth are you doing dressed up as your sister?

**Barky:** I don't have a sister, you fool!

**Rolie:** Oh, I see. Then who are you dressed up as?

**Barky:** My sister.

**Rolie:** But I thought you just said you don't have a sister.

**Barky:** I don't. I'm dressed up like the sister I don't have.

**Rolie:** You're dressed up like the sister you don't have?

**Barky:** Exactly.

**Rolie:** Yes, well, Basil - seeing as how I'm fairly certain we're not holding a fancy dress ball here at the moment, would you care to explain why exactly you're suddenly walking down the other side of Saville Row?

**Barky:** It's Flora, Rolie.

**Rolie:** What about her?

**Barky:** I'm in love with her.

**Rolie:** Oh dear. Now, look here Barky, you know I've warned you about this sort of thing in the past. I've warned you that these flights of passion which your are so wont to go soaring off on can only lead - can only lead - to lunacy. Madness! Stark raving - ravingness! And here before me I have the living proof. "I thought you were his chum," they'll say, "didn't you warn him?" they'll say. And I shall respond "I did, I did warn him. I am completely

blameless in the matter. Roland Cuthbert Pffefingleigh cannot be blamed for the fact that his friend Basil Barquwhaite is parading around in considerably more skirts than your average chap!

**Barky:** Oh, don't be such an ass, Rolie. Do you think I like being dressed up like this?

**Rolie:** Well, you did always take on the girl's parts when we did those theatricals at school.

**Barky:** That was a different thing entirely! This is about love! Don't you know about love, Rolie?

**Rolie:** Never touch the stuff. Makes a chap go all odd. I once knew a chap with a wooden leg -

**Barky:** Never mind about your chap with a wooden leg! You've got to help me. You've got to help me with Flora. She doesn't love me!

**Rolie:** Yes, and that's another thing. Why are you possessed with this idea that pretending to be your imaginary sister is going to cause her to go head over heels for you?

**Barky:** She refused me, Rolie! She told me she could never love someone like me!

**Rolie:** Someone like you? Why, what is it you're like?

**Barky:** I have no idea! I'm like what I've always been like!

**Rolie:** Yes, well perhaps I see her point.

**Barky:** So I thought that if she sent me away, perhaps she's listen to a woman. You know, feminine connections and all that. Women believe one another, Rolie. They don't believe us at all.

**Rolie:** I'll take your word for it.

**Barky:** So I thought I'd better disguise myself as my sister, and get close to her so I could talk up all my good points.

**Rolie:** Soften her up a bit, you mean?

**Barky:** Exactly.

**Rolie:** And then when she's sufficiently soft you'll pop back into the old trousers and come around and reap the benefits?

**Barky:** Yes! Yes! That's my plan exactly, Rolie!

**Rolie:** Well, I have to say Barky that once one is past the rather odd initial proposition the whole argument falls into place rather soundly. If P then Q, and all that. And it's remarkably well thought out for one of your insane schemes. How's it working?

**Barky:** Terribly. I think she likes my sister even less than me. Oh, I'm no good as a woman, Rolie. I just don't have the knack for it. You've got to help me, Rolie!

**Rolie:** I'm more than willing to do a chap a good turn, Barky. You've bailed me out of a few scrapes yourself. But frankly, I'm at a loss as to exactly what you expect me to do. I haven't the foggiest how to go about being a member of the opposite - you know - I couldn't tell you how to curtsy, or which handkerchief to use, or even how to get the clothes off properly.

**Barky:** But you have a sister! You need to get Constance to teach me. But on the sly - you mustn't blow my cover!

**Rolie:** I mustn't do what?

**Barky:** Blow my cover! You know, let on that it's me under the skirts. It's what they say in those American detective novels!

**Rolie:** Of which you have apparently been reading too many.

**Barky:** Yes, well, the Americans are better at this sort of thing than us. Remember when they all dressed up like women and threw all that tea into the harbor?

**Rolie:** Red Indians.

**Barky:** What?

**Rolie:** They dressed up like Red Indians, not like women.

**Barky:** Are you sure about that, Rolie?

**Rolie:** Quite.

**Barky:** That doesn't sound right to me.

**Rolie:** No, I always did quite well in history. For some reason the long departed always seemed to me a bit more understandable. Something about being dead makes a chap very predictable.

**Barky:** Anyway, you can't let anyone know it's me. Flora will be furious if she knows I've deceived her. You've got to tell Constance that I never had a proper education, never went to finishing school. Get her to show me what I'm doing wrong and why these undergarments all seem so dazedly complicated.

**Rolie:** You may not have much luck there, either. I'm afraid Connie's always been more of a, well, sporting sort of girl.

*(Constance enters from the house)*

**Constance:** There you are! We've been waiting for you, Prudie. You're not letting old Rolie here keep you away from us forever. Hermenaut's getting all his brushes and things out, and he's even brought costumes! It's all jolly good fun. Come on, you can help me get changed. Be a dear and grab those cases, won't you, Rolie?

**Rolie:** Right ho!

*(Constance exits into the house, dragging Barky with her. As soon as the doors have shut Gallworthy bursts out through them)*

**Gallworthy:** Rolie! She's astounding!

**Rolie:** Constance? I suppose she has her points, and I've her the term "unique" tossed rather politely in her direction, but seeing as how we shared the same bit of maternal turf I could stretch to astounding. Still, that's a rather unusual burst of avuncular enthusiasm. Why the sudden shower of adjectives?

**Gallworthy:** No, not Constance, you fool! Flora! Miss Nickelodia!

**Rolie:** Oh good heavens, not you too!

**Gallworthy:** What do you mean, not me too?

**Rolie:** Oh, nothing, nothing. Like I said, old Barky was fond of her as well.

**Gallworthy:** Oh, bother old Barky!

**Rolie:** Believe me, uncle, those are my sentiments exactly.

**Gallworthy:** Oh, Rolie - what am I supposed to do? I haven't felt like this in all my... how old am I, Rolie?

**Rolie:** Past it, I should have thought.

**Gallworthy:** You have to help me Rolie! You have to leave!

**Rolie:** Leave?

**Gallworthy:** Yes, leave! Look here, I know perfectly well that I am no longer the prime specimen I was in my youth - but age has its advantages! I'm wise! I'm experienced! I've seen the world.

**Rolie:** Seen the world? You've hardly ever set a foot farther than the front gate. I can't remember the last time you so much as went to town to buy a stamp.

**Gallworthy:** But she won't see these advantages with a young sort like you about the place. Frankly Roland, I could do without the competition. So you have to leave. Immediately! I'm sending you down to the post office to send a telegram - no, two telegrams, then you'll come back here and pack your bags and be off.

**Rolie:** Off where, Uncle? I only got in from London yesterday, and I can't go back there. Promised my man he could have the whole week off. If I go back to town I'll have to press my own shirts or something.

**Gallworthy:** I'm packing you off to your Aunt Lavinia's.

**Rolie:** Aunt Lavinia? Good lord, Uncle - I didn't think even you could be so cruel.

**Gallworthy:** Shut up! And here - take this down. These are the two telegrams I want you to send - To Colonel Cuthbert Merrywether, 14th Division, Bengal - Soon arriving portrait of niece for your approval stop accurate representation how she looks stop.

**Rolie:** Stopped.

**Gallworthy:** And the next, to Lavinia, Lady Croth, the Manor, Little Chipping Sundbury - I give you my nephew stop do with him what you will -

**Rolie:** I say, Uncle -

**Gallworthy:** Stop!

**Rolie:** Right ho.

**Gallworthy:** Down to the post office with you, boy.

**Rolie:** I'll go - but I'll have it known that I object most strenuously!

**Gallworthy:** You can object all you want on the train, now get a move on!

**Rolie:** And because it's easier than staying here with the mad Barquwhaite.

**Gallworthy:** What's that you say? The woman's mad, you say?

**Rolie:** What woman?

**Gallworthy:** Miss Barquwhaite!

**Rolie:** Oh, eh - Yes, quite raving mad. I just remembered... suddenly... just now... why I never knew that Barky had a sister. Because I did know, only I'd forgotten, because Barky only mentioned it once, but now that I see her I remember that one time he did mention that he had a sister and that he didn't like to talk about it... you know the sort of thing.. and that she'd been packed off to a place in... Canada! A sanatorium in Canada - because she's stark

raving mad! As mad as a March hare! Completely and totally incurable! No hope whatsoever!

**Gallworthy:** Well what's she doing here, then?

**Rolie:** Perhaps she's feeling a bit better?

**Gallworthy:** What was wrong with her?

**Rolie:** Oh, eh - she thought she was a man.

**Gallworthy:** Oh dear. I certainly don't approve of that.

**Rolie:** Yes. Thought she was a man. So if she seems a bit - mannish - almost sort of like the genuine article of the dominant sex done up in some kind of ridiculous costume - well, you must look the other way!

**Gallworthy:** Must I?

**Rolie:** Oh, you must, you must! Do you recall how put off old Uncle Clarence would be if anyone mentioned he wasn't quite as orbital as he considered himself?

**Gallworthy:** Oh my...

**Rolie:** Well, must be off, uncle! Got to send these telegrams to send! Pip pip!

*(Rolie exits)*

**Gallworthy:** Oh dear, another lunatic in the house. This is no good - no good at all!

*(Constance enters, dressed as a Ganymede)*

**Gallworthy:** What in the devil are you wearing, Constance?

**Constance:** Your Greek chap put me in it. He says soldiers like this sort of thing.

**Gallworthy:** Perhaps in the Greek army.

**Constance:** Says he's going to do me with nymphs and sheep and all that sort of thing fluttering about. I'm to be some shepherd who was innocently standing about one day when out of the blue Zeus swoops down and buggers off with him.

**Gallworthy:** Ganymede.

**Constance:** That's the chap. Of course, I never paid any attention to that sort of thing at school. Damn. I say, Uncle, any chance of a cigarette? I must have left mine in something with pockets.

**Gallworthy:** Here.

**Constance:** Cheers. Anyway, he sent me down to inquire if there was any chance of a bite to eat.

**Gallworthy:** Eat?

**Constance:** Yes, I think he specifically asked if there were any cold chicken... Cold chicken, cold tongue, cold ham, cold beef, pickled gherkins, salad, French rolls, cress sandwiches, potted meat -

**Gallworthy:** Onion Sauce!

**Constance:** He didn't specifically mention it, but it would go rather well with the cold beef, wouldn't it? Oh, and he also inquired if we might dip into the cellar.

**Gallworthy:** The cellar?

**Constance:** Apparently one works up quite a thirst painting.

**Gallworthy:** I'll have cook send up some old sandwiches.

**Constance:** I say uncle, this is all rather jolly, really. And this costume isn't so bad, either. There's a great deal of freedom of movement. Pru Barquwhaite's quite the thing, as well. Her brother is such is such a dreadful idiot, I suppose we know now where all the admirable qualities in the family ended up.

**Gallworthy:** Yes, a word in your ear about all that, Constance. Rolie gave a bit of a warning about her, seems she suffers from delusions.

**Constance:** Delusions?

**Gallworthy:** Delusions.

**Constance:** What sort of delusions?

**Gallworthy:** Apparently she thinks she's a man.

**Constance:** Really? How extraordinary!

**Gallworthy:** So best to steer clear, you know. You never know what these types are capable of.

**Constance:** Oh, I can imagine. Vividly!

*(Hermenaut enters, eating off a plate of cheese, followed by Flora)*

**Hermenaut:** This is a quite good Stilton, Sir Ruprecht, quite good. It is aged very nicely. Cheese is like a woman, is it not? It gets better and better with age, until it reaches a point where it goes bad very suddenly.

**Gallworthy:** Where did you get that from?

**Hermenaut:** Your man was kind enough to show me to the larder.

**Flora:** Word are such curious things, aren't they Sir Ruprecht? We call it a larder, yet we keep so much more than just lard in it.

**Gallworthy:** Indeed, Miss Nickelodia. Very curious.

**Flora:** Of course, I suppose one must call it something, and to have the room named after every single thing in it would be a terrible mouthful. I mean one couldn't go about calling it the room of lard and cheese and flour and tinned sardines.

**Gallworthy:** It would be more than one would care to chew on.

**Flora:** Oh, I would do away with words if I could, Sir Ruprecht, and just have feelings. How I long for that deep connection! To encounter a fellow-traveler, one who can simply reach out and feel what's fluttering within my

bosom. Do you believe in the elemental creatures, Sir Ruprecht?

**Gallworthy:** I beg your pardon?

**Flora:** Living things composed entirely of air, fire, or water.

**Constance:** I've often thought my brother to be all wet.

**Hermenaut:** Miss Nickelodia is a great believer in the hidden world, Sir Ruprecht.

**Constance:** What, Fairies and that sort of thing?

**Flora:** There are many sources of ancient power still with us, Sir Ruprecht. Ley lines, Sir Ruprecht, great paths of energy that criss-cross the English countryside. Your house sits on not one, but two such a ley lines, Sir Ruprecht. Your home is awash in mysterious, spiritual energies. You don't know how rare it is to find a man of your age with the power of more than one ley in him.

**Gallworthy:** I shall do my best not to disappoint you, Miss Nickelodia. You must teach me more about this mysterious energy.

**Flora:** Do you have the second sight, Sir Ruprecht?

**Gallworthy:** Only after I've drunk about two bottles, my dear.

**Flora:** What I mean, Sir Ruprecht, is - are you a medium?

**Gallworthy:** You'll have to ask my tailor. I never buy off the rack.

**Flora:** Oh, Sir Ruprecht, you're such a witty man.

**Gallworthy:** Do you really think so, my dear?

**Flora:** I do, Sir Ruprecht.

**Constance:** Bear in mind she also believes in fairies, uncle.

**Flora:** You remind me of my father - such a very distinguished man.

**Gallworthy:** Oh? A peer?

**Flora:** He ran a chip shop in Croydon.

**Constance:** But I'm sure it was a very respectable chip shop. Just the kind that made the empire great.

*(Barky enters.)*

**Barky:** Oh, I say, there you all are. I was beginning to think that you'd just run off and left me behind, Flora.

**Flora:** That hardly seems probable, does it Miss Barquwhaite? We've only just arrived.

**Barky:** Yes, it was just rather lonely up there. It is a large house.

**Constance:** Never mind about that, Prudie, you're here with us now.

**Gallworthy:** Yes, here with us. Can I get you anything, Mr. .. eh...Miss Barquwhaite? Large whiskey?

**Barky:** Oh, that'd be lovely.

**Gallworthy:** Oh, I meant a small sherry.

**Barky:** Oh, um.. yes.. so did I.

**Hermenaut:** I'll have one as well, thank you.

**Gallworthy:** Sherry?

**Barky:** Whiskey?

**Hermenaut:** One of each.

**Gallworthy:** Shouldn't you be painting?

**Hermenaut:** A painter is not always painting when he is painting. Do not worry, one look at your daughter's portrait and your Indian will want her in a moment.

**Gallworthy:** He's a soldier *in* India. He's not a bloody wog. This is a very established family.

**Hermenaut:** Ah, apologies. My English sometimes slips. I know you would not pass your family's glory on to a bloody wog. Or a Jew. Or a Greek.

**Constance:** Think nothing of it, Mr. Katablepsides. My parents were done in by the wogs, you see, so it's a rather sensitive subject about the house.

**Hermenaut:** I'm sorry to hear it. My own parents were done in by the cursed Turks. Of course, most of Greece was done in by the Turks.

**Constance:** I say, Uncle Ruprecht, didn't daddy have at the Turks once?

**Gallworthy:** What? The Turks? I can't remember. I think there was something besides just wogs he shot in the Kush,

but I'll be damned if I can remember what it was. But he definitely killed wogs. Wish I could remember what the other ones were.

**Constance:** Well, daddy killed some other sort of darkie and that's the important thing, isn't it?

**Flora:** How I pity the dark races, really. And the Americans. How sad it must be not to be English.

**Gallworthy:** England for the English, that's what I say! Especially in India!

**Constance:** I really have to confess that I'm dreading it, Uncle. Suppose this Colonel of yours wants to pack me off back there? I couldn't never live like that, I'm sure. It seems so wretchedly uncivilized. What does one do if one wants something to shoot?

**Barky:** Tigers.

**Constance:** Well, that does sound like fun.

**Gallworthy:** It's not a matter for discussion, my dear. I've sent young Roland into town to send a telegram telling the Colonel to expect your portrait. And another telling Aunt Lavinia that I'm sending Roland off packing to her for a few days.

**Constance:** Sending Rolie to Aunt Lavinia's? what one earth for?

**Gallworthy:** Never you mind, I just don't want him underfoot for a while.

**Barky:** I say, here comes old Rolie now.

*(Rolie enters, carrying two telegrams)*

**Gallworthy:** Did you send the telegrams, boy?

**Rolie:** Indeed I did. Astounding things, these telegrams. Sent the initial missives off, nipped round to the local for a quick gin, and by the time I'd popped back in the

post office the replies were waiting for me on these little bits of paper. All the way from India, imagine that!

**Gallworthy:** Well, what do they say boy?

**Rolie:** Let's see - this one's from Aunt Lavinia, "What do you mean sending portrait of niece for my approval - stop - I know what Constance looks like and don't approve - stop - stop being an ass - full stop." That's rather cryptic, wouldn't you say Uncle?

**Gallworthy:** You got the telegrams mixed up, you idiot. You sent Aunt Lavinia the Colonel's telegram and the Colonel's telegram to Aunt Lavinia. Now Aunt Lavinia is expecting a portrait of Constance to arrive, and I've just instructed the Colonel that he can have my nephew to do with as he pleases!

**Constance:** I wonder what the Colonel will say to that?

**Rolie:** Well...hmmm...ah.

**Gallworthy:** Well, tell us what it says boy.

**Rolie:** It says... ah... "How can I refuse such a generous and unexpected offer stop Leaving Bengal first boat tomorrow stop Be there soon Colonel Merrywether - full stop."

**Gallworthy:** Oh, the bloody British army!

**Constance:** I say, anyone for tennis?

## Act II

**Scene:** *Two weeks later. Great Uncle Clarence's Room in Frottaging Manor, now serving as Hermenaut's studio. A blank canvas on an easel, surrounded by art supplies, is standing stage left. There is a painted screen standing far right. A number of paintings are leaned against the screen, including one of an Indian woman in traditional garb. There's a small table at the center of the room. **Barky**, still in disguise, is sitting at the table, eating. There's a bottle of gin on the table. A large wardrobe stands upstage center. After a moment **Rolie** enters.*

**Rolie:** What ho, Barky!

**Barky:** Rolie! Aren't you supposed to be in Little Chipping Sundbury?

**Rolie:** Yes, well - probably. Aunt Lavinia does tend to be a bit much, so after breakfast this morning I said I was popping out for a cigarette and, well, caught a train back here.

**Barky:** Well, it's good to have you back, Rolie. You simply wouldn't believe what's been going on around here.

**Rolie:** I imagine it's been something of an eventful fortnight. I say, that soldier hasn't shown up yet, has he?

**Barky:** No. The boat's not due until tomorrow.

**Rolie:** Jolly good. And how's the painting coming along? I suppose it must be almost finished by now.

**Barky:** See for yourself. It's over there. Gin?

**Rolie:** Rather. *(Walks over and inspects the blank canvas)*  
Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. *(returns to the table, gets the gin and then returns to the painting once more)* Hmm.

**Barky:** Well, what do you think?

**Rolie:** I like the patina.

**Barky:** What patina? He hasn't painted a stroke!

**Rolie:** Do you know, Barky, I thought as much, but we all know what a fool I am about this sort of thing.

**Barky:** Hermenaut's been having Connie come in and stand about in that sheet every day for two weeks. He mutters a bit, and waves a few brushes around, and once I thought I saw him coming dangerously close to making a sketch, but he never gets any actual painting done. Meanwhile, he's been eating your uncle out of house and home, and working his way through a good bit of the cellar as well. Your uncle's about to loosen the old school tie over the whole thing, I can tell you. He keeps saying he doesn't know why he's paying for this catastrophe.

**Rolie:** Yes - it does sound bit unfortunate.

**Barky:** Sometimes Flora joins Constance in posing. Rolie - I've seen her in a sheet.

**Rolie:** Have you? That's progress, I suppose.

**Barky:** Although your Uncle's always hanging about whenever that happens, so I never get a word in. I say, Rolie, why didn't you mention that your Uncle was rather sweet on

Flora before you'd gone off? I can't say I fancy having Ruprecht Gallworthy as my rival suitor.

**Rolie:** Yes, well, I meant to of course, Barky, but I had to go in such a hurry.

**Barky:** You could have sent a telegram.

**Rolie:** Yes. Yes I could have. But I supposed that a fellow such as yourself would have all the natural advantages in the situation.

**Barky:** Natural advantages? I'm dressed up like a woman.

**Rolie:** Quite. How's all that going, by the way?

**Barky:** Terribly. Flora barely says a word to me, this corset is dashed uncomfortable, and Constance has been absolutely no help whatsoever. All she does is keep suggesting that we have a quick game of tennis and then go for a rub down.

**Rolie:** Yes. Well, you'll be pleased to know that in these past few weeks you have never been far from my mind, old

chum, and whilst shackled to my aunt I made a few inquiries of my cousin Cecily with an eye towards aiding your case.

**Barky:** I never knew you had a cousin Cecily.

**Rolie:** Doesn't everyone have a cousin Cecily? But the point is that Cecily is a bit more traditional in the feminine charms department than good old Connie, and she gave me a few pointers which I shall now pass along to you.

**Barky:** You didn't mention me by name, did you? Only I'd hate for all this to get about.

**Rolie:** No, No - I assured her that I needed a few helpful hints for a charity show down at the village hall. An evening of comedic performance and other light entertainment. As far as she knows, your only involvement will be to sing a rather touching rendition of "Danny Boy."

**Barky:** "Danny Boy"?

**Rolie:** "Danny Boy."

**Barky:** Why on earth would I be singing "Danny Boy"?

**Rolie:** Well, that's the sort of thing that's routinely sung at these affairs, isn't it?

**Barky:** It's not the sort of thing that I'd go about singing. I've never even been to Edinburgh.

**Rolie:** No one's saying you have, Barky.

**Barky:** I don't see why I should have to be part of your dreary little charity hall do, either. I'm not even from here.

**Rolie:** There is no charity hall do.

**Barky:** Then where is it I'm supposed to be singing "Danny Boy"?

**Rolie:** It was all just a story, Barky. I told my cousin Cecily that I was expected to do a few short scenes from "Romeo and Juliet," and, our little village having more available Romeos than Juliets, I had drawn the short straw and required a few helpful hints as to putting on the proper demeanor, hints which I shall now pass along to you.

**Barky:** Oh, I see! I say, Rolie. That's dashed clever. But I still don't understand why I'm supposed to be singing "Danny Boy."

**Rolie:** Never mind about "Danny Boy." I'm here to pass along the feminine wisdom of my cousin Cecily. *(withdraws a small notebook from his pocket)* For instance, let's have a look at the way you're sitting.

**Barky:** What's wrong with the way I'm sitting?

*(Barky is rather sprawled, slumped, lounging back smoking a cigarette)*

**Rolie:** Well, it is just a tad on the masculine side. According to what cousin Cecily has to say you'd be well served by bringing your knees closer together.

*(Barky brings the tops of his knees together but leaves his feet planted firmly apart)*

**Barky:** Like this?

**Rolie:** That's definitely a start, but, I think the idea is to rather eliminate some of that space between the legs. In fact you should, let's see, ah..."Gently tuck the right ankle behind the left."

**Barky:** Gently tuck?

**Rolie:** Yes, gently. Here, like this. (*Demonstrates. Barky imitates him*) That's the stuff!

**Barky:** This is dashed uncomfortable.

**Rolie:** Sit up straight. Eliminate any curvature of the spine. And put that cigarette out.

**Barky:** Oh, must I?

**Rolie:** Give it here at the least. I say, that's rather good. Turkish?

**Barky:** Your Uncle's. He gave a bunch of them to Flora.

**Rolie:** He never gave any to me. Anyway, point your chin forward, like so, and fold your hands demurely in your lap.

**Barky:** Demurely?

**Rolie:** Even so. There. I think you're getting the hang of this, old chum - Sorry, old girl! I think you might even be ready for a few dancing lessons (*Stands*). Now, what you have to remember -

*(Barky attempts to stand, too, and forgetting to uncross his ankles, falls immediately to the floor)*

**Rolie:** Now, really, Barky, if you're not going to take this seriously I shan't bother.

**Barky:** I tripped, you damned fool! It's this leg crossing business. Now be a gentleman and help me up.

**Rolie:** Oh, quite. (*Help him up*) There we are. Now -  
Dancing. Much of a young lady's character is revealed on  
the dance floor, Miss Barquwhaite. Now, take my hand. No -  
the other one! You're not the one leading.

**Barky:** Sorry, Rolie.

**Rolie:** Perfectly all right. Now, notice how my other hand  
rests comfortably on the small of your back? Good. Imagine,  
if you will, that we are together in the grand ballroom at  
the Regency. A gentle summer breeze wafts in through the  
windows. A band is playing something or other to do with  
Vienna. I'm the tall, attractive gentleman who has just  
asked you to dance. We begin to glide smoothly across the  
dance floor. Although we've only just met, you can feel  
some stirring of emotion within your feminine bosom, the  
sort of feeling that tells you this could be the very dance  
which will change your life forever, and transform you,  
Miss Prudence Barquwhaite from a mere girl into a woman.

(**Barky** kisses him, passionately)

**Rolie:** I say, Barky!

**Barky:** Sorry, Rolie. I got carried away.

**Rolie:** Yes, well, you must learn to control yourself. Imagine the reputation you'll get if you go about kissing chaps you've just met on the dance floor like that. It'd cause a scandal.

**Barky:** It's just I never dreamed someone like you could love a girl like me. But now I've gone and made a fool of myself.

**Rolie:** No, not at all. I've always thought you were a very attractive woman, Barky. Even when we were at school together. I remember one time, quite distinctly, when we were on the cricket pitch against those chaps from the other place and you were at bat. Just as you were stepping up to the popping crease I remember saying to myself "That Basil Barquwhaite is a very attractive woman." Do you remember that, Barky?

**Barky:** Is that the game where I nearly had a century?

**Rolie:** Just the one! A very attractive woman, and a damned fine batsman! What more could any chap want?

**Barky:** Oh, it's nice of you to say so, Rolie. But I doubt that a woman like Flora Nickelodia would ever want a woman like me to be the man she'd want to marry.

**Rolie:** Nonsense! You must stand tall and show Flora Nickelodia that your just the sort of girl that a chap like her is looking for to be the woman she wants to be her husband!

**Barky:** Do you really think so, Rolie?

**Rolie:** I most certainly do.

**Barky:** That's jolly nice of you.

**Rolie:** Not at all.

**Barky:** I say, Rolie, I don't suppose there's any chance -

*(Constance enters)*

**Constance:** Rolie! I didn't know you were back. Escaped the clutches of Aunt Lavinia?

**Rolie:** Hello, old blood of my blood. Just barely escaped, I can tell you. I wonder how long it'll be before she wonders when I'm going to finish that cigarette?

**Constance:** I'd have thought she'd be glad to be rid of you. Hello, Prudie. You're looking rather sporting today.

**Barky:** Sporting?

**Constance:** Yes, sporting. Bother it all, but it's time for me to stand about in a sheet for another hour while that Greek fellow works his way even further through our rations. Be a dear and help me out of these things, won't you Prudie?

**Barky:** Oh, ehm... Right.

*(Constance and Barky go behind the screen. Constance begins to undress)*

**Constance:** You've been missing all the fun while you've been away, Rolie. Uncle Ruprecht is making an awful ass of himself over Miss Nickelodia. Keeps following her around, all moon-eyed and foolish, and I believe he's actually pretending to take an interest in all that elves and magic nonsense she's always spouting. Do you know, just the other day we were walking in the garden and he actually pointed to a rock and asked me if I thought it might be a fairy. He immediately retracted, of course, and denied that he had ever said any such thing. Pretended he had asked me if I thought we should open a dairy. He's gone completely mad. I say, Rolie, be a dear and get me a cigarette, would you? Of course, Prudie here and I have become the very best of friends since you were gone, haven't we Prudie?

**Barky:** The best.

*(Rolie approaches with the cigarette and lighter and notices the portrait leaning against the screen)*

**Constance:** Oh, cheers, Rolie.

**Rolie:** I say, who's this woman in the picture?

**Constance:** The Indian, you mean? We've no idea. Found it the other day in a crate full of father's things when we were setting up the studio for Hermenaut. She's rather pretty, isn't she?

**Rolie:** Very fetching.

**Constance:** Though what father was doing with a portrait of a wog tucked away in his effects I have no idea. There we are. *(She emerges from behind the screen, dressed as Ganymede)* Any more of that gin left, Rolie?

**Rolie:** That's the bottle, I'm afraid.

**Constance:** Well, be a good chap and push off and fetch us another one. This posing business is awfully thirsty work.

**Rolie:** Right ho!

**Constance:** Oh, and do see what you can do about a lemon, won't you Rolie?

**Rolie:** Wouldn't dream of coming back without one.

*(Rolie Exits)*

**Constance:** Alone at last, aren't we Prudie?

**Barky:** It would seem that way.

**Constance:** What were you and Rolie talking about all alone up here?

**Barky:** Oh, nothing, really.

**Constance:** You weren't discussing me, were you?

**Barky:** No, not at all. Rolie was, just teaching me how to dance.

**Constance:** How to dance?

**Barky:** I mean, showing me some new steps he picked up in town.

**Constance:** Oh, you are funny, Prudie. Really, Rolie's about the worst dancer I've ever come across. Fancy him teaching someone to trip the light fantastic. I can show you much better than he can.

*(Constance grabs Barky and begins to dance with him)*

**Constance:** There we are. It's ever so exquisite, isn't it? The way one just moves so powerfully, so sensually across the floor. My friend Honoria taught it to me. She learned it from an American. It's all the rage in New York. It's called *(She dips him)*...the Tango!

**Barky:** It's very... energetic.

**Constance:** Oh, but you're an energetic girl, aren't you Prudie? Your head is filled with fantastic ideas, and your heart with exotic passions.

**Barky:** Not that exotic, I can assure you.

**Constance:** You can't fool me, Prudence Barquwhaite. I know your little secret.

**Barky:** You do?

**Constance:** Oh yes. I know all about why they packed you off to Canada.

**Barky:** *(Bewildered)* Canada?

**Constance:** Oh, there's nothing to be ashamed of. We all played our little games in school, didn't we?

**Barky:** I was quite good at cricket. Nearly scored a century once.

**Constance:** Of course you did, my dear. And who were you thinking of when you gripped your ash? We all had our

little crushes. Of course, they said we'd grow out of it, but you know as well as I that some of us never do.

**Barky:** Well, there was this one chap...

**Constance:** Oh, yes, we learned to pretend! We learned to make eyes as dull little snotty boys at dances. And eventually they'll marry us all off to dreadful soldiers! But until then we have to have as much fun as we can! Do you want to have fun, Miss Barquwhaite?

**Barky:** I can always be called upon to round out a game of bridge.

*(Constance kisses him, passionately)*

**Barky:** I say, Miss Pffefingleigh!

**Constance:** Oh, don't pretend! There's no need to pretend!

**Barky:** There most certainly is!

**Constance:** Miss Barquwhaite, you can't hide your passions forever!

**Barky:** No, but I've some very compelling reasons to keep them concealed for the moment!

**Constance:** Oh, be sensible, Prudie. One only gets so many chances for fun in this life, and I for one think it's perfectly beastly not to take advantage of all of them. Why not start off by taking advantage of me?

**Barky:** Miss Pffefingleigh, I'm shocked!

**Constance:** Oh, must you be? It's such a dreadfully dull thing to be. I only want a little fun! We're both sporting girls, and it seems perfectly rational to me that if we

want to take a few moments and do what sporting girls have been known on occasion to do, then there's absolutely no sensible reason why we shouldn't. It's not like it would be the first time it's happened in England. So be sensible and get your kit off, and we'll be done before tea time.

**Barky:** Miss Pffefingleigh, I'm very flattered by your suggestion -

**Constance:** Oh, balls.

*(Constance rips Barky's blouse open)*

**Barky:** Miss Pffefingleigh!

**Constance:** Oh, do call me Connie. All my friends do.

**Barky:** Miss Pffefingleigh - Connie - someone's coming!

**Constance:** Oh, is someone?

**Barky:** I can hear footsteps.

**Constance:** Oh, bother, isn't it always the way? Well, I suppose you had better hide, then.

**Barky:** Me? Hide?

**Constance:** I'm not the one who's gallivanting around with her blouse torn open. I look perfectly respectable in this sort of sheet thing. So behind the screen with you. Go on.

**Barky:** Behind the screen?

**Constance:** Go on. Look, if whatever's about to happen drags on for too long I'll see about slipping you some sandwiches. Now go on!

**Barky:** Right ho.

*(Barky conceals himself behind the screen. Constance sits at the table and lights another cigarette. Flora enters, dressed as a shepherdess.)*

**Flora:** Miss Pffefingleigh, how pleasant to encounter you here.

**Constance:** Good day, Miss Nickelodia. How are we today?

**Flora:** Do call me Flora.

**Constance:** Care for a cigarette, Flora?

**Flora:** Why thank you, my dear. The portrait is coming along smashingly, isn't it?

**Constance:** Indeed. Sometimes I think I'm looking in a mirror wrapped in canvas.

**Flora:** Hermenaut is a great artist. He's Greek, you know, which I find terribly brave of him. One really must admire the Greeks for not being darkies. Really, one feels that they could so easily be darkies, yet they avoid it, even if narrowly. I think that's truly the mark of a noble civilization, don't you Miss Pffefingleigh?

**Constance:** I don't know. The Frogs aren't darkies and I don't think much of them.

**Flora:** He's truly passionate about his work. Of course, all great artists are passionate. Are you a passionate woman, Miss Pffefingleigh?

**Constance:** Only when the occasion demands, Miss Nickelodia.

**Flora:** I'm a passionate woman. I believe it comes from my education. I went to a small academy called Radclyffe Hall. Perhaps you've heard of it?

**Constance:** I'm afraid not.

**Flora:** A pity. It's really rather progressive in a great many of it's views.

**Constance:** I'm sure it's lovely. Uncle Ruprecht was never much for progressing, so I'm afraid it was just the Abbey School for me. My education was mostly ice water, horsehair, and Latin.

**Flora:** Miss Pffefingleigh I believe in embracing passion, in whatever form it might take. Are you aware of the philosophy of free love?

**Constance:** Free love? That sounds rather Socialist. No, Miss Nickelodia, our family has always had the means to purchase its love quite legitimately. If there are those about who can't afford it, well, then they'll simply have to do without.

**Flora:** Love should never be bought or sold, Miss Pffefingleigh.

**Constance:** How delightfully charming of you to say so.

**Flora:** Love should be given freely. We have within ourselves the nobility to reclaim love from its debased, commercial state, and to make it the exchange of like minds, like souls, like bodies.

**Constance:** Yes, well it all sound jolly good fun, now if you'll excuse me -

*(Flora embraces her and kisses her, passionately)*

**Constance:** *(shocked)* I say! *(Pause - Pleased)* I say!

**Flora:** *(Rips off her shepherdess costume, leaving her standing in her underwear)* Man, woman. Man, man, Woman, woman - it doesn't matter, Miss Pffefingleigh. I know you feel these same, great, indiscriminating passions that I do coursing through your aristocratic veins. Let us be free! Let us be wild! Let us be uncontrolled!

**Constance:** Let me put my cigarette out.

**Flora:** Oh, Miss Pffefingleigh! How I've longed to embrace you from the moment I laid eyes on you! I knew at once upon seeing you that you were a true kindred spirit! I knew that you were that particular type of young lady with whom I could get on smashingly!

**Constance:** There's really someone I should have a word with, first.

**Flora:** There's no need to ask anyone's permission! We're free spirits!

*(Flora rips Constance's Ganymede costume off, leaving her standing in her underwear)*

**Constance:** Do you know, I begged Uncle Ruprecht to send me to a progressive school.

**Flora:** Embrace me, Miss Pffefingleigh, embrace me with passion!

**Constance:** Passion's rather quaint, Miss Nickelodia - but I'll certainly do it with civility.

**Flora:** Embrace me, Miss Nickelodia, embrace me as if - someone's coming!

**Constance:** Already?

**Flora:** Footsteps in the hallway! We must conceal ourselves!  
Think of the scandal!

**Constance:** Oh, bother the scandal - though I do find  
explanations rather dull. Right - behind the screen, I'll  
go in the wardrobe.

**Flora:** Good thinking.

**Constance:** On second thought - (*Flora dashes behind the  
screen, Constance moves to conceal herself in the wardrobe*)  
Oh, what's the use? It's bound to make things more  
interesting anyway.

**Flora:** Miss Barquwhaite!

**Barky:** Good day to you, Miss Nickelodia.

**Constance:** Much more interesting.

(*Constance shuts the wardrobe door on herself. Rolie  
enters, carrying a large box of clothing. A set of men's*

*evening wear on a hanger lays on top of the pile.*

**Gallworthy** and **Hermenaut** enter after him. **Hermenaut** is carrying a plate of food, a glass, and a bottle of wine)

**Rolie:** Connie? I've got that lemon.

**Gallworthy:** Hang that suit up, will you Rolie? I just had it pressed.

**Rolie:** Right ho, Uncle. *(He takes the evening clothes and opens the wardrobe, oblivious to Constance inside)* I wonder what could have become of her? She was here just a moment ago. *(Shuts the wardrobe door)*

**Hermenaut:** It is a very large house. And very beautiful.

**Gallworthy:** Well, do make yourself at home.

**Hermenaut:** Thank you. Sausage?

**Rolie:** I say, Uncle, what is all this costumery anyway?

**Gallworthy:** Oh, it's all left over from those fancy dress balls your father used to fancy getting dressed up fancily for. It's about time I sorted through it all and then pitched the lot of it.

**Rolie:** I say, Uncle, have a look at this!

*(Rolie pulls a Britannia costume from the box, complete with wig, helmet, toga and shield and dons it all)*

**Rolie:** What jolly good fun those parties must have been! Who's was this?

**Gallworthy:** That was your Aunt Lavinia's, and you may as well take it back to her on the next train. Fancy skipping out like that. She must be beside herself with worry.

**Rolie:** Aunt Lavinia?

**Gallworthy:** Well, beside herself with rage. Or at least mildly put out. Or probably just relieved. Anyway, I still don't want you hanging about here.

**Rolie:** (*Posing in the costume*) What do you think? (*sings*)  
And did those feet, in ancient times, walk upon England's  
mountains green...

**Hermenaut:** The spirit of the empire herself!

**Rolie:** (*sings*) Till we have built Jerusalem, In England's  
green and pleasant land!

**Gallworthy:** Well, that's it for the empire, then.

**Hermenaut:** Ah, Sir Ruprecht, you English, you should be  
careful with this empire of yours. Do not let it slip from  
your hands.

**Gallworthy:** I'll bear that in mind.

**Hermenaut:** I am from a little town in Greece called Athens,  
perhaps you have seen it in the British museum?

**Rolie:** Lovely spot!

**Hermenaut:** In Athens, we invented democracy. Thought it would be a good idea to let the people rule themselves. And so it was, for a time. Then, we decided that we might like to have an empire. And so we did. Then the empire fell. It has been two thousand years since then, and we have yet to be a democracy again.

**Gallworthy:** Well, you people never could look after anything. Just look what your did to the Parthenon.

**Hermenaut:** That was the Turks, Sir Ruprecht. The Turks, The Romans, The Russians, The French, you English and your King Otto, throughout all of it we have been slaves. We have been slaves for so long that sometimes I think we have forgotten how to be free.

**Gallworthy:** Oh, quit your whinging. You're all a bunch of bloody goatbangers and weak as water, the lot of you. Weak as water! Britons never shall be slaves!

**Rolie:** (*Singing*) Britons never never never shall be slaves!

**Gallworthy:** Oh, shut up, Rolie!

**Rolie:** Right ho!

**Gallworthy:** What you fail to appreciate, is that you have brought this upon yourselves, Catastrophe. There is a fundamental difference between my race and yours.

**Hermenaut:** And what is that?

**Gallworthy:** We're winning.

**Hermenaut:** For now.

**Gallworthy:** Forever!

**Hermenaut:** Ask me again in two thousand years. But for now, you have a lovely home and that is all that is important.

**Gallworthy:** Shouldn't you be painting, anyway? Where is that damned niece of mine?

**Rolie:** She was here a moment ago, Uncle. Sent me out for some gin and a lemon when you interrupted with that box of costumery.

**Gallworthy:** Well, did you manage to get the gin?

**Rolie:** The stuff itself.

**Gallworthy:** Well, we might as well make us of that. Pull up a chair here... hand me one of those glasses.

**Rolie:** *(Pouring the gin)* Well, here's to one thing the empire's done right, anyway! Cheers!

**Gallworthy:** Cheers!

**Hermenaut:** Cheers!

**Lavinia:** *(Offstage)* Rolie!

**Rolie:** Good lord - it's Aunt Lavinia!

*(Aunt Lavinia storms onstage in a very formidable fashion)*

**Lavinia:** Rolie! I want a word with you!

**Rolie:** What ho, Aunt Lavinia!

**Lavinia:** Don't you "what ho, Aunt Lavinia" me! How dare you sneak off like that without a word to anyone, and pocketing my best cigarette lighter in the process!

**Rolie:** I was going to drop in the post...

**Gallworthy:** Good day, Lavinia...

**Lavinia:** Oh, and don't you start Ruprecht Gallworthy. You're the one who sent the idiot off to me in the first place. As if I wasn't burdened enough with guests of my own. If he wasn't the child of my dear, departed brother I'd have had him out of his misery quite some time ago! And you, Sir Ruprecht, is this the sort of hospitality one can expect in this house these days? Look at whom I found standing outside your door just waiting for attention!

*(Colonel Merrywether enters, followed closely by Mandala)*

**Gallworthy:** Colonel Merrywether! I do beg your pardon, we weren't expecting you until tomorrow.

**Colonel:** Think nothing of it, my dear boy. Coming round the horn I had a quick word with an able seaman and was able to persuade him to take advantage of a particularly favorable tailwind. This is my servant, Mandala. The army won't let me have boys any more.

**Mandala:** I am most humbly pleased to make your acquaintance.

**Gallworthy:** Colonel, this is that Greek Catastrophe that everyone in Chelsea's been to look at.

**Colonel:** Delighted. (*eyeing Rolie*) I say, this must be that niece of yours I'm supposed to marry. Well, I had been told she was a sporting girl. And who are those two half-naked people barely concealed behind that screen over there?

**Gallworthy:** What?

(*Barky and Flora emerge, demurely, from behind the screen*)

**Barky:** Hello!

**Flora:** How do you do?

**Gallworthy:** Miss Nickelodia!

**Hermenaut:** Miss Barquwhaite!

**Lavinia:** Good lord!

**Gallworthy:** Good heavens!

**Rolie:** Good job!

**Barky:** Miss Nickelodia was just helping me into -  
something.

**Flora:** Yes. Something.

**Colonel:** I'm sure there's some perfectly straight  
explanation for the whole thing. I am rather keen to meet

this nephew of yours, Ruprecht, the one who your promised me would be so obliging.

**Gallworthy:** Yes, about that -

*(Constance, now dressed in the tuxedo, emerges jauntily from the wardrobe)*

**Constance:** What ho!

**Colonel:** Well, hello! My, what a fine, fair young lad you are. *(He manhandles Constance)* We could always use a few more lads like you around the old barracks. It's always good to have a willing and able young lad to clean your pistol after a hard day going up the Kush. I can teach you all you need to know about the proper way to handle small arms. *(One of his hands grabs one of Constance's breasts)* Odd. That shouldn't be there.

**Gallworthy:** That's not my nephew, that's my niece.

**Colonel:** Your niece?

**Constance:** Yes. The one you're supposed to marry, not the one who's going to be obliging.

**Gallworthy:** That object in the evening clothes is my niece, and that idiot in the flag is my nephew.

**Mandala:** And that lady in the portrait is my mother.

**Gallworthy:** I beg your pardon?

**Mandala:** *(Pointing to the portrait by the screen)* Yes, this woman is my mother.

**Gallworthy:** You mother?

**Mandala:** I'm quite certain of it. She died of a fever when I was very young, but I shall never forget her face. A more gentle and loving woman has never walked the earth. Why do you keep her portrait in your home, Sir Ruprecht?

**Lavinia:** It can't be!

**Gallworthy:** We've certainly no idea who that woman is. The portrait was among my late brother-in-law's things when they were brought back from India.

**Lavinia:** Dear child, tell me - was your father English? Was he a soldier?

**Mandala:** Yes, he was. My mother was the youngest daughter from one of the most noble families in Bengal, and she married an English soldier. When she died of a fever, he abandoned me, and later married again, to an English woman. I was raised in an orphanage, and have been forced to work as a servant ever since, but I have never forgotten the great pride of my ancestry.

**Lavinia:** Oh, my merciful stars! Dear girl, is there a birthmark on your left arm in the shape of a crescent moon?

**Mandala:** Why, yes! How did you know? *(Pulls up her sleeve, revealing a birthmark)*

**Lavinia:** Your father's name, girl - What was your father's name?

**Mandala:** My father was Lieutenant Percy Pffefingleigh, of the Twelfth Queen's Rifles. And my true name, not the one I was given in the orphanage, is Miss Madeline Pffefingleigh!

**Lavinia:** (*Embracing her*) Come to me, dear child! Dear Madeline! It is you! We thought you were dead! The telegram said that you and your mother had died of that fever! Oh, all these years, if only we had known! Percy never forgave himself! And how can you ever forgive me? For dear child, I am your Aunt Lavinia, and you are the eldest daughter of my brother, Percy Pffefingleigh!

**Mandala:** Aunt Lavinia! I never dreamed I would see you again!

**Gallworthy:** Good lord!

**Constance:** Good heavens!

**Rolie:** I say, this is all rather unexpected!

**Hermenaut:** This is a great moment! We must celebrate, with food, and drink, and games! Anyone for tennis?

### Act III

*Scene: Great Uncle Clarence's room, a few moments later.*

*Aunt Lavinia and Mandala are seated at the table.*

*Gallworthy, Rolie, Constance, Barky, Colonel Merrywether, Flora, and Hermenaut are all gathered around.*

**Lavinia:** It's perfectly simple, My brother Percy was stationed in Bengal when he was introduced to a perfectly lovely young lady from a very respectable family, and they were married.

**Gallworthy:** A native girl?

**Lavinia:** Not just any native girl, Ruprecht. The youngest daughter of a branch of the Kutlehar family. Madeline's great-grandmother was Rani of Rajputana. Your great-grandmother was the mistress of the Earl of Sandwich.

**Gallworthy:** Well at least I know what a sandwich is, and I've some idea of what a mistress is for. I've no idea what the razzmatazz of roly-poly is when it's at home.

**Lavinia:** That's because you're appallingly ignorant, Ruprecht. Madeline, My brother never intended to abandon you. He loved you and your mother with such devotion. He had been called home on some official business and because there was a small mutiny going on at the time he felt it too dangerous for you and your mother to travel. I shall never forget the look on his face when he received that telegram saying you had died of a fever. After he thought he'd lost you, he couldn't bear the thought of going back to Bengal. He put in for transfer to the Hindu Kush, and I'm afraid that's where he met his end. Please believe me, had we known that you lived we would have sent for you immediately.

**Mandala:** What's done is done, Aunt Lavinia. My heart is filled with such joy to see you again, to be among my family again, that it is if my heart itself has grown wings, and lifts me with it, leaving the past far behind.

**Rolie:** So... she's my sister?

**Lavinia:** Oh, do shut up Rolie.

**Gallworthy:** Why did Percy never mention any of this?

**Lavinia:** Percy never cared much for you, Ruprecht.

**Flora:** Oh, this is the most beautiful story I've ever heard! It's like a fairy tale, come true! Oh, isn't it marvelous, Hermenaut?

**Hermenaut:** It's quite touching, yes. Perhaps we should drink a toast?

**Rolie:** I say, Colonel, makes you look a bit of a fool.

**Colonel:** What's that?

**Rolie:** I said it makes you look a bit of a fool, Coming all the way from India to get married.

**Colonel:** The army told me that I'd have to marry or lose my commission. And the last I heard vicars aren't doing weddings over telegram.

**Roland:** Ah! But the will says it's the first daughter to get married that gets the room and board and pocket change for life. And here you were betting it all on old Cons, when there was a perfectly marriageable daughter of old Percy P. right in front of you the whole time. Must be hard not to feel just a teeny bit of a fool.

*(Mandala and Constance exchange glares)*

**Mandala:** What will is this?

**Constance:** Oh, about that marriage, Colonel. Perfectly lovely idea, you're just the sort of chap I've always dreamed of, can't wait to be Mrs. Merrywether. I've never been one for long engagements, though. Does this afternoon suit you? Miss Barquwhaite, be a dear and run down to the village and fetch the vicar up here.

**Mandala:** I'm to inherit this house if I marry?

**Constance:** First daughter to be married, my dear. Here's my husband, have you got yours? Oh, terribly sorry. Come stay any time you like.

**Mandala:** My dear, long-lost sister Constance - our father instilled in me all the virtues of a proper English girl. I had a proper English upbringing, and for a certain time enjoyed a life of some privilege. Unfortunately, when my mother, our father's first wife, passed away I lost a great deal of that privilege. Having now been restored, after all these years, to my family and these lovely, spacious English country homes which I remember so well from my childhood, you can see that I am somewhat hesitant at the thought of returning to living in a goddamned shack. Colonel Merrywether, you know I've been a good and faithful servant to you, a servant who knows many things about you which your superiors would find very interesting, so why not marry me instead?

**Colonel:** Oh, such a decision to make! Never did I think I would be confronted with such a choice!

**Hermenaut:** Would you like to flip a coin, Colonel?

**Colonel:** Oh, what's the point? Either way it's tails.

**Hermenaut:** They are both beautiful ladies, Colonel. I would be happy to marry either one of them.

**Constance:** I'd be delighted, Mr. Katablepsides.

**Hermenaut:** But I'm afraid I already have a wife back in Athens.

**Constance:** It's an awfully big house, Mr. Katablepsides.

**Hermenaut:** She's an awfully big lady, Miss Pffefingleigh.

**Constance:** Fair enough. Well, looks like the Colonel is the only point for our contention. I hope your powers of persuasion are up to it, my dear.

**Mandala:** I assure you my arguments are perfect down to the letter.

**Barky:** But, what about love?

**Constance:** We're dealing with marriage at the moment, Miss Barquwhaite, now do go fetch the vicar, won't you? You'll find him in the village somewhere in the vicinity of the church. It's the rather small, damp building with the ambitious roof.

*(Constance exits)*

**Mandala:** And I shall go prepare for my wedding. Aunt Lavinia?

**Lavinia:** Oh, Madeline, of course. Do tell me how have you been all these years?

**Mandala:** Enslaved.

*(Lavinia and Mandala exit)*

**Gallworthy:** Miss Nickelodia, I wonder if I might have a word with you?

**Flora:** Of course, Sir Ruprecht.

**Barky:** Yes, well, I'll go fetch the vicar, shall I?

*(Gallworthy, Flora, and Barky exit)*

**Hermenaut:** Come along, Colonel. I'll get you kitted up.

**Colonel:** So you're Greek, did you say?

**Hermenaut:** That is right, Colonel.

**Colonel:** I've always admired the *esprit de corps* of the Greek army. Do you know, I've never once seen one of your chaps turn his back on the enemy.

**Hermenaut:** Eh?

*(Hermenaut and The Colonel exit)*

**Rolie:** I say, this is all rather exciting. Rather calls for another gin.

*(Constance enters)*

**Constance:** Put that bottle down, Rolie, we're heading down to the village.

**Rolie:** Whatever for?

**Constance:** You're going to be my husband.

**Rolie:** I say!

**Constance:** First daughter to be married. We'll mount up, ride down to the church, beat her to the bouquet, and have the thing done and over with before Prudence even arrives to fetch the vicar.

**Rolie:** I say, Connie! Don't you think that's going a bit far?

**Constance:** Are you prepared to hand our ancestral home off to someone with no legitimate relationship to our family except for being a legitimate relative?

**Rolie:** But, dear thing, you're my sister. Blood of my blood and all that. Surely you see the breach of etiquette there?

**Constance:** Oh, Rolie, don't be such a bloody traditionalist.

**Rolie:** Anyway, I'm hardly your type.

**Constance:** It's only marriage, Rolie. I think it's the least you can do for your sister. And you still owe me from that time I biffed Spotty Parker for you after he pinched your conkers.

**Rolie:** A debt I freely admit to, dear sib. It's just that I feel rather sorry for the poor thing.

**Constance:** The poor thing?

**Rolie:** She does seem to have had rather a tough time of it. And Aunt Lavinia seems genuinely fond of her. Despite her faults, that woman is a solid enough judge of character. She pegged me as completely useless years ago.

**Constance:** Rolie, that girl is trying to take out home!

**Rolie:** Well, perhaps it's her home, too, Constance. It just seems, well, rather rummy to turn the poor thing out into the cold. She's our sister, our father's daughter, and I'm still of the opinion that counts for something. If not for one mistake made by a telegraph clerk all those years ago she would have been raised here in this house right along side of us. And I think perhaps in the grand scheme of things a lost sibling is bigger than my conkers.

**Constance:** She's not the sort we need her sort around here, Rolie.

**Rolie:** And what sort is that?

**Constance:** The sort that's trying to get away with my inheritance.

**Rolie:** Not very much of a sort. There's only one of her.

**Constance:** Well, you have to nip this sort of thing in the bud. If the idea catches on, before you know, you won't be able to step foot on the lawn without tripping over a long-lost sibling demanding the first set on the tennis courts. And where will that leave us? As your sister I think you owe it to me to put an immediate end to this sort of incestuous behavior by marrying me.

**Rolie:** I'm sorry, Connie, I simply must refuse.

**Constance:** Must you?

**Rolie:** I'm afraid I must.

**Constance:** Roland Pffefingleigh you're just the sort of spineless, invertebrate vermin that one expects to find being sucked down the throat of the first convenient robin. What sort of man refuses to marry his own sister?

**Rolie:** I'm sorry, invertebrate though I may be, I must remain firm.

**Constance:** Our family name is not without influence in this village, Roland. I'm afraid that I am going to be forced to use that influence. I am now proceeding down to the village, where I shall round up the vicar and have him marry us whether you're there or not. (**Constance** exits and then immediately reenters) And next time Spotty Parker pinches your conkers you're on your own!

*(Constance exits, slamming the door behind her)*

**Rolie:** I can handle my own conkers now, thank you very much! About that gin...

*(Gallworthy enters)*

**Gallworthy:** Give me that bottle, Rolie - I'm going to drink a toast - to me!

**Rolie:** Well, I suppose one must drink to something.

**Gallworthy:** I'm getting married, Rolie!

**Rolie:** Good lord, that was quick! I had no idea Connie was that desperate! I say, as her guardian is this really the sort of match of which you should be approving?

**Gallworthy:** Who's guardian?

**Rolie:** Connie's!

**Gallworthy:** What has your sister got to do with this?

**Rolie:** You're not marrying Constance?

**Gallworthy:** Certainly not!

**Rolie:** Madeline, then?

**Gallworthy:** Nor her neither!

**Rolie:** Not the Colonel?

**Gallworthy:** Miss Nickelodia, Rolie. Flora and I are getting married! I've asked her and she's said yes!

**Rolie:** Oh, well done Uncle Ruprecht! That is rather jolly! Congratulations! What are you going to do about Aunt Lavinia?

**Gallworthy:** Lavinia?

**Rolie:** Well, you heard her opinion concerning your ancestry and sandwiches. I doubt she'd see chips as much of an improvement.

**Gallworthy:** Good Lord, you're right. We'll have to do it fast, before she can find out! You must let me know as soon as the vicar gets here, Rolie! I've got to go warn Flora!

*(Gallworthy exits)*

**Rolie:** *(Beginning to pour a gin)* Well, here's to Aunt Lavinia not finding out!

*(Lavinia enters)*

**Lavinia:** Rolie!

**Rolie:** Aunt Lavinia's found out.

**Lavinia:** Put that glass down, Rolie! Are you aware of the engagement that your Uncle has had the audacity to make without my permission?

**Rolie:** Just this moment discovered it, dear Aunt.

**Lavinia:** Who does he think he is? The impudence, choosing his own wife like that, with no regard to our family name whatsoever. Who is she, Rolie? What's her name again? Fauna?

**Rolie:** Flora. Flora Nickelodia.

**Lavinia:** Is she at least from a good family? I don't believe we have any Nickelodias in Little Chipping Sundbury.

**Rolie:** Well, it's probably the Chipping part you should concentrate on there.

**Lavinia:** What on earth are you talking about?

**Rolie:** I say, Aunt Lavinia - why not let Uncle Ruprecht have his happiness in these, his last few shuffles round the old mortal coil?

**Lavinia:** Who is her family, Rolie?

**Rolie:** (*mumbles*) croydonchipshop.

**Lavinia:** Stop mumbling, Rolie. You sound like a Welshman.

**Rolie:** Her father ran a chip shop.

**Lavinia:** Oh, no!

**Rolie:** In Croydon.

**Lavinia:** Oh, most certainly not!

**Rolie:** But it was quite a respectable chip shop, Aunt Lavinia - she's been to school and everything! Knows all about fairies and things! She's been showing Uncle Ruprecht how to find a good ley!

**Lavinia:** Roland Cuthbert Pffefingleigh you're going to put a stop to this wedding. Rubber is one thing, but I'm not inserting any chips into this bloodline. This family has a proud tradition of service to the empire. Our family has been organizing social occasions for the royal family since the conquest. I shouldn't need to remind you how many times the royal balls have been held on these very premises.

**Rolie:** Right ho, Aunt Lavinia.

**Lavinia:** I'm not an unkind woman, Rolie. If Ruprecht is looking for a wife to bring him some joy in his rapidly declining years, I shall be more than happy to choose a suitable wife for him. Who was that young lady who was here earlier?

**Rolie:** Constance? Well, she is from a good family.

**Lavinia:** The other young lady, Rolie.

**Rolie:** Ehm -

**Lavinia:** Not Madeline, either!

**Rolie:** Oh! Prudence Barquwhaite, you mean?

**Lavinia:** Barquwhaite? Of the Blasingstoke Barquwhaites?  
Your useless friend Basil Barquwhaite has a sister?

**Rolie:** Well, of a sort.

**Lavinia:** The Barquwhaites are a very respectable family,  
Rolie. They did great service to our martyred king by  
giving a platoon of Roundheads a good clipping. Appalling  
people, those Roundheads.

**Rolie:** That's a rather cavalier attitude, Aunt Lavinia.

**Lavinia:** (*Glares*) Slaughtering the enemies of our king is a  
much more suitable occupation than running a chip shop. So  
it's settled. If Ruprecht must marry, he's going to marry  
Prudence Barquwhaite.

**Rolie:** Oh dear - now, hold on a moment, Aunt Lavinia -

**Lavinia:** Roland, your Uncle simply doesn't know what's good for him. If my brother hadn't married his sister he'd never have had me to tell him what to do with his life and then frankly I don't know where he'd be. Let me know as soon as the vicar gets here. I'm going to go have a word with Ruprecht.

*(Lavinia exits, taking Rolie's glass of gin with her)*

**Rolie:** *(Beginning to pour himself another gin)* Uncle Ruprecht should have married Connie when he had the chance.

*(Hermenaut enters, pursued by The Colonel)*

**Hermenaut:** Colonel Merrywether, you have been much misled about my countrymen! These are all vicious lies spread by the Turks!

**Colonel:** But surely a nimble-fingered artist such as yourself can help me get an extra inch or so out of my cummerbund!

*(Hermenaut exits. Rolie looks perplexed. The Colonel takes the glass of gin from Rolie's hand.)*

**Colonel:** Thank you, dear boy. Greeks are so excitable. I was looking for was a little help loosening my cummerbund. I seem to have put on a little weight in the Kush and was having difficulty getting it round the end.

**Rolie:** I can see how that would be upsetting.

**Colonel:** Do you know, it really can be quite hard up the Kush.

**Rolie:** Yes, I remember they warned us about that thoroughly at school.

**Colonel:** Oh, being back here makes me realize just how much I really do miss England. The cricket, the clubs, the

little country churches, the vicars, the choir boys... I wonder if I shouldn't just retire back here?

**Rolie:** What, and give up the Kush?

**Colonel:** Just between you and me, young Roland, I'm nearly past it.

**Rolie:** Well, I have heard it's just a phase.

**Colonel:** Oh, Roland, what would you do if you were in my shoes?

**Rolie:** I'm not sure. Trip?

**Colonel:** When your uncle offered me your sister's hand I had no idea that I already knew your sister, well a sister, anyway, and one I've been having beaten savagely all these years. It does give one pause for thought.

**Rolie:** Really? I would have thought being beaten savagely to be something of a distraction.

**Colonel:** If one thinks about it, everyone you meet out there could be some secret relation, just waiting to be revealed. It's going to make war a dreadfully complicated business. One will never be too sure whom one should shoot and whom one should marry.

**Rolie:** Well, one must marry one of two now at any rate, Colonel. Have you made your decision yet?

**Colonel:** It's all terribly difficult, young Roland, and I'm not the marrying sort to begin with.

**Rolie:** I had actually worked that out by this point, Colonel.

**Colonel:** I suppose that if I had known Mandala was from a respectable family and not just another wog I would have treated her more kindly. Perhaps I should make it up to her now by marrying her and inheriting her fortune.

**Rolie:** I say, that would be jolly decent of you.

**Colonel:** On the other hand, I do have a gentleman's agreement with your uncle. And a gentleman always keeps his

agreements. Perhaps I should go ahead and marry young Constance and inherit the same fortune. Such a decision.

**Rolie:** Dear Constance is about as good an egg as any hen has ever produced. I'm not just saying this because she's my sister, either. No, she's just the girl you want by your side if you're expecting some chap to pinch your conkers.

**Colonel:** Really?

**Rolie:** Oh yes. Just ask Spotty Parker.

**Colonel:** Well thank you for helping me make up my, young Roland. A gentleman does always keep his agreements. Do let me know as soon as that vicar gets here.

*(The Colonel exits)*

**Rolie:** *(Starts to pour himself a gin)* I say, I wonder where Barky has got to with that vicar?

*(Barky enters, disguised as the vicar)*

**Barky:** Rolie! You've got to give me a hand!

**Rolie:** Oh, good lord, Barky!

**Barky:** He's asked her to marry him!

**Rolie:** Yes, well there's a lot of that going around. Whom has he asked to marry him? And for that matter, who might he be?

**Barky:** Your uncle - Sir Ruprecht. He's asked Flora to marry him! And she's said yes!

**Rolie:** Yes, quite, I know - and I'm firmly in favor of it, Barky. And so should you be.

**Barky:** Rolie, she doesn't love him!

**Rolie:** She doesn't love you, either, Barky.

**Barky:** But she doesn't not love me nearly as much as she doesn't not love him!

**Rolie:** Look, believe it or not, Barky - not marrying Flora Nickelodia is the least of your concerns at the moment!

**Barky:** How can you say that, Rolie? I can't let her throw her life away on him when she could be throwing it away on me! They plan to get married as soon as the vicar gets here!

**Rolie:** Which I suppose has something to do with why you're a man again. Of course, you're not wholly back to being Basil Barquwhaite again, but I suppose it's a start.

**Barky:** I'm the Vicar, Rolie!

**Rolie:** Yes, I did notice the hat.

**Barky:** But I'm not the real Vicar!

**Rolie:** Believe it or not, that hadn't escaped my attention, either. Now you must listen, Barky, It's about your sister

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**Barky:** Oh, bother my sister. Haven't you been listening?  
I'm not my sister, I'm the vicar! But I'm not a real vicar,  
and so if I marry them it won't be for real! They won't  
really be married!

**Rolie:** Yes, but listen, Barky - if the real vicar shows up  
in the meantime -

**Barky:** Oh, he won't. I've just knocked him unconscious and  
tied him up. He's out here, in the hallway. (*Barky opens  
the door and the Vicar, unconscious, in his underwear, tied  
up and gagged, falls into the room*) Help me get him into  
this wardrobe.

**Rolie:** Good lord, man!

**Barky:** Quickly, Rolie!

*(They pick up the Vicar and shove him into the wardrobe)*

**Rolie:** Are quite sure he's going to be all right?

**Barky:** Oh, vicars are used to this sort of thing. Happens to them all the time. Don't you ever go to plays?

**Rolie:** We're really going to have to invite him around for tea once all this is over. But at the moment you need to listen to me, Barky - it's about your sister! Aunt Lavinia is looking for your sister!

**Barky:** Well, she can find her if she needs to.

**Rolie:** Where?

*(Barky pulls off his hat and his hat, allowing his wig to fall out)*

**Barky:** Bob's your uncle!

**Rolie:** And I suppose you'll be dressing up like him, next.

**Barky:** Footsteps! Someone's coming!

**Rolie:** Oh, pray it's not Lavinia - and do something about your hair!

**Barky:** No time! I'll hide in the wardrobe!

**Rolie:** The vicar's in the wardrobe.

**Barky:** I'll hide behind the screen!

**Rolie:** The rabbi's behind the screen.

**Barky:** What?

**Rolie:** Only joking. Don't you ever go to plays?

*(Barky dives behind the screen. Rolie begins to pour himself a gin. Flora, still in her underwear, enters and walks right past Rolie, taking the gin from his hand.)*

**Flora:** Ah, there you are, Miss Barquwhaite. Did you manage to round up that Vicar?

**Barky:** Vicar? Oh, yes. He's just back here, um...buttoning his cassock. I'll just nip down and tell him he's needed.

*(Barky's head drops below the screen, and he immediately pops back up, sans wig and wearing the Vicar's hat)*

**Barky:** How do you do, my dear?

**Flora:** Very well, thank you Vicar. I don't mean to put you to any trouble, Vicar, but I was wondering if you could manage to squeeze one more marriage in this afternoon, in addition to Colonel Merrywether and... well, they haven't quite finished sorting that out yet, but Sir Ruprecht Gallworthy has asked me to be his wife.

**Barky:** Ah, fine fine fine. Congratulations, my dear. That will be just lovely.

**Flora:** And Miss Barquwhaite?

*(Barky dives down again and emerges in his wig)*

**Barky:** Yes?

**Flora:** Miss Barquwhaite, I wonder if you'd do me the favor of being my bridesmaid? I'd ask Miss Pffefingleigh, only I fear she may be rather busy getting married herself, and I would ask the recently discovered Miss Pffefingleigh, only I don't like darkies, so that leaves you.

**Barky:** I'd be honored.

**Flora:** And Vicar?

*(Barky dives down and emerges as the Vicar)*

**Barky:** Just - adjusting my vestments, my dear.

**Flora:** Nothing too progressive in the ceremony, if you don't mind. I'm something of a traditionalist when it comes to weddings. I'm a great believer in the institution of marriage.

**Barky:** Oh, that will be lovely. Fine fine fine.

**Flora:** Thank you so much, Vicar. Good day, Mr.  
Pffefingleigh.

**Barky:** Good day. I say, I hope you don't mind me asking,  
Miss Nickelodia, but...

**Flora:** Yes?

**Barky:** Well, believe me, I'm all on your side when it comes  
to this marrying my uncle business. Of all the alternatives  
before us, you're certainly the most sane - fairies and all  
that aside. But are you sure you'll be happy with my Uncle?  
I feel a certain obligation to warn you he can be a bit  
much.

**Flora:** Mr. Pffefingleigh, the moment I saw your uncle  
standing in front of this stately, expansive, quite lovely  
house I knew he was the man for me.

**Rolie:** Fair enough - I say, one other thing - if it's a traditional ceremony you're after, hadn't you better see about rounding up a gown or something?

**Flora:** I'm still a free spirit, Mr. Barquwhaite.

**Rolie:** But not too much of a free spirit to be tied down?

**Flora:** Every free spirit has her price, Mr. Pffefingleigh.

*(Flora exits. Rolie begins to pour himself a gin.)*

**Barky:** Rolie! She asked me to be her bridesmaid! *(He grabs the gin form Rolie's hand and drinks it)* I think I'm finally getting through to her!

**Rolie:** Oh, lovely. Perhaps after she's married my uncle she'll really take a shine to you. Now you must listen -

**Barky:** I shall be standing beside her when she gets married! That's the important thing! I'm going to be in her wedding!

**Rolie:** Quite. Now look, this is important - I say, how are you going to be in the wedding when you're also going to be the Vicar conducting the ceremony?

**Barky:** Oh dear, I hadn't thought of that. I could do it all behind this screen.

**Rolie:** Is that traditional?

**Barky:** Right. Good point. I say, this is all getting rather complicated, isn't it?

**Rolie:** Quite. Oh, yes - what I've been meaning to tell you. Now look, you'd better have another gin to brace yourself because I have to tell you something very, very important.

*(Rolie pours a gin. Mandala enters)*

**Mandala:** Rolie!

**Rolie:** What ho, Madeline? Gin?

**Barky:** What were you going to tell me, Rolie?

**Mandala:** *(She takes the gin)* Cheers. Rolie, you simply cannot allow Uncle Ruprecht to go through with this marriage to this objectionable woman!

**Barky:** Rolie, what were you going to tell me?

**Rolie:** Good to have you back, Madeline, sorry about all those years lost to anonymous servitude.

**Mandala:** Never mind about all that, what are you going to do about this woman? She's hardly the sort of person who should be involved with our family!

**Barky:** What are you trying to tell me, Rolie?

**Rolie:** Who? Prudence Barquwhaite!

**Mandala:** Flora Nickelodia! Uncle Ruprecht cannot marry Flora Nickelodia!

**Rolie:** But he isn't marrying Flora Nickelodia.

**Barky:** Oh, thank heavens!

**Rolie:** He's marrying Prudence Barquwhaite.

**Barky:** What?

**Mandala:** What?

**Rolie:** Oh, haven't you talked to Aunt Lavinia? I've been meaning to tell Barky that, as well. One thing you're going to have to learn now that you're back in our family, dear Madeline, is that old Roland is the come-to man for the latest news.

**Barky:** What do you mean he's marrying Prudence Barquwhaite?

**Rolie:** It's quite the thing, really - whenever someone in our clan comes with sort of insane scheme that scheme's first step is to recruit selfsame Roland.

**Barky:** Rolie, why didn't you tell me Sir Ruprecht was marrying Prudence Barquwhaite?

**Rolie:** Oh, do be quiet, old bean! I'm trying to have a civil chat with my long-lost sister! Just because you can converse with your sibling without ever stepping foot outside your ears is no reason to disturb those of us with actual material relations!

**Mandala:** Rolie, since when is Uncle Ruprecht supposed to be marrying Prudence Barquwhaite?

**Rolie:** Just now. Aunt Lavinia came up with the idea. Rather generous of her. Decided that old Flora Nickelodia coming encumbered with too many chips, she'd introduce old Sir Ruprecht to the respectable Miss Barquwhaite in substitute, so old avuncular Ruprecht would be assured of at least an auntvuncular someone.

**Barky:** He can't! Sir Ruprecht can't marry Prudence Barquwhaite! I forbid it!

**Mandala:** Why is the Vicar so concerned about who Prudence Barquwhaite marries?

**Rolie:** Oh, that's no the Vicar. That's Prudence Barquwhaite.

**Mandala:** What?

**Rolie:** Who is, in fact, her brother Basil Barquwhaite.

**Barky:** Rolie! Remember the American detectives! You mustn't blow my cover!

**Rolie:** Oh, bother your cover! And bother the American Detectives! And if you start dressing up like a Red Indian you're on your own as well!

**Mandala:** Rolie, what is going on?

**Rolie:** Barky Barquwhaite is in love with Flora Nickelodia, which for some reason has compelled him to disguise himself as his sister these past few weeks, a pose which he has recently unstruck in order to impersonate a Vicar. Now Aunt Lavinia's nixed Uncle Ruprecht's marriage to Flora and vowed to bind Prudence Barquwhaite to him instead. And you're supposed to be marrying the Colonel, or perhaps Constance is supposed to be marrying the Colonel, or for all I know Barky didn't biff the Vicar with sufficient haste and Connie and I are already married. And I seem to

remember there was a painting involved, but quite frankly I've completely forgotten how it figures into this business at all.

**Mandala:** All this madness has been going on around here?

**Rolie:** Rather.

**Mandala:** I should have stayed in India, where we know how to behave like proper Englishmen.

**Rolie:** Shouldn't you be more concerned about your own impending nuptials?

**Mandala:** Oh, I'm not at all concerned. There won't be any marriage today. I certainly wouldn't have him, and once I have a word with him, I don't think he'll be too keen on Constance, either.

**Rolie:** What makes you so sure?

**Mandala:** I have a certain amount of leverage where the Colonel is concerned. I have possession of a letter which reveals the name of his illegitimate child's mother.

**Rolie:** I beg your pardon?

**Mandala:** I pinched it from his kit years ago. I always knew it would come in handy some day.

**Barky:** The Colonel?

**Mandala:** Colonel Merrywether, yes.

**Rolie:** A love child?

**Mandala:** Oh yes.

**Barky:** Are you sure?

**Mandala:** Quite sure.

**Rolie:** Well... it's hardly the first thing I'd expect the Colonel to be being blackmailed with.

**Mandala:** Apparently it was a unique situation. The young lady involved had a great deal of faith in the Empire.

**Rolie:** Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand, eh what?

**Mandala:** Oh, do shut up, Rolie.

**Rolie:** Right ho. Another gin?

**Mandala:** I should think so.

*(Rolie pours a gin and hands it to Mandala. He pours another gin as Lavinia enters.)*

**Lavinia:** There you are, Rolie!

*(Sighing, Rolie hand the gin to Lavinia)*

**Rolie:** What ho, Aunt Lavinia?

**Lavinia:** Has that Vicar got here yet? I can't seem to find Prudence Barquwhaite.

**Rolie:** Well, there is actually a fairly sound reason for that -

**Lavinia:** That's no the Vicar, that's Basil Barquwhaite. What's he doing dressed up like that?

**Barky:** Lady Croth, I can't marry Ruprecht Gallworthy - I'm not my sister, I'm the vicar!

**Lavinia:** Rolie, What is going on?

**Rolie:** Would you care to explain?

**Barky:** Not really.

**Rolie:** Prudence Barquwhaite cannot marry Uncle Ruprecht, Aunt Lavinia.

**Lavinia:** Oh Really? And why not?

**Rolie:** Because Prudence Barquwhaite and Basil Barquwhaite are the same person.

*(Rolie removes Barky's Vicar disguise, leaving him dressed like Prudence again)*

**Lavinia:** Well, I hardly see how this changes things. I've already told Ruprecht he's marrying Prudence Barquwhaite. I don't see why this should be any hindrance to my plans.

**Barky:** I say!

**Lavinia:** What do you say, Miss Barquwhaite?

**Barky:** I say - I say!

**Lavinia:** Well stop saying and start preparing for your wedding. Despite your lack of certain qualifications you're still more acceptable than that chip shop woman.

**Rolie:** Now look here, Aunt Lavinia -

**Lavinia:** I should have thought you would have been happy for your friend, Rolie. His sister is getting married.

**Rolie:** But his sister is also him!

**Lavinia:** Then he should be doubly happy. Mr. Barquwhaite, it's high time you learned that being of the fairer sex means one must be made of sterner stuff. Now put on that cassock you're holding, Rolie.

**Rolie:** What on earth for?

**Lavinia:** Well, if we're going to have a wedding we're going to need a vicar, aren't we?

**Rolie:** You want me to play the Vicar?

**Lavinia:** If our Lord saw to fit to make you as daft as a vicar, Rolie, I don't see that it's your place to disagree with him.

**Rolie:** But I'm not the real Vicar!

**Lavinia:** I believe Prudence Barquwhaite's dress would fit you equally as well, Rolie.

**Rolie:** I am the real Vicar!

*(Gallworthy enters)*

**Gallworthy:** Oh, there you are, Lavinia. Is the Vicar here yet?

**Rolie:** What ho?

**Gallworthy:** That's not the Vicar, that's Rolie. What's he doing dressed up like that?

**Barky:** He's not the real Vicar! He can't marry anyone!

**Rolie:** I most certainly am, and I most certainly shall, Miss Barquwhaite!

**Gallworthy:** Of course he's not the real Vicar. What is going on?

**Rolie:** Would you care to explain?

**Lavinia:** Not really.

**Gallworthy:** Now look here, Lavinia - this business about me marrying Prudence Barquwhaite, it simply won't do! I'm marrying Flora Nickelodia, and that's the end of the matter.

**Lavinia:** Flora Nickelodia is not suitable for you, Ruprecht. At your age you're likely to become overexcited marrying that sort of girl. If you insist on getting married, you'll marry Miss Barquwhaite.

**Gallworthy:** Miss Barquwhaite, do you have the slightest desire to marry me?

**Barky:** I'd rather marry Miss Nickelodia.

**Gallworthy:** And that's the sort of girl you think is suitable for me? Anyway, who'll perform the ceremony?

**Lavinia:** Rolie will. He's dressed like a vicar.

**Gallworthy:** Ah! But he's not a real vicar! It won't count!

**Lavinia:** It will count, Ruprecht, in the eyes of the Lord and what I tell people. If I say Rolie's a real vicar, then he's a real vicar. And if your wedding makes the society pages, he is most certainly a real vicar.

**Gallworthy:** You wouldn't dare!

**Lavinia:** Don't make me say "Wouldn't I?" Ruprecht.

**Gallworthy:** I suppose you would at that.

*(Flora enters)*

**Flora:** Oh, there you are, Ruprecht. Where has that vicar got to?

**Rolie:** What ho?

**Flora:** That's not the vicar, that's Mr. Pffefingleigh.

**Barky:** He's not the real vicar!

**Rolie:** I most certainly am!

**Flora:** Miss Barquwhaite, what is going on?

**Rolie:** Would you care to explain?

**Barky:** Not really.

**Flora:** Sir Ruprecht, I have no idea why your nephew is dressed in that ridiculous outfit, but I do hope the real vicar gets here soon. I'm so anxious to be joined with you.

**Lavinia:** Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you my dear, but Sir Ruprecht must inform you that he has withdrawn his proposal and extended it to Miss Barquwhaite.

**Flora:** Is this true, Sir Ruprecht?

**Gallworthy:** Not at all, my dear! Once again my sister in law is attempting to interfere with my happiness! I'll not have it, Lavinia!

**Flora:** I must caution you, Lady Croth, not to come between me and my future house - band.

*(Colonel Merrywether enters)*

**Colonel:** Oh, there you are, Mandala.

**Lavinia:** Madeline.

**Colonel:** Is that vicar here yet?

**Rolie:** What ho?

**Colonel:** Ah, young Roland. However did you know?

**Rolie:** What?

**Flora:** He's not the real vicar.

**Colonel:** He's got the outfit. He can't pretend, can't he?

**Lavinia:** What is going on?

**Mandala:** Would you care to explain?

**Colonel:** Not really.

**Lavinia:** Colonel Merrywether, I hope you don't mind but Sir Ruprecht and Miss Barquwhaite will be sharing your ceremony this afternoon.

**Colonel:** Yes, about that, Miss - if it's all the same to you, I'm afraid that I'm just going to have to marry Miss Pffefingleigh. A gentleman's agreement, and all that. I'm sure you'll understand.

**Mandala:** Are you sure you won't reconsider?

**Colonel:** I'm afraid so.

**Mandala:** It would be awfully uncivil of me to begrudge my sister this happiness.

**Colonel:** I knew you'd understand, my dear.

**Mandala:** Not quite as uncivil as reading someone else's mail, though, Colonel?

**Colonel:** Whatever do you mean?

*(Mandala produces a letter)*

**Colonel:** Oh dear.

**Mandala:** Would you read this out loud please, Lady Croth?

**Colonel:** On second thought, my dear, you would make a wonderful wife. And once we're married I promise I'll have you beaten less often.

**Mandala:** Sorry, Colonel. I'm afraid you're just not what I'm looking for in a husband.

**Lavinia:** (*Reads*) "Colonel Merrywether - That night when I persuaded you to go against your natural inclination and know me as a woman, as I tried in vain to make real Englishman of you, has had some unfortunate consequences"

**Colonel:** Only on Saint's days, how about that?

**Lavinia:** (*Reads*) "Do not fear, dear sir, for I have found a young Lieutenant, filled with such kindness, who has recently lost his wife and child and who agreed to be my husband despite my condition. Such generosity of spirit is rarely found these days. We shall be stationed in the Kush, and I doubt you shall ever see me again."

**Barky:** I say, this is rather touching.

**Lavinia:** (*Reads*) "Colonel Merrywether, please forgive me for attempting to persuade you from your true nature. I know now that a man is what he is. In memory of this great truth, and in memory of my own foolishness, should our child prove to be a daughter I shall name her, in memory of

your resolve to remain true to your nature - Constance.  
Yours sincerely, Margaret Gallworthy"

**Rolie:** I say, wasn't that your sister's name, Uncle  
Ruprecht?

**Gallworthy:** Yes. Your mother.

**Rolie:** Well, what are the odds? The Colonel's bit of stuff  
and old mumsy having the same name. And her having a  
daughter named Constance. And having a husband who was a  
lieutenant stationed in the Kush. One would almost begin to  
think... oh, I say!

*(Constance enters)*

**Constance:** Has that bloody vicar got here yet?

**Gallworthy:** What ho, Constance?

**Constance:** What on earth are you all looking at me like that for? Why is Rolie dressed up in that ridiculous outfit? Would anyone care to explain what is going on?

**All (except Constance):** Not really.

**Constance:** Oh, bother it all, then. I've got more important things to worry about at the moment than whatever my rather insane relatives have been up to. Colonel, I'm afraid I couldn't find the vicar. Will you catch the train to London with me? We can get married there and I can pick up that saddle soap I need.

**Rolie:** Yes, probably not such a good idea, that, Connie. About those rather insane relatives you just mentioned -

**Constance:** Oh, don't you start again, Rolie. Aunt Lavinia -

*(Lavinia hands her the letter. Constance reads.)*

**Constance:** Well, I hardly see how this changes things.

**Gallworthy:** Good Lord, Constance!

**Constance:** Oh, come on now, really! It's only a marriage.  
That doesn't mean anything's going to happen.

**Rolie:** She does have a point there.

**Colonel:** I'm sorry, my dear, as much as it pains me, were I  
to wed you every time I looked at your face I would be  
reminded of your dear mother, and I'm afraid I can't live

the rest of my life, thinking every day "Who did I think I was fooling?"

**Mandala:** If it's any consolation, Constance, I, too, have refused the Colonel's hand. Having your love as a sister means more to me than this house ever could.

**Constance:** But I'm not your sister. Not really.

**Mandala:** Well, I'll hope I can have your love, regardless.

**Constance:** You certainly can. Round up the vicar, Rolie, Madeline and I are getting married.

**Mandala:** I say!

**Constance:** It's a perfectly sensible solution. The first daughter to get married inherits the house. You're now the only daughter, we both want the house, you just said you

wanted my love, and I certainly wouldn't mind being a Pffefingleigh again. It keeps the family name, the family honor, and the family fortune all neatly intact. I believe it's called defending marriage.

**Rolie:** She does have a point, Madeline.

**Mandala:** Well, marriage is a wonderful institution. And what better way to defend it than a wedding?

**Constance:** So you will marry me?

**Mandala:** Yes, I most certainly shall.

**Constance:** Darling!

**Mandala:** Darling!

*(They embrace)*

**Constance:** Do you like sports?

**Mandala:** I can learn.

**Colonel:** But what about me? They told me if I don't settle down with a wife, I'll lose my commission!

**Rolie:** Well, young Prudence Barquwhaite is available, Colonel, and do you know - I rather think she's just the sort of girl with whom you would get on smashingly!

**Colonel:** Well, there is something about her I can't quite put my finger on.

**Rolie:** Don't worry, Colonel - if all goes well you'll have your chance.

**Barky:** I say, Rolie!

**Rolie:** Would you prefer to be Mrs. Ruprecht Gallworthy?

**Barky:** Are those my only choices?

**Rolie:** Only if you don't want it spread about the club.

**Barky:** You wouldn't!

**Rolie:** Don't make me say "Wouldn't I?"

**Barky:** I suppose you would at that. Darling!

**Colonel:** Darling!

**Rolie:** Now that just leaves Uncle Ruprecht and Miss Nickelodia. Surely you'll drop your objections on this day of such happiness, Aunt Lavinia? If this family can open itself up and insert some rubber certainly there's room to shove in some chips as well.

**Mandala:** Please, Aunt Lavinia. I would hate to see any tears shed on my day of happiness.

**Connie:** Besides, if we're to be living here darling Madeline and I will need a fourth for bridge.

**Lavinia:** Oh, well, I suppose I can always have it annulled once he dies. I think our family honor is enduring enough to hold up for the six months until then.

**Gallworthy:** What?

**Lavinia:** Didn't you get the telegram?

*(The Vicar, still bound and gagged, bursts from the wardrobe onto the floor)*

**Rolie:** Ah! Yes - do you know, I just remembered something - I'm not a real vicar! Now this - this is the real vicar!  
*(Goes over to help him up)* Sorry about that, old chap, only we have a few weddings that need doing.

**Vicar:** Mmpphh!

**Rolie:** Quite, now - I say, Barky did a number on these ropes, didn't he? Well, never mind, here's your hat back, anyway. So - I suppose we all more or less know the words.

Now, if you wouldn't mind, Vicar - those two, those two,  
and those two over there!

**Vicar:** Mmppphh mmmrppp mmrooorppp mppprmm mmrrrrpppr  
mppprmm mmmrmmrmmr mmooopporr pppppr rrr mmm.

**Rolie:** Well, come on everybody! (*Mouths "I do"*)

**All (except Vicar, Rolie, and Lavinia):** I do!

**Rolie:** Jolly good! Well, good to see the old order  
restored, eh what?

*(Hermenaut enters)*

**Hermenaut:** Is that Colonel gone yet?

**Rolie:** No need to worry there - Catastrophe avoided, eh what? Colonel Merrywether is married to Prudence now, Constance is married to Madeline, Uncle Ruprecht is married to Flora, and - I'm finally going to have that gin!

**Hermenaut:** Three weddings! How wonderful!

**Flora:** And you must come live with us here, Hermenaut! Mustn't he, darling?

**Gallworthy:** What?

**Hermenaut:** I wouldn't hear otherwise!

**Gallworthy:** How?

**Flora:** And do tell me darling, will my room be near Connie's?

**Gallworthy:** Who?

**Vicar:** Mmrppp mhrppp mppprpr mrrrhghhm

**Lavinia:** What's he going on about, Rolie?

**Rolie:** I think he wants us to have a hymn or something.  
Right, everyone gather round (*sings*) And did those feet...

**All:** (*Singing*) In ancient time, walk upon England's  
mountains green? And was the holy lamb of God on England's  
pleasant pastures seen...

**Constance:** Skip to the end!

**All** (*Singing*): 'Til we have built Jerusalem in England's  
green and pleasant land!

**Rolie:** Well, what ho, Jerusalem?

**Mandala:** Anyone for tennis?

***Curtain***