

# THE MANSION

## A PLAY

by Kaj Himmelstrup

Are you interested in the stage rights please contact my agency.

[www.dramatiker.dk](http://www.dramatiker.dk)  
[admin@dramatiker.dk](mailto:admin@dramatiker.dk)

© Kaj Himmelstrup

# THE MANSION

This is a sad story about a manor house, erected somewhere in Europe by a nobleman in 1790. It stands in the suburbs of a minor university town and until this day it has been owned by his descendants. All of them were dukes. Now the latest owner has passed away and there are no heirs. The estate is for sale.

A distinguished professor of philosophy from the local university has, together with other international scholars and prominent citizens from the local municipality, organized a committee with the purpose of making the manor house the domicile of an independent foundation. They intend to establish a center where ethical problems and public morals of our time can be researched and discussed, not only at the highest level, but in a way which hopefully will encourage ordinary people to participate. They have found sponsors for the running of the centre and they are now trying to persuade the city council into buying the estate.

At the same time a wealthy firm is making plans for buying it. They want to convert it into their European headquarters.

The action takes place from Saturday afternoon until Sunday morning at a conference center. Members of the committee will present their ideas and plans to the city council. During the night the matter is in fact decided.

The history of the mansion also plays a part. The nobleman who built the mansion had two young daughters. Although they don't agree they play the action as if they were a kind of Fatal Sisters. One of them wants the family traditions to be continued. The other is troubled by doubts.

## CHARACTERS

JACOBY, *the professor, aged 41, but already internationally distinguished.*

WILLIAMS, *a grammar school teacher and old friend of Jacoby.*

VIVIAN, *a cabaret singer, aged 65.*

TOMMY, *her accompanist, aged 66.*

STONE, *managing director.*

RUGBY, *a solicitor and a member of the city council.*

CECILIA, *the Duke's daughter.*

MIRANDA, *the Duke's second daughter.*

BRANDON THOMSON, *a member of the city council.*

MARY LITTLE, *a member of the city council*

RITA, *a young actor.*

PETER, *a young actor.*

## DRESSING

Cecilia and Miranda are wearing robes from 1790. The others are wearing clothes from our time, but to each costume is added a 'historical' detail, e.g. a dagger, a lace collar, a coat, a pair of boots, in order to arouse associations to classical tragedy.

## LANGUAGE

The play is written (and should be spoken) in blank verses to maintain the associations, to keep clear of naturalism and to add an ironic dimension to the action and the characters.

## ACT ONE

*Williams and Antony in a lecture room at the conference center. Slide projector, screen, chairs, grand piano.*

### WILLIAMS

At last we have succeeded, time has come  
and now your bright and beautiful idea  
will change from dream into reality.  
Although we didn't think it would survive,  
this dream, so daring and so necessary,  
is now unfolding like a fertile flower.  
It is no longer fantasy but fact.

### JACOBY

Remember there is nothing settled yet.

WILLIAMS

I know, but why should our city council  
spend lots of money on this conference  
if they were not completely confident  
that they would carry through the whole idea?  
After all it's just a small investment  
and in return they'll get a farfamed body  
which allso will lend lustre to the city.

JACOBY

I didn't say that I am pessimistic.

WILLIAMS

Of course you're not. There is no reason why.  
I'm sure that all of them are sympathetic.  
None of them would say that our project  
doesn't have a reasonable purpose.

*He turns on the projector and a photo is seen on the screen: the mansion. He bows to the empty chairs and pretends that he's making a speech.*

Honourable members of the council.  
Here it is, the old historic building.  
Its plain and simple name 'The daughters' mansion'  
is still surviving among common people.  
In the past it played a leading part  
in our history and now we hope  
that like The Sleeping Beauty it will waken  
and recreate the brilliance of the past.  
A sleeping beauty in a lovely park,  
owned by noblemen for centuries.  
But recently the latest of them died  
and now this gorgeous jewel is for sale.  
There is room for all what our city  
has dreamt of during many many years:

*Next picture from the mansion: a beautiful banqueting hall.*

A beautiful and stunning setting  
for music, exhibitions, theatre.

*Next picture: the library.*

A room for knowledge, wisdom, contemplation  
and detailed studies of the human mind.

*Next picture: an iron fence and a gate. In the following he's also speaking to the audience.*

The gate was closed, they set the dogs on you,  
but now the citizens will have access -

*Next picture: the wonderful park.*

to a park as beautiful as Eden.  
Honourable members of the council,  
this is what you get: a precious pearl,  
a wonderful extension of the town.  
But on the top of that you'll also get  
a body of outstanding reputation.  
You know, from our confidential talks  
and from the plans and budgets that we sent you,  
that we can make this house a domicile  
of a foundation with an urgent purpose.  
A peaceable place where people get together  
searching for the right and valid answers  
to the many unsolved human problems  
which our conscience is so pestered by.  
Honourable members, here it is.

*Next picture: the mansion.*

The Daughters' Mansion as a meeting place  
where poets, scholars and philosophers  
and ordinary people too, of course,  
from our own municipality  
may find a wiser way to rule the world.  
History is giving us a present  
full of confidence and expectation  
in return for all the misery  
and melancholia it caused.  
Shame on us if we refuse to take it.

*To Jakoby*

I have done my homework, haven't I?

JAKOBY

To keep one's head is not a bad idea.

WILLIAMS

I haven't lost it. I am confident  
that the council fully understand  
that this idea is of great importance  
not only to the town but to the world.

JAKOBY

None of them has promised to say yes.

WILLIAMS

Dear professor, nothing tells against it.

JAKOBY

The selling price. It's not a small expence.

WILLIAMS

Believe me it's a bargain at that price.  
All the members of the council know it.  
They wouldn't come today if the decision  
was already made and it was 'no'.  
Nowadays investments in the arts  
must be a part of our policy.  
It's a fact which all of them accept  
- some of them with joy and some without -  
but they won't deny that it's important.  
That's the weight we throw into the scales:  
It pays to spend your money on the arts.  
The second weight will surely make it turn:  
Who would dare to sabotage a body  
fighting for the new morality  
which mankind has been sighing for so long?

JAKOBY

I'm not expecting any sabotage.  
We've got a kind reception everywhere,  
but one might fear, however, that the council  
in spite of all the promises we've got,  
promises which none of them is bound by,  
will change their mind and turn the yes to no  
in order to appease some angry voters.

WILLIAMS

Angry voters? But we haven't seen them.  
We know what ordinary people think.  
They tell us they're in favour of the plan.  
A very great majority at least.

JAKOBY

Anyway, the council's sympathy  
may quickly turn to doubt and scepticism  
when they have to take the final step.

WILLIAMS

Dear Jakoby, there are no grounds whatever  
for an answer in the negative.  
Our sponsors are reliable  
and they have guaranteed that they will pay  
the running of the center and the rent.

The council won't be stuck with any bill  
and there's security for what they pay.  
They have studied our plans and budgets  
and they are satisfied with everything.

*Next picture: A very old yew somewhere in the park near the mansion. Miranda and Cecilia enter. They are invisible to the others. They walk across the stage, but suddenly they become aware of Williams. They stop and listen.*

A yew as old as the surrounding hills.  
The crown is resting humbly on the ground  
as it has done for more than thousand years.  
The Duke who built the mansion long ago  
would often point and proudly say: it's mine.  
But he was wrong. He didn't make the yew.  
When the seed decided to take root  
this place was nothing but a grass-grown hill  
where the deer was Duke and sovereign.  
As years went by and people came and settled  
they neither said nor thought: this yew is mine.  
It was considered common property  
for more than six or seven centuries.  
And then the Duke appeared on our stage.  
He built the mansion, said the yew was his,  
and ev'rybody had to bend the neck.  
But like the yew the mansion has become  
a part of our ancient history  
and both of them can now be looked upon  
as common heirlooms from a bygone age.  
A distant past presents us with a gift  
so precious that we cannot turn it down.  
It's our bounden duty to say yes,  
we know it's our common property  
and we are proud of it and we'll take care  
that in future it will only serve  
the great majority of common people  
who are longing for a better world.

CECILIA

Did you understand what he was saying?  
To me it sounded like an ugly ghost  
trying to get hold of our mansion.

MIRANDA

We were on the way to picking flowers.  
Don't let a distant voice distract us, sister.

CECILIA

I'm afraid you minimize the menace.

MIRANDA

I think that what he said was beautiful  
and not an ugly threat, so come along.

CECILIA

You're always too confiding, dear Miranda.

*Exeunt Cecilia and Miranda. Enter Tommy and Vivian.*

VIVIAN

Oh Tommy, look, I think we're disturbing.  
I'm so sorry - did we interrupt you?  
They said there was a grand piano here  
and we could have the stage for a rehearsal.  
Brandon has invited me, you know.

WILLIAMS *to Jacoby*

Brandon Thomson from the city council.

VIVIAN

He asked if I could come and sing, you know.  
He said that you might need some entertainment.

WILLIAMS *to Jakob*

I forgot to tell you Mary called  
and said that it was Thomson's own idea.

VIVIAN

There he goes again. He's always ready  
to strike a blow for the performing artists.

WILLIAMS

It's okay - we'll leave the stage to you.  
I think we've finished our own rehearsal?

*Jakoby nods.*

VIVIAN

Thank you very much. How nice of you.  
Brandon said that I, and what I stand for,  
is exactly what you are in need of  
as an example of the future life  
of this magnificent and splendid house.  
He has a gift for saying pleasant things.

TOMMY

We haven't heaps of time, my prima donna.  
I'm sure these gentlemen can go without  
the story of your marvellous career.

VIVIAN *about Tommy*

He has a gift for saying the unpleasant.  
Perhaps you'd better look to the piano.

TOMMY

I shall, my dear, I'll do it right away,  
so that one of us can be in tune.

WILLIAM

It sounds like we had better go away.

VIVIAN

Thank you very much. It's nice of you.

*Exeunt William and Jakoby. Tommy at the piano. He plays.*

This morning Brandon called me.

*Tommy stops playing.*

TOMMY

Yes - and so?

*Vivian hesitates.*

He didn't call to tell you nothing, did he?

VIVIAN

He said he had a little song for me.  
A song with reference to the occasion.

TOMMY

Another masterpiece from Brandons pen?

*Vivian nods.*

And you said, 'yes my dear I'll gladly sing it?'  
Why don't you have the courage to say no?

VIVIAN

I know you don't appreciate his songs.  
Like you I find it very difficult  
to admire his gift for poetry,  
but he's the one who always gets us jobs  
when we are stony broke, remember that.  
Besides, he's not pretending he's a poet  
and though his songs are poor they serve a purpose.  
He's fighting for the party. What are you?

TOMMY

I'm just fooling. I apologize.  
Oh my god why did I not desist  
from shooting off my dirty-minded mouth .

VIVIAN

You never do, but you will be forgiven.

TOMMY

I appreciate your great indulgence.

VIVIAN *brings out a paper.*

I'm sure you know the tune. Should old acquaintance.

*He looks at her in disgust. She puts on a smile.*

TOMMY

For the sake of old acquaintance then.

*He plays.*

VIVIAN *sings*

The daughters mansion always stood  
in our neighborhood.  
But now the Duke has left for good  
and I have understood  
that we are gathered here today  
to hear the wise men say  
we'll have a house without delay  
where moralists can stay.

*Tommy stops playing.*

TOMMY

Vivian, you can't be serious.

VIVIAN

There're six more verses, Tommy, please go on.

TOMMY

I'm sick and tired of Brandons backward songs.  
I know you want to do the man a favour,  
it's handsome of you, certainly it is,  
but you will make yourself ridiculous.

VIVIAN

We'll survive, my dear, so take it easy.

TOMMY

Survive! Is that the only thing you want?  
Don't you understand what you are doing?  
You've got a reputation to defend  
and it is getting urgent necessary.

VIVIAN

Brandon is a very helpful person.

TOMMY

He gets us jobs, so let us lick his boots.

VIVIAN

And if he didn't? Have you thought of that?  
There'll be fewer visits to the pubs.  
If you will stick to the piano, please,  
I'll take care of our artistic funk.

TOMMY

I wish you had some more of that, my dear.

*He plays.*

VIVIAN *sings*

And in the house the voice of art  
will join us and take part  
in all the talks that soon will start  
and change the people's heart.  
For none of us is solely fed  
on milk and daily bread  
we want that everyone is lead  
in the tracks the Muses tread.

*Tommy stops playing.*

TOMMY

Don't tell me you will lend your name to that!  
It's not the bingo-players from the party  
or the usual old-age pensioners  
who'll be sitting there in front of you.  
You'll face a very very brainy audience  
demanding something at a higher level.  
You cannot put them off with Brandon's puke.

VIVIAN

Perhaps another tune might save the text?

TOMMY

Oh no, I wouldn't touch it with a barge pole.

VIVIAN

I understand your self-esteem is hurting?

*Tommy nods.*

I don't remember when it happened last.

TOMMY

You never noticed it before, my darling.  
What about a little well-timed headache?  
'Sorry, Brandon, it's impossible'.

VIVIAN

Oh yes. Or I could break your fingers, eh?  
But what would happen to the little check?

TOMMY

Mum is always thinking of the money.  
There was a time -

VIVIAN

But it is long ago.  
You cannot live on pleasant memories.

*He plays, but the tune is full of discords and dissonances. He stops.*

You could find some other words perhaps?  
Breathe a little life into the mess?

TOMMY

You cannot pull it through, my dear, it's dead.

VIVIAN

It won't insult him. Brandon isn't touchy.

TOMMY

As long as people think that he's the author.

VIVIAN

Oh, there's the rub? It wounds your vanity?

*Pause. She reaches out the paper.*

As a token of your old affection?

*He doesn't take it.*

I have heard there is a bar somewhere.  
We could go and find some inspiration?

TOMMY *takes it*  
I know exactly how a hooker feels.

VIVIAN  
Don't bother, you may leave that part to me.

TOMMY  
So I can style myself piano pimp?

*Exeunt Tommy and Vivian. Enter Williams and Jakoby. Williams turns on the projector and replaces the slides.*

WILLIAMS  
I know it's my responsibility  
to represent the plan to our audience  
and play second fiddle later on.  
Have you got a piece of good advice?

JAKOBY  
Just behave like you have done till now,  
a man of spirits, culture and refinement.

WILLIAMS  
Thank you. How is that put into practise?

JAKOBY  
Words -

WILLIAMS  
and words,

JAKOBY  
and words.

WILLIAMS  
Ay, ay, Mylord.

JAKOBY  
We trust the power of the spirit, don't we?  
Don't forget that language is a weapon.

WILLIAMS  
My sword is drawn, now is the time for action.  
When darkness falls we'll take The Daughters' Mansion  
and we will make it into meetingplace  
for those who want that dialogue and reason  
shall replace the mess that rules the world.

*Exeunt Jakoby and Williams. Change of scene. We're in the park at the mansion.  
Cecilia and Miranda are picking flowers. Cecilia is picking white heartseases.  
Miranda is picking red and lilac orchises.*

CECILIA

Look at these, Miranda, what's their name?  
They look like heartseases, but they are white.

MIRANDA

It is a heartsease -

CECILIA

No, it cannot be.  
Heartseases have colours, they're never white.  
So, what's its name?

MIRANDA

I cannot help it, sister.  
It is a heartsease.

CECILIA

No, I don't believe you.  
Strange as it may seem that our world  
is so great and rich that things we own  
we even do not know the name of.

MIRANDA

And yet my sister does not hesitate  
to call them ours.

CECILIA

Don't take that tone with me!  
I know your hints and I have never liked them.  
Of course the flowers all belong to us.  
The grass, the trees, the whole estate is ours.  
Dad originated the idea  
and built the mansion for his family.

MIRANDA

But he didn't build the flowers, did he?

CECILIA

He bought the land, laid out the park and garden  
and built the house where you and I were born.  
Unhappily he died and left it to us.  
It's our property and that is why  
I have the right to call the flowers mine.

MIRANDA

He bought the land. Where did the money come from?  
He built the house. Where did the money come from?  
You know the answer just as well as I.  
You may repress it, but you can't forget it.

CECILIA

I do not know what you are talking of.

MIRANDA

Have you never heard the roofing tiles  
moaning in the middle of the night?  
Words of grief in foreign languages?  
Curses, crying, sobs and lamentations?

CECILIA

I do not listen, sister, pick your flowers,  
very soon the bell will ring for tea.

MIRANDA

You do not understand the foreign words,  
but yet you are aware of what they tell.  
Each tile is telling us a tearful story  
about the cruel ruin of a slave.  
But of course it leaves my sister cold.  
Like the birches at the lake she stands  
happily enjoying her reflected image  
and pretending that she cannot hear  
the voices of the subdued men and women.

CECILIA

I know exactly what's come over you.  
You have read too many books, my dear.

MIRANDA

I haven't read as many books as you.  
The blunder is that you have read the wrong ones.  
Talking about books I do remember  
a beautiful and interesting story  
about your white and humble little heartsease.  
Nowadays it is a variation  
rarely seen and known by very few.  
Originally all of them were white,  
but in one of Shakespeare's many plays  
we hear about the god of love Cupido  
that he puts an arrow on his bowstring  
and sends it off towards a waiting heart.  
He doesn't hit what he is aiming at.  
The arrow falls upon that little flower.  
'Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound

and maidens call it Love-in-idleness'  
the poet says, as far as I remember.  
Since then this flower, pure as driven snow,  
has possessed a seldom magic power.

CECILIA

I see. And what is meant by magic power?

MIRANDA

If by chance a woman or a man  
gets pollen in the eye or on the eyelid  
they will fall in love immediately.  
The first they look at when the eye is opened  
will be an object of their lust and passion.  
It will arouse their hidden lechery.

CECILIA

I think that I have heard enough, Miranda.

MIRANDA

Oh I forgot, my sister is refined,  
but neither I nor Shakespeare is to blame,  
it is a myth from ancient history.

CECILIA

I suppose that your two dreary bunches  
-what did you call them?

MIRANDA

Orchis, red and lilac.

CECILIA

I suppose he wrote about them too?

MIRANDA

When they found the dead Ofelia  
drifting in the river ...

CECILIA

I remember.

*Pointing at the red orchises*

She was covered with a bunch of those.  
The roots, like fingers on a skeleton,  
held her round her pale and ashy neck.  
Do you remember what queen Gertrude said?  
'Our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them'.  
Those flowers are cut out for you my dear.

MIRANDA

You're wrong. The red ones do not have a root resembling fingers of a skeleton. It's different, it is a swollen root and it is also mentioned by the queen. 'Liberal shepherds give a grosser name', but she doesn't tell us that they use a name which still survives among the people.

CECILIA

Your preference for folksy homeliness is going much too far, my dear.

MIRANDA

It is?  
It passes by the name of doggy balls. Owing to their special shape, I think.

CECILIA

That's enough. I've never heard the like.

MIRANDA

Perhaps I'd better tell you then that nuns slept with dead men's fingers in their bed when their chastity became a burden.

*Holding up the lilac orchises*

The lilac ones which also can arouse a longing for catastrophies and death.

*Holding up the red orchises*

These beautifully red with swollen roots produce a very different effect arousing lust and passions which the nuns would not allow themselves to think about. But also they are carrying a dream of love and friendship, life and luck.

CECILIA

I said that I have had enough, my dear.

*She turns her back on Miranda. Stone and Rugby enter. They have come to inspect the mansion and the park. Instead of picking flowers the sisters watch Stone and Rugby.*

STONE *about the yew*

I've never seen a tree like that before.

RUGBY

It's a yew, they say it's very old.

STONE

In my opinion it is out of place.  
It's better suited for a cemetery.

RUGBY

You're right, according to an old tradition  
there's always been an intimate connection  
between the yew and our thoughts of death.  
For instance was the narrow road to Hades  
bordered all the way with just the yew.

STONE

Hades?

RUGBY

Is the kingdom of the dead.

STONE

I have heard that it is poisonous.  
It is superstition, isn't it?

RUGBY

The three macabre witches in Macbeth  
put yew and spider webs and cuckoo spit  
and other titbits in their brewing vat.  
So yes, I think it may be poisonous.

STONE

Hades and Macbeth. The ancient culture.  
A little polish for the upper ten.  
It is nothing but a pack of lies  
and in the real world it doesn't count.  
Anyway, a little ancient polish  
will lend lustre to the company.  
They are planning to preserve it, aren't they?

RUGBY

I'm afraid they are. It's very old.  
Something like a thousand years I think.

STONE

A thousand years will do. We have to fell it.  
It's standing where we plan to build the show-room.  
We're only waiting for the city council.  
I hope you'll get around to doing something,  
and very soon indeed, we're in a hurry.

RUGBY

I can't pretend that we're hurrying.  
Democracy demands a lot of talking  
before we take a formal voting on it.

STONE

I'm not talking of formalities.  
Don't tell me that you do not make decisions  
before the members gather in the hall.

RUGBY

I'm sorry, but you have to bear with us.  
However, I am rather confident  
that everything will end the way you want it.

STONE

You said the city council has the option?  
And they may buy it very cheap at that?

RUGBY

It's one of the conditions of the will.

STONE

How come that you're so sure they will not buy it?

RUGBY

We haven't got the money.

STONE

You may borrow?

RUGBY

It's impossible, and if we could  
we have so many other urgent matters.

STONE

What about the citizens' committee,  
yesterday I heard the latest rumours.  
An institute for art and for morality?

RUGBY

Take it easy, it's a fancy phantom.

STONE

And yet the council fools away the time  
talking of the possibilities?

RUGBY

Don't forget that we are democrats.

It's very tiresome, but I find it better  
to let them think we take them seriously.  
'We're so sorry, but unfortunately  
it's impossible to find the money'.  
In my opinion everything is settled  
before we leave the conference tomorrow.  
There are some intervals...

STONE

Where party leaders ... ?

*Rugby nods.*

And you'll agree?

RUGBY

There is no doubt about it.

STONE

So we are waiting for the conference.

RUGBY

You may take sunday off for playing golf.

STONE

I wonder what those wicked witches used  
for their lethal soup, perhaps the needles?

RUGBY

Shakespeare's talking about slips of yew,  
not to mention roots of horrid hemlock,  
'thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected',  
but I think the witches must have had  
a recipe with more exact descriptions.  
Would you like to have a copy of it?

STONE

I'm not surprised that you can get me one.  
Thank you, yes. It might be very useful.

*They leave the park. Enter Rita and Peter. Without being seen they have been  
watching Rugby and Stone. Now they are watched by Cecilia and Miranda.*

RITA

What a luck to meet the manager.  
The patience's coming up.

PETER

And who's the other?

RITA

Rugby, highly paid solicitor  
and honoured member of the city council.  
Conservative and local figurehead  
tenderly embracing Capital.

PETER

And they will buy the daughters' mansion?

RITA

Yes.

PETER

The local people do not have a chance?

RITA

Why should they have? It's just a sick idea.  
They only want it for a rotten reason.  
They're looking for a fashionable place  
where all their harmless, safe and nice opinions  
can be displayed and properly admired.  
A dream of peace and love and brotherhood  
as far from real life as you can get.

PETER

We considered to support them, though?

RITA

And made a clear decision that we wouldn't.  
It's impossible, we can't approve  
their purely academic theories.

PETER

The alternative we just have seen  
could tempt us ...

RITA

No it couldn't! Not at all.  
It's evident they are the enemy.  
We must prevent their nasty company  
from buying the estate, no doubt about it.  
It is just as evident, however,  
that the motives of the local group  
are so upper class and impalpable  
that we cannot sympathize with them.  
It's important that they don't succeed,  
their breath is reeking of perfumery.

PETER

In other words, we're keeping to the plan?

RITA

We'll be doing what we've always done.  
We'll face the enemy and show the people  
where the menace to the world peace is  
and where the real frontline can be found.  
Let's return and fetch the gear and costumes.

*They leave the park.*

MIRANDA

I have a feeling of a change of weather.

CECILIA

You are right, the lake was soft as velvet,  
now an angry wind has rippled it  
and the light of day is getting red.  
The whitewash on the walls is wet with blood  
and the drumming in the veins begin.  
I was right, you minimized the menace.

*She goes up to the yew, breaks off a bough and reaches it towards Miranda.*

The struggle for the mansion has begun.  
There isn't time for orchises, take this.

MIRANDA *doesn't take it*

You know I do not like the smell of yew.

CECILIA

Don't be silly. Don't you understand  
that something terrible is happening?

MIRANDA *doesn't take it*

I do not like it, neither do I think  
that you and I will ...

CECILIA

Nonsense! Can't you see  
an ugly ghost is menacing the mansion.  
We have to take up arms against it.

MIRANDA

No.

CECILIA

Don't you understand that we must act?

Can't you see the yew is our weapon?

MIRANDA

I realize that it is yours.

CECILIA

Come on!

We haven't got the time to argue, sister.  
The catastrophic struggle has begun.

MIRANDA

The question is, whom do you take the side of?

CECILIA

That's a pack of nonsense.

MIRANDA

No it isn't.

CECILIA

Yes it is. We haven't got a choice.  
There's only one of them who can deserve  
that we support their cause. The others ...  
starry-eyed idealists and dreamers  
under a delusion of a world  
ruled by love, morality and peace,  
and those young people, scatterbrains and hotheads  
bent on overthrowing law and order,  
ugly ghosts, that's what they are, my dear.  
Commit yourself, there's no avoiding it,  
I've got a plan, I want you to take part.

MIRANDA

And that is why you offer me the yew.

CECILIA

Chuck away those dirty orchises,  
make up your mind and join me in the battle.

MIRANDA

The yew has only one ability.  
With these you have at least a kind of choice.  
The *lilac* orchises, the dead men's fingers,  
they often also call them devil's claw,  
drive us towards destruction, death and ruin.  
But these, the red ones with the swollen roots,  
I'm sure you'll not forget their simple name  
even if I tell you that the people

also call them virgin Mary's hand,  
these humble flowers drive us towards the life  
and towards a pure and unaffected love.

CECILIA

Is that the only weapon you have got?

MIRANDA

I've made my choice.

CECILIA

A choice you will regret  
when the brewing vat begins to boil.

*Change of scene. We are at the reception desk at the conference center. Cloak-room with hangers. A small table, two armchairs. A receptionist is handing a small name badge to Jakob. He puts it on. Enter Williams.*

JAKOBY *to the receptionist*

Please, this gentleman is Williams.

*He gets the name badge and hands it to Williams.*

WILLIAMS

You bestow a decoration on me  
before I have deserved it, thank you, Sir.  
I'll put it on my proudly beating heart  
and take it as a sign that we'll survive.

*He puts it on his chest. Enter Vivian from the left side and Brandon from the right.*

VIVIAN

Brandon! How are you?

BRANDON

Oh Vivian!  
My girl, still going strong and fit for fight.

*Cheek kissing and hugs.*

You're looking marvellous, my darling.

VIVIAN

I'm glad you haven't put your glasses on.

BRANDON

I sent a little song, I hope you liked it.

VIVIAN

Oh yes. May I relieve you of your coat?

BRANDON  
What did Tommy say?

VIVIAN  
He liked it too.  
He said that it deserved to have a tune  
written for this special occasion.

BRANDON  
He's a fellow you can always trust.

VIVIAN  
Perhaps he'll have to make some alterations,  
smaller ones of course ...

BRANDON  
It's quite okay.  
I am looking forward to the moment  
when you appear because there's none but you  
who's master of the songs that criticize  
all the rotten right-wing attitudes.  
Throw it in their faces, dear, tonight.

VIVIAN  
Where does your fighting spirit come from, Brandon?

BRANDON  
My heart was always beating for the arts.  
The people need not only bread but culture.  
That's a part of our policy.

VIVIAN  
And you are fighting for it here today.

BRANDON  
A never-ending struggle. By the way  
I've got a good idea, just a moment.

*He opens his bag and takes out a black cap.*

WILLIAMS  
Shall I take it to the cloak-room?

BRANDON  
What?  
This is not an ordinary cap.  
It has taken share in our struggle

for a better life for working men.  
Today's democracy and welfare state  
owe their life to the distinguished man  
who wore this old and modest cap.

VIVIAN *to Williams*

You may fetch a hanger for the coat.

*Williams hands the coat to the receptionist.*

BRANDON

Can you guess to whom it has belonged?

VIVIAN

To him?

BRANDON

You're right, the greatest figure ever  
in the history of our party.  
Leader of the union and the movement,  
in power for about a thirty years.  
It's his, and now I'll take you by surprise.  
I have found an intimate connection  
between the mansion and this modest cap.

WILLIAMS

An intimate connection?

VIVIAN

Tell us, Brandon.

BRANDON

Once he paid a visit to the duke,  
the former duke who was the figurehead  
of the opposition and a fool.  
They met in secrecy to compromise,  
he stayed the night and got what he was after,  
but this occurrence, long ago forgotten,  
made me think that we might find the room  
in which he slept and have it fitted up  
as a tribute to his memory.

JAKOBY

In other words a sort of mausoleum?

BRANDON

No. Not at all, I'd sooner look upon it  
as a way to make politics easier  
to comprehend for ordinary people.

This cap and other objects from his life,  
his pipe and other things I have collected,  
might arouse a useful interest  
in the history of our party.

WILLIAMS

Have you never thought of wearing it?

BRANDON

Oh no, in fact I never wear a cap  
even if my doctor says I ought to.

VIVIAN *to Williams*

Have you never heard about his scar?

BRANDON

You shouldn't mention it, it's just a trifle.

VIVIAN

No it isn't, you are much too modest.  
Too many people seem to have forgotten  
that some have fought for a society  
with freedom, welfare and democracy.  
It was the king's dragoons that ...

BRANDON

No, no, no,  
my father fought the king's dragoons, but I  
I bore the flag, it was the first of May  
and I was beaten up by the police.

VIVIAN *to Williams*

You could not make do with words those days.

BRANDON

Oh no, but it has healed, I got off lightly.

*The receptionist presents a name badge to Vivian.*

Put it back, no badge for Vivian.  
This is a conference of art and culture  
and those who do not know the queen of songs  
have nothing here to do, but give me mine.

*The receptionist puts it on.*

We're looking forward to a pleasant meeting  
free from prejudices ...

VIVIAN  
Rugby's coming.

BRANDON  
Rugby? Let's get out, where is the bar?

*Exeunt Vivian and Brandon, quickly. Enter Rugby. The receptionist presents a name badge.*

WILLIAMS  
Well-known persons need not wear a badge,  
so if ...

RUGBY  
I wouldn't dream of saying no.  
Though it is a detail it's important.  
It proves that you're a real democrat.

*He puts on the badge.*

JAKOBY  
What do you expect from our meeting?

RUGBY  
I'm looking forward to the conference  
with confidence, it's not a bad idea.

JAKOBY  
What obstacles do you anticipate?

RUGBY  
Let's look at the idea, not the hurdles.  
That's my personal philosophy.  
No obstacles are unsurmountable.

JAKOBY  
You may have heard some people raise objections?

RUGBY  
A few have said, referring to the taxes,  
that it is a little on the large side.  
Again, we've never seen complete agreement,  
so let us keep our optimism alive.

WILLIAMS  
So your attitude is optimistic?

RUGBY

What's the use of being pessimistic?

*Exit Rugby.*

WILLIAMS

Very kind, and slippery as soap.

JAKOBY

You'll never see him fire a pistol,  
but he's the one who's casting all the bullets.

*Enter Cecilia and Miranda. Cecilia with her yew bough and her heartseases in her hands. Miranda with her red and lilac orchises.*

CECILIA

This is where the game will soon begin.

MIRANDA

The game?

CECILIA

Or combat, struggle, battle, war,  
who can know how the events will move?  
But for a start we'll have a little game.  
The men are ready on the chequered board,  
we're only waiting for the last of them,  
but she is on her way, just wait and see.

MIRANDA

What will happen if you do not win?

CECILIA

If I do not win? Don't worry, sister,  
there is no other possibility.  
Look at them, they cannot frighten me,  
two pitiful and unresistant pawns,  
they'll fall an easy prey, Miranda.

MIRANDA

Are you not afraid they may have allies?

CECILIA

I've got a plan, I'm sure it cannot fail.

MIRANDA

I'm afraid you have forgotten me.

CECILIA

Not at all, you're just a minor piece

and your route across the board is fixed.

*Enter Mary with some conference papers.*

There's another pawn, we are complete.  
My initial move will be with this.

*She lifts the white heartseases.*

You gave me the idea, thank you, sister.  
You'll see her being captured, merciless,  
by the power in the magic pollen.

*She puts the heartseases on the table.*

WILLIAMS  
Good afternoon, miss Little, how are you?

MARY  
I'm fine. I'm looking forward to the meeting.

JAKOBY  
You've done a very estimable job.

*The receptionist has handed her name badge to Williams.*

WILLIAMS  
You'll get an order.

*He puts it on her.*

MARY  
This is my reward?

WILLIAM  
Oh no, it only serves as an excuse  
for looking at your interesting bosom.

*Chivalrously Jakoby turns the armchair and makes her sit down.*

JAKOBY  
If I were you I wouldn't pay attention,  
he always flatters, it's no matter whom.

*Mary puts the papers on the table and picks up the white heartseases and buries her face in them.*

CECILIA *to Miranda*  
Look at her, she's picking up the flowers,

she is smelling them, my plan is working.  
And what comes next?

*Mary rubs her eyes and looks at Jakoby.*

That's it! She's looking at him.

MARY *to Jakoby*  
Don't *you* find my bosom interesting?

JAKOBY *embarrassed*  
I'd rather tell you we appreciate  
what you have done so far, it's excellent.

CECILIA  
Her eyes are sparkling, look, with love and lust.

JAKOBY  
I think you have got pollen on your eyelid.

CECILIA  
Do you remember what it means, Miranda?

JAKOBY  
Close your eyes ...

CECILIA  
Come on ... he's touching her!

*Mary turns her face to Jakoby. He removes the pollen with his finger. She opens her eyes and looks at him with an amorous glance. He doesn't react.*

Cupido's crafty arrow hit the target.  
I moved a pawn, a perfect opening.  
She's now obsessed by hopeless love -

MIRANDA  
But why?  
I do not understand. What is the purpose?

CECILIA  
Can't you grasp it? Well, then wait and see.

JAKOBY *pointing to the papers*  
Papers for the meeting I suppose?

*He picks them up.*

I'll see to it that they are handed out.

*Exit Jakoby with the papers.*

WILLIAMS

What does the expert say about the prospects?

MARY

Am I an expert? No. I wish I were.

WILLIAMS

You're a member of the city council.  
You must have a keen appreciation  
of the other members' attitudes?

MARY

It's a subject rarely spoken of,  
but I suppose, since nothing tells against it,  
a happy ending isn't far away.  
I do not know the name of this, do you?  
They look like heartseases, but they are white?

WILLIAMS

It's a variant and very rare.  
Shakespeare calls them love-in-idleness  
and they are dangerous, they're filled with magic.

MARY

Ancient superstition.

WILLIAMS

Don't be sure.  
Shakespeare has a story, anyhow,  
of how they make a man infatuated  
in a donkey.

MARY

I remember it.  
That's what often happens to a girl,  
without assistance from a magic flower.

CECILIA

Save your smile, you're sitting in the trap.

*Enter Brandon.*

BRANDON

Hello, my pretty peach, so here you are.  
We've been looking for you everywhere.

MARY *to Williams*

Have you ever met the gardener?

BRANDON

It's a pity that we didn't find you,  
we had a meeting and ...

MARY

A meeting? Who?

BRANDON

The group, we talked about which attitude.  
we should take up ...

MARY

Without my being there?

BRANDON

We couldn't find you, Mary, take it easy.

MARY

You hadn't told me you would hold a meeting.

BRANDON

It wasn't planned.

MARY

And yet ...

BRANDON

It wasn't planned.

MARY

You were talking about me.

BRANDON

Oh no,  
we talked of nothing in particular,  
but we considered it a good idea  
if you will act tonight as our spokesman.

MARY

It's an open debate ...

BRANDON

Certainly.

MARY

Everyone is free to speak, so why ...

*Brandon shakes hands with Williams.*

BRANDON *to Williams*

I'm Thomson, I must compliment you on  
the very fine initiative that you  
and all your fellow combatants have taken.  
Visionary thoughts are what we need.

MARY

If I shall act as spokesman ...

BRANDON

You're the best.

*To Williams:*

I can tell you she has done her utmost,  
if anybody knows the case it's her.  
I hope you value what she's done.

WILLIAMS

We do.

MARY

I do not know what I'm allowed to say.

BRANDON

It's just a conference so take it easy,  
no decisions will be made today.  
Just tell them we're in favour of the plan.  
And don't you give me that suspicious look.

CECILIA

Another pawn has come upon the board.  
I have a feeling he's a helpful ally.  
The silly girl has reasons to distrust him.

MARY

You have always been a wily bird.

BRANDON

What did you say, my girl?

CECILIA

She thought aloud.

BRANDON *to Williams*

She didn't mean it seriously, you know,  
it's just the way we're talking to each other,

we're concealing our friendly feelings.

*To Mary:*

If I am 'animal', then what is Rugby?

MARY

I have no idea.

WILLIAMS

Carnivore?

BRANDON

Or carnal bull? I shouldn't wonder.

MARY

Ask him.

He's on his way, I'm sure he'll answer you.

BRANDON *to Williams*

Let's get out of here. I'll stand a drink.

*To Mary:*

Perhaps he's just a dull and dirty pig?

*Exeunt Brandon and Williams. Enter Rugby.*

RUGBY

The squires are running to the bar to drink  
leaving the enchanting maid alone.

It's too bad, they ought to be ashamed.

MARY

I'm not in need of words of consolation.

RUGBY

You console yourself by smelling flowers?

MARY

I've got them from a knight, the white, you know.  
A species which is very rare these days.

RUGBY

Because the ladies have got tired of them.  
When there is no demand there is no market.

CECILIA

Now look, I'll take another move, Miranda.

*She makes Mary raise the flowers.*

RUGBY

They look like heartseases.

MARY

That's what they are.

*Cecilia makes Rugby smell them.*

CECILIA

He has got pollen on his eyelid now.  
But still you do not understand my plan?

*Rugby looks at Mary, lecherously.*

MIRANDA

I have a feeling it's abominable.

CECILIA

But it works. It makes a chessman of him.

MIRANDA

Very useful for your ugly purpose.

CECILIA

Certainly, his passions are evoked.

MIRANDA

You're playing with their feelings, why?

CECILIA

Feelings? No! Their lust, their lechery.  
Those were the words you used yourself, Miranda.  
I stake on his desire for sex and money  
and I know that father would approve.  
His eyes are pawing all her ample curves,  
and I shall see to it that everyone  
of all his fantasies are realized.

RUGBY

Do you know how cute your dimples are?

MARY

Perhaps it seems incredible to you,  
but people sometimes pay me compliments.

RUGBY

I wonder why I've never noticed them.

MARY

The reason is you've always spoken to me  
in a way that didn't bring them out.

RUGBY

I promise I will mend my ways at once  
and hurry to retrieve the situation  
because it seems so obvious to me  
that there're some interests we have in common.

MARY

You're thinking of my single bed-room, aren't you?

RUGBY

Considering you are a politician  
your language is surprisingly direct.

MARY

Was I unfair?

RUGBY

I think so, yes, I'm hurt.  
It isn't pleasant either to be called  
a dirty pig.

MARY

It wasn't I who said it.

RUGBY

I know and that must be a drop of hint.  
I'd like to show old Brandon wasn't right.  
May I invite you to a midnight snack?

MARY

Can I believe my ears? A midnight snack?  
It sounds incredible.

RUGBY

But it is true.  
I'm sure you've got me wrong. My attitude  
is very different from what you think.

*Jakoby has entered, he hears what Rugby says.*

JAKOBY

What's the use of being pessimistic?

RUGBY

Exactly. That is my philosophy.  
Let us go for what is possible.

*To Mary:*

I'm sure we can unite in doing something.

JAKOBY

It sounds like an auspicious beginning.

RUGBY

It is.

CECILIA

It is indeed, just see his smile.

RUGBY

I think I'll go and find the dear old fogey.  
I am sure that he'll enjoy to see me.

*Exit Rugby.*

CECILIA

Another move: a major piece is captured.  
It works according to my plan, Miranda.

MIRANDA

I do not understand it, but it's ugly.

CECILIA

I do not care as long as it's effective.

JAKOBY

It surpasses all my expectations.  
The man is sympathetic to the plan,  
suddenly, as if by magic, why?

MARY

I wish that I were able to explain.  
I'm afraid I'm not.

JAKOBY

It doesn't matter.  
As long as he's in favour of the plan  
we shouldn't be concerned about his motives.  
I'm surprised and so are you I think,  
but when you turn it over in your mind  
and ask how many reasons he might have

against the plan, I cannot see but one:  
he pays attention to the county rates.  
I have no doubt that it's an attitude  
that all his voters do appreciate,  
but since the money is a minor problem  
it's not a weighty argument.  
It cannot serve his purpose and he knows it.

MARY

I understand it means a lot to you.

JAKOBY

It's the most important step we've taken.  
We've been working on it for a decade.  
You see, the members come from many countries  
and it has not been easy to be heard.  
But with a domicile of our own,  
independant of the many countries,  
we'll be able to take action now  
as a strong an influential body.

MARY

What I meant ... for you yourself ... these weeks ...  
hasn't it appealed to your emotions?

JAKOBY

I admit that I am glad you're asking.  
I'm well aware I haven't shown my feelings.  
I'm afraid it isn't in my nature.  
Besides I couldn't bear a disappointment.

MARY

You need not worry. Thank you for the flowers.

JAKOBY

The flowers?

MARY

Yes, and the idea behind them.  
They say that it's a love-in-idleness,  
but it's a different kind, completely white  
waiting for a colour, red and warm.  
I think I would have called it covert feelings.

*They do not notice that Williams enters. Mary stretches out her hand. Jacoby takes it without understanding why. Williams misjudges the situation. He's embarrassed, but he doesn't notice that so is Jacoby.*

WILLIAMS

I'm afraid I have to interrupt you.  
The meeting will be opened in a minute.

JAKOBY

We're ready now, and we are well prepared,  
thanks to Mary and her splendid work.

*Exeunt Williams, Jakoby, Mary and the receptionist.*

CECILIA

Come on, Miranda, let us follow them  
and see them perish on the battlefield.  
I've placed my chessmen on the board  
and all of them are ready.

MIRANDA

All of them?

CECILIA

Oh yes, we'll not be taken by surprise.

MIRANDA

I'm afraid you have forgotten two.

*Enter Peter and Rita watchfully observing. Peter is dressed as he was before, but Rita is wearing a robe which is an exact replica of Cecilia's.*

As far as I can see it's their intention  
to mingle with the others on the board  
and I'm afraid they'll sabotage your moves.

RITA

What's the time?

PETER

Ten minutes past.

RITA

Okay.

PETER

I can hear the meeting has begun.  
I think we'll have to wait an hour or so.  
There're some speeches and a short discussion  
and after that they're dusting Vivian  
so she can sing an ancient song or two.  
When she's about to finish you'll be ready.

CECILIA  
They are dilettanti.

MIRANDA  
I'm not sure.  
It seems to me they know what they are doing.  
I think their dreams are healthier than yours.  
You want to keep the mansion as a place  
where fates are crushed just for the sake of money.  
I have a feeling you have met your foe.

CECILIA  
If so, they too will be defeated, trust me.

MIRANDA  
How come your hands are shaking?

CECILIA  
They are not.

MIRANDA  
Two more pieces, entering your board.  
It's crowded now, and they were not expected.

CECILIA  
I know my countermoves, so long, Miranda.

*Exit Cecilia.*

PETER  
There's no one here, so just remain and wait  
until we give the signal. Here's the whip.

*He hands her a whip.*

RITA  
You'd better disappear, good luck.

PETER  
Good luck.

*Exit Peter.*

MIRANDA  
I'm afraid my sister is mistaken.

*Change of scene. We are now in the lecture room at the conference center. Jakoby, Williams, Rugby and Mary are in the 'audience'. (The 'audience' may be supers or*

*dolls or...)* Vivian has entertained the audience and is being applauded. Tommy is at the piano. Brandon goes up to Vivian. Miranda and Cecilia are seen upstage.

BRANDON

Thank you, Vivian, for your performance.  
I know that I'm speaking on behalf  
of all of us who're gathered here tonight.  
You were brilliant, thank you very much..  
The artistry with which you hold us spellbound  
demonstrates and proves the well-known fact  
that if mankind didn't have the arts  
life would be a very dull affair.  
You give us beauty, love and food for thought  
and even when politics is the subject  
your songs are reaching everybody's heart  
without wounding anybody's feelings.  
And now I'm going to disclose a secret.  
Vivian will sing another song,  
a song especially for the occasion.

VIVIAN *sings*

1.  
Once upon a time there was a knight.  
His castle was a most impressive sight.  
He built it without asking, might is right.  
He underpaid his workers, he was tight.  
Around the mansion he laid out a park.  
Intruders were received with bite and bark.  
He had a soul, but it was swathed in dark.  
His conduct was the conduct of a shark.  
But times have changed, it is no longer so,  
we've had democracy since long ago.  
The house deserves a new and better fate.  
It should be ours so let's kick in the gate.

2.  
His daughters came into estate and land.  
They never lent their personnel a hand.  
They never let them sit, they let them stand.  
Their care and consciousness were writ in sand.  
But who preserved the land and the estate?  
Who did mend the old and worn-out gate?  
Who did keep the house in healthy state?  
The servants did it, they were paid with hate.  
But times have changed, it is no longer so,  
we've had democracy since long ago.  
The house deserves a new and better fate.  
It should be ours so let's kick in the gate.

3.

There're costly guilt-framed paintings everywhere,  
elaborated gold and silverware,  
you can walk for hours and hours and stare  
at works of art both precious and rare.  
But never did the snooty dukes invite  
their peasants and the countryfolks inside.  
Their interest in art was broad and wide,  
their interest in people put aside.  
But times have changed, it is no longer so,  
we've had democracy since long ago.  
The house deserves a new and better fate.  
It should be ours so let's kick in the gate.

4.

The works of art belong to all of us.  
It is no use to make an awful fuss  
it's crystal clear, there's nothing to discuss.  
A new age has begun, we'll say it thus:  
The house deserves a new and better fate  
So let us enter through the open gate.  
Let's fill the house with love instead of hate  
and let's make every fellow man your mate.  
Let us create a place where peace can start.  
Let's build it upon common sense and art  
and hope that everybody will take part  
and struggle for the cause with all their heart.

*Applause. Vivian takes a bow. Rita enters, still dressed like Cecilia and cracking the whip. Confusion in the 'audience. Most of them, however, think it is a part of the entertainment.*

RITA

All of you are talking of the mansion  
as if it ever lay within your power  
to change the purpose and the principles  
that it has served for many many years.  
You're talking of the people and the arts,  
of peace and love and no more ugly wars  
as if it ever would be possible  
to change the way this wicked world is ruled.

BRANDON

What is going on? It can't be right!

RUGBY

Take it easy, it's another joke.

RITA

You think it's up to you to form the fate  
and the future of The Daughters' Mansion.  
But you have no idea of the strength  
wintering behind the whitish walls.  
Surrender is a word we never knew  
and we will not consider for a second  
to learn it now from anybody here.  
But we'll perform a play that isn't pleasant.  
The purpose is to hold the mirror up  
as Hamlet told the rotten king and queen  
and show the truth to you, the stinking truth  
which you're too blind to have discovered..  
It all began two hundred years ago  
when my beloved father built the house.  
He who made it possible for him  
was the gentleman who's coming now.

*A black slave stripped to the waist appears carrying a big white wooden plate.*

Thousands of his kind contributed  
to make the mansion so remarkable.  
I'm sure you'll say he is a paltry slave,  
but wait and see, you'll have to change your mind.

BRANDON

That's the limit. They are not invited.

RUGBY

Take it easy, Brandon, and relax.

RITA

Some people think the mansion is so old  
that it belongs to our history.  
Since everybody own the history,  
so these silly people try to argue,  
the mansion must be owned by all of us.  
It's ridiculous and wishful thinking.  
The mansion on the grassy hill was built  
because a single man decided it.  
A brainy man who also had the courage  
to suit the the action to his bright ideas.  
A clever man can understand the world.  
An energetic man can make it his  
and that's exactly what my father did.

*The black slave has put down the plate. He has crawled up to her, now he's kissing  
the hem of her robe.*

All of you are thinking he's oppressed  
and only kneels for fear of getting whipped.  
Oh no it is the other way about.  
He's not afraid of neither me nor this.  
He loves us both because to him we mean  
daily bread and dwelling, peace of mind,  
protection, safety and security.  
To cut it short: the owner of the mansion  
has provided him with everything  
he wasn't able to produce himself.  
That's why he wants to show his gratitude.

BRANDON

Shouldn't we report them to the ...

RUGBY

No!

Can't you see it's splendid entertainment?

RITA

By means of him and hundreds of his likes  
my father built his house, and later on  
during century by century  
he was followed by a lot of workers  
who completed and kept up the house.

*Enter a peasant from the eighteenth century and a workman from the nineteenth.  
They are carrying more white wooden plates. The slave, the workman and the  
peasant assemble the plates into a big model of the mansion.*

There it is, a proud and noble swan,  
standing firm and imperturbable  
high above the grey and simple sparrows.  
And please take notice of the humble slaves.  
Look at them, how they crouch behind the mansion  
seeking shelter from the wicked life,  
and the protecting swan spreads out the wings.  
Their fates are intertwined inextricably  
and that's a fact which none of you can change.  
The mansion and the men are chained together.

*She goes up to them and shows that they are put in irons and chained to the model  
of the mansion.*

Long ago their common fate was fixed  
and a change is long past praying for.

*Enter a member from Rita and Peter's group. He is dressed exactly like Jakoby and  
he is wearing a very lifelike oversize mask, slightly caricatured, representing*

*Jakoby.*

A sympathetic young professor enters.  
He's dreaming of a new and better world  
because the one we have is cruel and wicked.  
Who would disagree with him on that?  
Aren't we all in favour of his dream:  
a happy world without distress and pain  
a world with freedom and equality,  
full of people caring for each other?  
Certainly!

*Speaking to 'Jakoby'.*

So please, professor, please  
go up to them and tell them that the mansion  
from now on serves a new and nobler purpose  
than it did in old and bygone days.

*'Jakoby' goes up to the model. He tries to unchain the men, but they push him aside.*

Tell them they are free, they're on their own,  
there is no one to control them or give orders,  
they can do whatever they would like to,  
fulfil their dreams and hopes and leave the mansion.

*'Jakoby' 'mimes' that he is talking to them. They shake their heads and turn their back on him and put the hands upon the ears. Rita turns and speaks to the 'audience'.*

He has to realize that none of them  
will barter all his flimsy promises  
for the security they know they have.  
They may be dreaming of a better life,  
but they will never change his hazy dreams  
for the caring and protecting wings.

*'Jakoby' seems to be giving up. Rita speaks to him.*

Don't lose your heart, my friend, revive your courage,  
don't think the game is up, remember what you said,  
You trust the power of the spirit, don't you?  
And you believe that art can save the world?  
The artistic creativity  
as father of a reborn brotherhood  
and mother of a new morality  
that's for sure the creed professed by you.

*A girl from Rita and Peter's group has entered. She is dressed like a greek Muse carrying a lyre.*

Now look, the Muse has come, she will assist you.  
The ancient culture stretches out her arm,  
so take her hand and let her song unchain  
the poor and pitiable and oppressed.  
Her art will get the people set in motion.

*To the audience.*

You and I are on the point of puking,  
but we will let him seek the miracle.

*'Jakoby' goes up to the Muse and leads her by the hand to the model and the three figures.*

While there is life there's also hope,

*Rita turns and speaks to 'Jakoby'.*

That's right!

Music from the gods, divinely played  
tumbled down the walls of Jericho.

*The Muse mimes that she 'plays' the lyre. They turn the back on her and put their hands upon the ears. She gives up and stops 'playing'. The lyre comes to pieces in her hand and falls to the ground.*

Your Muse is silent and her hands are empty.  
You're looking at her in despair and anguish.  
You do not understand what's happening  
and neither do you understand the reason.  
But I will tell you why, my dear professor.  
Come on and let us have a look at her.

*Rita goes up to the Muse and lifts up her dress revealing that she too is put in iron and chained to the model of the mansion.*

People of your level always praise  
the liberty and freedom of the arts,  
the independence of the men in power  
and the happiness it brings to people.  
Here's the truth: the people do despise her.  
They know that art is but an almond cake  
a little sweet and sugar-coated pleasure  
eaten by the rotten bourgeoisie  
when they are bored and want to be diverted.

They also know she isn't independent,  
on the contrary her whole existence  
would be unthinkable without the favour  
of the ruling master in the mansion.  
Her song is beautiful but powerless,  
she sings the songs we want to listen to  
but she has sense enough to hold her tongue  
about the things we do not like to hear.  
There you are, she is a monument  
to all your futile dreams about a change.

*Enter Peter. He is dressed like Rugby and wearing a mask, oversize and slightly caricatured, representing Rugby. He's carrying a sheaf of small pam-phlets or papers stapled together.*

PETER *to Rita*  
I've been watching you and I have seen  
that you are playing in the ancient style.  
I'm pleasantly surprised. My compliment!

BRANDON *to Rugby*  
You were right, it's very entertaining.

PETER  
But I think a character is missing.  
A man who'd bring the action up to date  
and disclose the secret of the play.  
I hope I'll be allowed to play that part?

RITA  
We've been waiting for you, mister Rugby.  
We were just arriving at your lines.

BRANDON *to Rugby*  
Aren't you going to protest against them?

RUGBY  
Ban a play? What are you thinking of?  
I thought you were a real democrat?

PETER *to 'Jakoby'*  
My friend, I know how you are feeling now,  
but do not let it drive you to despair.  
When this play is over you'll have learned  
that you will never never be successful  
when you fight against the mighty mansion  
because the force and power of the mansion  
is the same as that which rules the world.

RITA

So even if the duke has passed away  
the mansion carries on as usual?

PETER

Of course! It'll never cease to serve the purpose  
it has served so faithfully for years.  
In order to avoid misunderstandings  
I'll tell you that it means that we have bought  
the mansion and the park .

RITA

And who are we?

PETER

A firm of standing, international.  
It is meant to be their central office  
of the european main division.

*He goes up to the 'audience' and hands out the pamphlets.*

WILLIAMS

Tell me, who's responsible for this?

PETER

A committee which will save the mansion.  
Here you are sir, interesting news.

*He hands a pamphlet to Jakoby.*

WILLIAMS *to Brandon*

Why don't you stop it?

RUGBY

It's a show, enjoy it.

PETER *to Tommy*

Here you are. A racy story, sir.  
You could write a nasty song about it.

*He hands a pamphlet to Vivian.*

And you could go and sing it in the streets  
where the oppressed would come and listen to you.

*He goes up to Mary.*

I'll tell you, strictly confidential,

I do not want the rumour to be spread,  
that we are ready for delivery  
of very dubious activities  
within the holy economic system.  
We observe the deepest secrecy  
so there's no lack of hungry customers,  
but if you're interested you can read about us  
in this little booklet, it is free.

*He hands a pamphlet to Mary. He goes on handing out pamphlets.*

RITA to 'Jakoby'

You've seen the man who snatched away the mansion,  
crushed your visionary high-flown dreams  
and inflicted a defeat on you.  
You must be angry with him, furious.  
You know that if the table shall be turned  
you'll have to fight with weapons different  
from academic words and words and words.  
You must take action now and draw your dagger.

*She unsheathes his dagger and puts it in his hand.*

The only language that he understands  
is the language of unpleasant power.

*She shoves him towards Peter.*

If you want to win the battle, speak his language.

*'Jakoby' takes a few steps and stops. He looks at the dagger, hesitates, holds out his hand, shakes his head and lets go of the dagger. It falls to the ground.*

PETER

I can understand that you surrender.  
I think it's wise of you to realize  
that you have lost a war you couldn't win.  
Furthermore you'll never get a chance  
to go to war again, we'll see to that.

*He signs to the peasant to pick up the dagger and motions him to kill 'Jakoby'. 'Jakoby' falls to the ground. At the same time the slave and the workman have altered the model of the mansion into a white coffin.. They put 'Jakoby' into the coffin. Exit the Muse, followed by the slave, the workman, the peasant and Peter who are carrying the coffin and Rita who accompanies their steps with loud cuts of the whip. As they are passing Rugby 'Jakoby' raises the dagger and lets go of it. It falls in Rugby's lap.*

RUGBY

Bravo, excellent, a real masterpiece.

*To Brandon.*

Congratulations to the dramatist.  
A big surprise and very well arranged.

BRANDON  
You think that I -

RUGBY  
Relax, old pal, relax.  
Who wants a dull and boring conference?  
I'm not annoyed, I like what you have done.

*To everybody.*

And now the city council have the pleasure  
of being hosts at our midnight party.  
We hope that you will join us in the bar.

TOMMY  
An excellent idea, thank you sir.

*Tommy rises. Vivian grabs his arm.*

VIVIAN  
You need not always be the first, my friend.

RUGBY  
It's situated in the swimming-hall.

*Exeunt Brandon, Rugby, Tommy, Vivian and possible supers. Mary and Williams  
look at Jakoby.*

CECILIA *to Miranda*  
Let us enjoy his stony look, my sister,  
his trembling hands, his stupefied expression.  
He is staggered by the stunning news  
and understands that he has had his day.

MIRANDA  
If I were you I wouldn't be so sure.

CECILIA  
You have to face the fact, you can't evade it.  
At a blow his futile dreams were crushed.  
Thanks to me it went without a hitch  
and then I had to use but half my weapons.

MIRANDA  
You got some help.

CECILIA  
I won! That settles it!

*End of act one.*

ACT TWO

*The same set a few minutes later. Jakoby, Williams and Mary are studying the pamphlets they were given by Peter. Cecilia with her yew bough and Miranda with the red and lilac orchises are still present.*

CECILIA  
The future of the mansion is ensured.  
It shall serve what it has always served.

MIRANDA  
If I were you I wouldn't be so sure.  
Their little play fit in extremely well  
with all your plans, but it was theatre,  
very good indeed, but not convincing.

CECILIA  
It may well be that you are not convinced,  
but look at them, they know that they have lost.  
Bleeding bodies on the battlefield.

MARY  
When he handed out this print I thought  
that it was nothing but a foolish gimmick.  
But this ...

WILLIAMS  
Surprise?

MARY  
That's not the word for it.  
I had a hunch that some of his affairs  
couldn't bear the light of day, but this ...  
It's worse than I could ever have imagined.

WILLIAMS  
It could be fabricated?

MARY  
Yes, it could.  
If it wasn't for the photocopies,  
copies of the contract and the sold notes,  
copies proving every word they said.

This is not a pack of sick assertions.  
It's a terrifying revelation.  
When they appeared I thought they came to spite us,  
but no, those devils came to tell the truth.  
None of us can be surprised that Rugby  
is engaged in fishy business,  
but even in my worst and wildest dreams  
I couldn't have imagined he was able  
to carry out a dirty trick like this.  
And while the show is going on he's sitting  
unaffected, pretty cool and smiling.

*Jakoby is still reading. She looks at him with sympathy.*

CECILIA

Look at her, sister, see her eyes.  
My flowers haven't lost their magic power.  
Her little heart is full of love and lust,  
but her desire will never be returned  
and soon a frosty hand will squeeze her heart.  
She'll loose her faith in him and in his cause,  
a faith she never shared with him in earnest.

MIRANDA

You're judging too severely.

CECILIA

No, I'm not.  
She's a politician, no more.  
She is fighting for her own position,  
it doesn't pay to fight for an idea.  
She has already taken her precautions.  
Oh yes, just wait, you'll see that I am right.

MIRANDA

You're so cynical that I get sick.  
But don't you think that you have won the game.  
Look out, my sister, now *I* make a move.

*She puts her hand on Jakoby's shoulder. He rises. He looks determined.*

JAKOBY

It isn't true.

WILLIAMS

Why not?

JAKOBY

It cannot be.

WILLIAMS

It says in coldest print, the house is sold.

JAKOBY

I don't believe them. There is something wrong.  
I do not understand why we got shocked.

WILLIAMS

But all the copies?

JAKOBY

There's a lack of logic.  
If it is true that he has bought the mansion  
why didn't he prevent this conference?  
And why do we forget to ask a question  
weightier than any other questions?  
A politician in his position  
can do what common people cannot do,  
but he can't evade democracy.  
According to the will there is an option.  
It is given to the city council  
which haven't taken a decision on it.  
Not as far as I'm informed.

MARY

That's right.  
It is still at the committee stage.  
We cannot make decisions on our own.

JAKOBY

What do these people say about the option?

WILLIAMS

Nothing.

JAKOBY

So from that we can conclude?

WILLIAMS

Are you sure that this is fabricated?

JAKOBY

A pair of scissors and a little glue.  
You need not even be an expert at it.  
I'm sure that they express what Rugby wants.  
But it's a forgery, the copies lie.

MARY

And the rest?

JAKOBY

You have no cause to worry.  
The quality of this is much too poor  
to be a threat to our enterprise.

MIRANDA

You thought he had received his death-blow, sister.  
He has risen now, and he is standing.

CECILIA

It won't be long before he falls again.  
Don't think my flowers are without result.

MIRANDA

It wasn't him who got infatuated.

*Cecilia doesn't answer. She turns her back on Miranda.*

MARY

I think that I had better talk to Brandon.  
Just to make assurance doubly sure.

*Exit Mary.*

WILLIAMS

Some of it might possibly be true.

JAKOBY

As for instance?

WILLIAMS

I'm thinking of  
the story about Rugby and his firm.

JAKOBY

Certainly, where there's smoke, there's fire.  
I can very well imagine him  
involved in rather filthy business,  
but that is none of our business.  
If you are going to investigate  
you may ask the lady there some questions.

*Rita has entered. She is no longer wearing the old 'Cecilia'-robe, but her previous dress.*

RITA

Hello, you're still enjoying our show?  
I suppose you couldn't swallow it?

WILLIAMS  
It wasn't easy.

RITA  
But you understood?

WILLIAMS  
To tell the truth, we didn't like your show.

RITA  
But you must admit it had a message?

WILLIAMS  
Don't tell us you came back to get a review.

RITA  
I'm sure I'd not be interested in it.  
I came because we had forgotten this.

*She picks up the broken lyre.*

WILLIAMS  
You know you may have ruined more than that?

RITA  
It isn't ruined, we've made it so  
that it can fall apart.

WILLIAMS  
You're very funny.  
You know what I am talking of.

RITA  
So what?  
We told a story mean and low, but true.  
Of course we knew that none of you would like it,  
but why should we consider to be silent?  
Rugby and his gang would get the mansion,  
you could whistle for it anyhow.  
Besides we didn't like your fancy dreams.  
They stink with snooty bourgeois attitudes.

WILLIAMS  
You told a story mean and low, that's right.  
But it wasn't true. It is like this  
those who are in charge of the estate  
haven't sold it yet. It's still for sale.  
Your show was telling nothing but a lie.

You had no reason not to be supporting.

RITA

And abuse the art in favour of  
an idiotic castle in the air?

WILLIAMS

So you were entertaining us with *art*?

RITA

Yes, precisely. That is where we differ.  
Your art is decent, nice and kind and toothless.  
To you it's nothing but a chocolate cream.  
To us it is a weapon in the hand  
which we are in duty bound to use.

WILLIAMS

To the benefit of whom?

RITA

The truth.  
The truth that you yourself had not discovered.  
The truth that says that Rugby and his gang  
will carry on those family traditions  
the house has had for many centuries  
being home for power, wealth and force.  
A fact you cannot alter for the better.

JAKOBY *holding out the pamphlet*

Would you say that this pretends to be  
the decisive piece of evidence?

RITA

It does not pretend to be, it is.

JAKOBY

And it is all you've got?

RITA

It is abundant.

JAKOBY

Unfortunately it is not authentic.

RITA

Yes it is.

JAKOBY

I'm sorry, it's a fake.

Very funny, but a forgery.  
You've fabricated all the photo-copies.

RITA

Faked or not, the papers tell the truth.  
It's a complicated jigsaw-puzzle,  
concealed from you and other decent people,  
but we have found the many hidden pieces  
and bit by bit we did the jigsaw-puzzle  
and discovered what it represented.  
And that is what we told you in the show.

JAKOBY

I do believe you found a lot of pieces,  
but you didn't find them all.

RITA

So what?  
That one or two are missing doesn't matter.  
The rest of them, and they are numerous,  
make a picture that you can't mistake.

JAKOBY

The one you're missing is the most important.  
You see, the city council has the option  
and the matter isn't settled yet.  
Your jigsaw-puzzle was of no avail,  
but your show was very useful to us.  
I'm rather sure that they will hesitate  
to let him have it, now that they have learned  
what his intentions with the mansion are.

RITA

So clever brains and yet so simple-minded.

JAKOBY

You were wrong and we were right, that's it.  
Anyway, we're grateful for your help,  
we appreciate what you have done.

*They wait for an answer, but she doesn't speak.*

WILLIAMS

You came to fetch your lyre, didn't you?

*She picks up the lyre and leaves the stage.*

I think that we had better look for Mary.

*Exeunt Jakoby and Williams.*

MIRANDA

Your silence is remarkable, my sister.  
Is the breeze so strong it bends the birch?

CECILIA

All these people talk about our father  
as if his money caused the misery,  
as if his vigour smelled of cruelty,  
and his intentions were to be a tyrant.  
But that's a lie, a bloody lie, you know it.  
His farmers met his vigour with contentment,  
his money made the servants happier,  
the neighborhood did prosper by his power.

MIRANDA

My memories of him are different.  
I asked myself, where does the money come from  
and the horrid answer made me cry,  
not when he looked at me, but in the night.

CECILIA

You have always had a maudlin mind.

MIRANDA

His many slave ships seldom reached the harbour  
while all the feeble slaves were still alive.  
The survivors could anticipate  
a life which you would never call a life,  
a life of grief and misery and mourning.  
That's why I find it fair and reasonable  
that fate has now decreed that our mansion  
shall serve a better purpose in the future,  
that the shame shall be replaced ...

CECILIA

The shame!  
That word has no relation to my father.  
Those men and their ridiculous ideas  
have no right to occupy my home.  
There's no need at all to feel ashamed  
and I'm not feeling guilty either, sister.

MIRANDA

I know and that will be the ruin of you.

*Change of scene. We are now at a toilet at the conference center. There's a door leading to the toilet. Rugby and Brandon are standing at the urinal.*

RUGBY

I've heard you've troubles with the bladder, Brandon.  
It must be hard to see it doesn't work  
as well as when you were a younger man.  
Alas, one have to bear the strokes of fate.

BRANDON

I appreciate your sympathy,  
I know you're speaking from experience.  
Not exactly with the bladder, though.  
We'd better change the subject, haven't we?  
You said you liked the show.

RUGBY

Oh yes, I did.

BRANDON

You didn't get that many compliments.  
To say it frankly they were gunning for you.

RUGBY

People aim at figures standing out,  
That is probably why you got off.

BRANDON

Quite likely there's a more convincing reason.  
Their story might be true. You want the mansion.

RUGBY

I do not know what you are hinting at.  
Why should I - ... Do you believe their story?

BRANDON

It doesn't sound that improbable, does it?  
I admit that I can understand you,  
it's a very beautiful estate.  
If I were you I think -

RUGBY

What do you think?

BRANDON

It must be vexing not to have the option.

RUGBY

I cannot see the option is a problem.

BRANDON

When the case is on the table you will spot it.

RUGBY

The council will say no, we lack the money.

BRANDON

It is without expences to the city.

RUGBY

Without expences?

BRANDON

They can raise a loan.

If we will undertake security.

Why shouldn't we? We'll get a decent mortgage.

And the running of the enterprise  
will be sufficiently secured by sponsors.

Their inventiveness is quite astounding,

it's the kind of private enterprise

which you always praise so loudly, Rugby.

RUGBY

The security will be a problem

because it rests with the majority.

BRANDON

You are right, but we've been working at it.

The majority is in the bag.

RUGBY

How the hell?? - I'm sorry. Is it true?

*During the following dialogue Mary enters, looks at the door to the toilet, listens and waits for Brandon to come out.*

BRANDON

Think it over, it is not amazing.

People get admission to a house  
which was reserved for those of noble birth.

The gate will open, they can stroll the park  
and watch the yew, the oldest in the country.

It's a part of our history.

RUGBY

I'm afraid the voters will say no.

BRANDON

And I'm afraid that they will not say yes  
to the alternative you represent.

RUGBY *after a short pause*  
You know the light and power company  
has a General Assembly soon.

BRANDON  
And you'll of course be re-elected chairman.  
Congratulations, it is profitable.

RUGBY  
You can't exclude the possibility  
that other candidates are recommended.

*Enter Williams.*

WILLIAMS *to Mary*  
Did you find him?

MARY  
No, I'm waiting for him.

BRANDON  
Anybody in particular?

*Williams opens the door and enters the toilet. He goes up to the urinal between  
Brandon and Rugby. None of them speaks. After a pause he washes his hands,  
leaves the toilet and closes the door.*

WILLIAMS  
He was not alone.

MARY  
I had the feeling.

WILLIAMS  
They didn't say a word.

RUGBY  
What can I say?  
The opportunities are not against you.

WILLIAMS  
Don't you think that Jakoby should know?

*Mary nods. Exit Williams. Enter Cecilia carrying her yew bough and Miranda with  
the lilac and the red orchises.*

CECILIA  
You thought that I had lost the game, but no!  
Look at me now, I'll join the gentlemen

and I will give them one more fatal chessman  
and you will see that I can keep it going.  
Are you coming with me?

MIRANDA  
No, I'm not.

CECILIA  
I'm so sorry, how could I forget  
my sister is a highly cultured woman?

*She enters the toilet, but not through the door. During the next six lines she strokes  
Brandon caressing with the yew bough.*

RUGBY  
The majority you mentioned?

BRANDON  
Yes?

RUGBY  
Is it a fact?

BRANDON  
We haven't voted yet,  
but the proposal has been well received.  
The other parties -

RUGBY  
All of them?

BRANDON  
Oh yes.

*They go to the washbasin. Cecilia follows them.*

RUGBY  
The company - it ought to be your turn.  
Could we ... what do you say?

BRANDON  
I wash my hands.

*Cecilia puts the yew bough at the washbasin and leaves the toilet. She goes up to  
Miranda.*

RUGBY  
Can I call you, Brandon?

BRANDON

Any time.

*Rugby opens the door and leaves the toilet.*

MARY

What have you been doing?

RUGBY

At the toilet?

I'm too shy to tell about the details.

MARY

You talked about the mansion, didn't you?

RUGBY

You'd better ask the man himself.

*He makes an ironic bow and goes out.*

MARY *while he is leaving*

I will,

but do not think I'll let you off so lightly.

I've not forgotten our midnight snack.

*Exit Rugby. Brandon picks up the yew bough and looks at it.*

CECILIA

I've made my second move and I am sure  
that you have not forgotten that the yew  
symbolizes death and desolation.

What are you feeling now, my little sister?

MIRANDA

I'll not say shame for neither shame nor sorrow  
or any other word is strong enough  
to lift the burden of my bleeding heart.

CECILIA

Stop feeling pity for those scatterbrains.

They are not worthy of a single tear,  
even less a bleeding heart, so stop it.

MIRANDA

It doesn't bleed for them, it bleeds for you.

CECILIA

My God! It can't be true! You've lost your reason.

It isn't time for bleeding hearts, Miranda,

it's time to have a hand that doesn't shake.

*Brandon leaves the washbasin with the yew bough in his hand. He opens the door.*

MARY

What the hell have you been doing?

BRANDON

What?

MARY

You've sold the mansion.

BRANDON

Half a tick ...

MARY

I know.

What did he offer in return? How much?

I'm pissed off with you and all your horse trades.

I've been working day and night on this

and every time I asked, you said go on

it fits the keynote of our policy.

You're pissing at me!

BRANDON

What a load of balls!

Use your brains! How can I sell the mansion?

The matter is at the committee stage,

contrary to you I'm not a member

so how could I ... let's talk about it later.

*He sees that Jakoby is coming*

There's the ducky friend of yours. - Hello!

What was his name? I have forgotten it.

*Enter Jakoby.*

JAKOBY

I hope I'm not intruding?

BRANDON

Not at all.

Today we're fighting for a common cause.

MARY *pointing to the yew bough*

Brandon tries to play the part of angel.

It doesn't come quite natural to him.

BRANDON

I'll gladly place it in the hands of one  
who probably can act it better.

*He hands the yew bough to Jakoby.*

JAKOBY

Thank you.

BRANDON

I suppose you came to speak to Mary?  
I won't disturb you, I will find the bar.

*Exit Brandon.*

CECILIA

Are you still unable to admit  
that it is I who keep the battle going?

MIRANDA

At least I can take comfort in the thought  
that you've expended all your ammunition.

CECILIA

I do not need another move, Miranda,  
he's walking on his Roman road to Hades.

JAKOBY

What is this? The palm of victory?

CECILIA

She knows that it is not, but cannot tell him.

MARY

Chuck it away.

JAKOBY

Oh no, it might be magic.

*He strokes her with it.*

CECILIA

Much more magic than you can imagine.

JAKOBY

What did Brandon tell you? Nothing much?

MARY

As matters stand I think that none of us

is able to predict what happens next.

JAKOBY

Why don't we go and join him in the bar?  
That's where people mostly make decisions.  
I am feeling rather confident.

*Exit Mary and Jakoby.*

CECILIA

Look, the lake has changed, it's glassy now,  
the wind has died away, the clouds are gone  
and there's the yellow moon, it's laughing at you.

MIRANDA

And so are you, a mean and scornful laugh,  
but I'm afraid that you forget the proverb,  
he laughs best ...

CECILIA

You're talking nonsense, sister.

MIRANDA

Don't forget you have no chessmen left.

CECILIA

I do not need them and I'll tell you why.  
He's mate and cannot make a single move.

MIRANDA

You haven't noticed there are other chessmen?  
They might come to his assistance now.

CECILIA

If you are talking of your ugly potherbs  
it's too late, they are already fading.

MIRANDA

Devil's claw and virgin Mary's hand.  
Both of them possess a magic power.  
The choking claw against the fondling hand.  
An urge to death, a wish for love and life ...

CECILIA

It's ridiculous, you make me sick.

MIRANDA

It was you who wanted fight and action.  
You'd better be prepared you'll get it now.

These are my weapons, one of them is red

*She holds out the red orchises.*

with swollen roots, I'm sure that you remember ...

CECILIA

No! Shut up! And stop your smutty jokes.  
Lust and lechery, it's so disgusting.

MIRANDA

I'm afraid you haven't understood  
that it's not only lust that they arouse,  
it's also real love, compassion, kindness.  
The magic makes you wish a better world,  
a world of peace and quiet friendliness.

*She holds out the lilac orchises.*

The others smell of rottenness and death,  
I do not like them, but because of you  
I'll have to ...

CECILIA

You're insane. You've lost your wits.  
You've been seduced by all your stinking flowers.  
You must understand your situation.  
The war is over and the game is ending,  
there is nothing more that you can do.  
Drop your flowers, sister, follow me,  
darkness falls and it is getting chilly.

MIRANDA

You are right, the air is cold and damp.  
I predict that we will soon be goosey.  
Go in, there's nothing more to talk about.

CECILIA

I'll see you later, sister, no hard feelings,  
I will not remember it against you.

*Exit Cecilia. Change of scene. We are now in a room at the conference center where there's a swimming-pool upstage. Down-stage is a bar, some small tables and easy chairs and a grand piano. Tommy, Vivian and Brandon bring glasses and bottles from the bar and are seated. There may be dolls or extras at the other tables.*

BRANDON

I'll spare the words and just say cheerio!

TOMMY

A thousand thanks, we've had enough of words.  
My ears are on the point of falling off.  
All those speeches ...

VIVIAN

Tommy!

TOMMY

Cheerio!

*They drink.*

VIVIAN *to Brandon*

The speech that you delivered was superb.  
You can see what is essential  
and you can always find the proper words.

BRANDON

You're right, the proper words, that's just the secret.

TOMMY

Find the words and you'll not have to act.

VIVIAN

He's awful.

BRANDON

But his tune was excellent.  
And so were you, you raised the roof, my darling.

VIVIAN

So you're content with me?

BRANDON *raises his glass*

Oh yes, I am.

VIVIAN

And with the conference? You'll get the mansion?

BRANDON *lowers his glass*

It's hard to say, we meet with opposition.  
Some of them are not in favour of it.  
But of course you have to face the fact  
that only few have grasped the great importance  
of this epoch-making new idea.  
Politics is a tiresome business.

VIVIAN

What will happen to your cap museum?

BRANDON

It's no problem, that's a consolation.  
I met the chairman of the library,  
I could have the exhibition case  
at the entrance, that's a good idea.  
When the door is opened you can feel  
the whirrings of the wings of history.  
A dignifying monument to him  
who created our welfare state.

TOMMY

That's becoming history itself.  
You're no longer able to afford  
the daily visit to your local pub.

VIVIAN

Tommy!

BRANDON

I will not forget the check.

*Enter Rugby. Brandon invites him to sit at their table. The waiter brings a glass,  
Brandon pours out.*

RUGBY *to Vivian*

Thank you for a very pleasant song.

*To Brandon.*

I suppose you wrote the happy words?  
I heard the red flags flutter in the wind.

*To Tommy.*

And the tune was like a worker's fist.  
Strong and sturdy, let's kick in the gate.  
Long live the bygone days when red was red  
and not a timorous exhausted pink.  
Did I tread on anybody's toes?

TOMMY

No, it doesn't matter, nowadays  
everybody loves to stand upon them.

RUGBY

I didn't mean to hurt you, cheerio!

TOMMY  
If you had tried we would have answered back.

RUGBY  
And told me what?

TOMMY  
The dream is still alive.  
It has to be since people of your kind  
will never stop to make it necessary.

VIVIAN  
Tommy!

TOMMY  
Sorry, Mum.

VIVIAN  
He's always awful.  
He can never keep his big mouth shut.

BRANDON  
It's too late to save the world tonight.  
Let's have some music, Tommy.

TOMMY  
Should I play  
while you are drinking, that's a bad idea.

*To Vivian*

Unless you'll sing the song I wrote for you  
about the lonely man who can't forget.  
I think that these two gentlemen will like it.

RUGBY  
A man who can't forget? It sounds alarming.  
Don't you think so, Brandon?

BRANDON  
No, come on.

*Tommy goes to the grand piano.*

VIVIAN *sings*  
1.  
I'll sing you a song of a man from a lost generation  
whose favourite colour politically was red.  
He treated this splendid idea with great veneration

and wept when he suddenly heard it's decisively dead.  
It was clear to us all  
that the system must fall  
all rights were put under a ban.  
The fencing was tall  
but down went the wall  
and we laughed at the misguided man.  
Your efforts at building a new paradise were in vain.  
You deserve that we treat you with  
smiles and sarcastic disdain.

2.

No wonder if he was knocked down by a fatal frustration.  
It's obvious he must be both disappointed and mad,  
he's probably stricken with panic and deep desperation,  
in short he must feel that his whole situation is bad.  
It is clear to us all  
we should pay him a call  
and tell him the world is okay.  
Your talk was too tall,  
that's why you did fall,  
I think that is what we should say.  
But oddly enough his depression and grief didn't stay,  
soon he recovered and now he is working all day.

3.

He knows it is hopeless to dream of a new revolution,  
but also he knows there is something  
that still can be done.  
He's trying to find what he thinks is a better solution  
hoping the difficult unequal game can be won.  
A world in a state  
of aggression and hate  
where selfishness governs us all  
cannot alter its fate  
before it's too late  
unless selfishness rides for a fall.  
So he is creating a new kind of man never seen  
in whom he's installing a strong solidarity gene.

RUGBY *applauds*

Bravo! Excellent! My compliments.  
What should we do if we did not have artists  
who can raise the old red flag and sing  
about the bygone days when we could still  
dream about the faultless paradise.  
How marvellous that you can close your eyes  
and praise a rotten system that is dead.

TOMMY *to Vivian*

I'm afraid we trod on someones toe.

RUGBY

Not at all, but to be serious:  
You believe that art can change the world,  
but isn't it depressing to observe  
that all the many changes that take place  
not are due to art ....

TOMMY

But capital?  
We never said that art can change the world.  
We may sing a song, but it's naive  
to think that you will listen to us, Rugby.  
We are sitting helpless in your car  
with Mammon at the wheel and he alone  
decides where we are going, we're not asked.

BRANDON *to Tommy*

I'm not so sure that I agree with you.  
The art is useful, look at Vivian.

*To Vivian*

You're a living proof that it's important  
that we do not solely fight with speeches,  
on the whirling wings of poetry  
we can reach the simple hearts and minds  
of those who haven't words for what they think.  
So we are not forgetting what we owe you.

TOMMY

I hope you're not, indeed, we're stony broke.

*To Rugby*

Man shall not live by poetry alone.

VIVIAN

I think I'd better go and tuck him up.

BRANDON

Or put him in the corner, naughty boy.  
I'll go and get it settled, cheerio!

*Exit Brandon.*

TOMMY *to Rugby*

If you want to we might specify

how we look at poetry and art.

VIVIAN

No more discussions, Tommy, I'm fed up.

TOMMY

So am I, I had a song in mind.

RUGBY

I would like to listen, go ahead.

TOMMY *on his way to the piano*

I got the inspiration when I read  
some years ago a book by Sigmund Freud.  
He had a poor opinion of the arts.  
'Art is nothing but a bare illusion'.  
And I wasn't sure he wasn't right  
so I thought that I would call my song  
'Thanks to Freud for having taught me something'.  
But then I saw a movie, one of Chaplin's,  
and chose another title, 'Thanks to Chaplin'.

VIVIAN *sings*

1.  
With bowler hat and cane  
he never fought in vain  
against a wicked world of vast dimensions.  
What does his triumph show?  
That you and I should know  
he won by means of love and good intentions.

2.  
A beautiful belief  
it feels like a relief  
but when the lights come up the spell is dying.  
A bowler hat and cane  
will always fight in vain  
against a wicked world, you know he's lying.

3.  
The art is just a flight  
it's like a dream at night  
of roses in the footsteps of the hero.  
The daylight will disclose  
there's not a single rose,  
you'll have to realize you're back at zero.

*Enter Brandon with a check in one hand and the cap in the other. Tommy plays the beginning of the Internationale, Brandon puts on the cap and salutes. Tommy stops*

*immediately.*

RUGBY

It becomes you, Brandon.

TOMMY

No it doesn't.

BRANDON *takes off the cap.*

You're right, I'm sorry, it was sacrilege.

*He hands the check to Tommy. Vivian reaches out her hand, Tommy gives the check to her. Brandon puts the cap on a table and lifts a bottle.*

BRANDON

Another drink?

VIVIAN

No, we had better leave.

To-morrow morning it's your happy pensioners and Tommy should not miss the keys.

TOMMY

Oh Mum!

*Enter Mary. She is wearing the young actors' Rugby-mask. She is followed by Miranda.*

BRANDON

Hello, I thought the masquerade was over?

RUGBY

You drink too much.

BRANDON *knocks at the mask*

Is anybody in?

*Mary answers, but nobody understands.*

It's the living image of you, Rugby.

*To the others.*

I never understand what he is saying.

RUGBY

Throw off the mask, sit down and have a drink.

*Mary takes off the mask. Brandon makes a sign to the waiter. He brings a glass.*

MARY

That's exactly what I had in mind.  
Time has come for dropping our masks.

BRANDON

Relax, my dear, relax.

*To Vivian and Tommy.*

I'll see you out.

*Exeunt Brandon, Tommy and Vivian. Cecilia enters upstage.*

MIRANDA

And time has come to drop the poetry  
and suit the blood-stained action to the word.  
Virgin Mary's Hand, the lust for life.  
I put them here so Jakoby will see them  
and when he picks them up the magic works:  
the mansion will be his forever after.

*She puts the red orchises on the table in front of Mary.*

The Devil's Claw, the icy Dead Mens' Fingers.

*She puts the lilac orchises on the table in front of Rugby. She looks at him.*

You think that you have won, but you have not.  
You'll meet your match, you'll meet these magic flowers.  
They'll grasp your neck and squeeze it very hard.  
Your defeat is now inevitable.

RUGBY

Now we have the table to ourselves.

MARY

What would you say that others shouldn't hear?  
How much you had to pay to get the mansion?

*Rugby pours into her glass.*

I suppose you got it for a song.

RUGBY

Unfortunately no.

MARY

But anyhow?

RUGBY

Let us drink to absent friends.

MARY *doesn't take her glass*  
Whose friends?

RUGBY

I think we stroke a reasonable bargain,  
so what, you know the game, you know the rules.

MARY

I would also like to know the price.

RUGBY

A lovely sideline went from us to you.  
It may be yours if you are quick.  
You need a pick-me-up, so cheerio!  
I propose a toast of mutual aid.

*He lifts his glass again. Mary doesn't take hers.*

Okay, a toast of something else: your dimples.  
They are very cute and most attractive.

*She doesn't take her glass.*

Would it be better saying it with flowers?

*He reaches out to pick up the lilac orchises in front of him, but at the same time  
Cecilia steps forward, grips his hand and makes him pick up the red orchises in  
front of Mary.*

MIRANDA

You're cheating!

CECILIA

No, I'm not. It's just a castling.  
I'm following the rules of chess, Miranda,  
it's not my fault you have forgotten them.

*Rugby gives the red orchises to Mary before Miranda can prevent him.*

It's too late, just look, the magic works.

MARY

I do not speak the language of the flowers.  
Will you please translate what they are saying?  
I guess it's something beautiful and brilliant.

CECILIA

They tell you of the power in your pants.  
A witches' weapon you shall find a use for.

RUGBY

I'm afraid you ask me for too much.  
I do not speak the language of the flowers.

MARY

Nor of the heart. A penny for your thoughts.

RUGBY

A single penny?

MARY

That is what they're worth.  
You're thinking, what's the number of her room.

RUGBY

Am I? How primitive. A dirty skunk.

MARY

It cannot come as a surprise for you.

RUGBY

At least I tried with flowers, didn't I?

MARY

It isn't flowers, don't you know it's weeds?  
They are like you, behind a handsome look  
they hide a soul that smells of greediness.

RUGBY

Dear me! A greedy weed. That's food for thought.  
What are you? A shrinking violet?

MARY

That would suit your book, but no, I'm not.  
I'm fond of greedy men and I would like  
to test your greediness between the sheets.  
They say the office girls are laughing at  
your poor capacity, it's only verbal.  
I would like to know if it is true.  
Do you have a tiger in the pants  
or is your prowess hidden in your wallet?

*Rugby doesn't know what to answer. He picks up his glass, but Mary takes it out of his hand and puts it on the table.*

It's no use, my friend, you can't escape  
by getting drunk. - My room is number thirteen.

*Enter Brandon.*

BRANDON *to Rugby*  
You're looking tired. Something on your mind?

RUGBY  
Oh no, we've had a pleasant time together.

BRANDON  
Marvellous, let's hope that it lasts on.  
Have you seen ... I can't remember names -

MARY  
Don't try to tell me you are missing them.

BRANDON  
I think we owe them something.

MARY  
What? A drink?

BRANDON  
At least respect. You do not often meet  
people who are true to their convictions.

MARY  
Not in our line of business.

BRANDON *to Mary*  
A little touchy, aren't you? Time for bed?

RUGBY  
I think I'll say goodnight.

BRANDON  
Enjoy the bath.

*Rugby looks at Brandon. What does he know?*

It's warmly recommended,

*to Mary*

isn't it?

RUGBY

Sleep well, old fox.

BRANDON

I promise you I will,  
my conscience is clear, goodnight.

RUGBY

Goodnight.

*Exit Rugby.*

MARY

'My conscience is clear', oh bugger me.  
I have done with the committee work.  
You may take on the shit yourself, I quit.

BRANDON

Now listen, Mary ...

MARY

You can tell the party  
that they might use me better as a member  
of the new executive committee.

BRANDON

The execu ....

MARY

I have done with culture.  
I'm tired of being in the bottom drawer.  
My abilities are good enough  
for something more important, something bigger.

BRANDON

You're right, you're right, I do not disagree ...

MARY

So?

BRANDON

I'll do whatever I can do.

MARY

There's more, the side job Rugby now gives up ...

BRANDON

No no! You're going much too far, my girl.

MARY

I could tell about your dirty trick?

BRANDON

But you won't and you know also why.  
I could tell about the number thirteen.

*He pours into his glass.*

Have we closed our bargain?

MARY

Yes, we have.

BRANDON

Cheerio, my girl, you're very quick.

*Enter Williams and Jakoby. Jakoby has the yew bough in his hand.*

A drink seems indicated, am I right?  
Come on and let us drown the disappointment.

*He pours. They lift the glasses. Jakoby doesn't drink. The others do. At the same time Cecilia is talking.*

CECILIA

The old man told him that the game is lost.  
He's looking miserable, isn't he?  
In his hand the symbol of his fate,  
in his heart the dream that now is dead.  
No roses in the footsteps of the hero.  
It's all over now and there is nothing  
that he or anybody else can do.

BRANDON

It isn't difficult to understand  
the mingled feelings both of you must have.  
It may console you that to me and Mary  
compromising wasn't funny either.  
But you shall know your beautiful idea  
is still alive in our bleeding hearts.  
They may emerge again, so bottoms up!

*He drinks, the others don't.*

Goodnight, sleep well,

*To Mary*

and don't forget the bath.

*Exit Brandon. Mary rubs her eyes.*

MIRANDA

Look, Cecilia, she rubs her eyes.

CECILIA

But there's no magic powder left, my sister.  
It's no longer time for heartseases,  
now it is the swollen roots that scratches,  
and we both know where: between her legs.

MIRANDA

You said that I was vulgar. What are you?

CECILIA

I won, and that's the only thing that counts.

MARY

I'm sorry. I will go to bed. Goodnight.

WILLIAMS

Goodnight and thanks for what you did.

*She picks up the red orchises and holds them out to Jakoby. He doesn't take them.  
She puts them on the table.*

JAKOBY

Goodnight.

None of us will ever blame you, Mary.

*Exit Mary. Exit the bartender. Jakoby picks up the cap. He talks to it.*

Below the peak your glasses and your pipe.  
Your face, your eyes, your famous curly beard.  
My granpa told about you in a voice  
which always became happy, warm and proud.  
To him you were a legendary figure,  
you held a better future in your hands,  
no powerty, no war, no anarchy,  
but brotherhood and liberty and love,  
responsibility and common sense.  
But you are gone and it is long ago,  
and now there's nothing left below the peak.  
A smell of failure and despondency,  
that's all, and where you once could see a smile  
there's now a cold and cynical grimace.  
The game is over and the rest is silence.

WILLIAMS

Why don't you follow her? You know she's waiting.

*Jakoby doesn't answer. He puts the yew bough and the cap upon the table.*

MIRANDA

He puts it down!

CECILIA

Expect no miracles.

In a little while The Dead Men's Fingers  
will grip his neck and squeeze it without pity.

*Jakoby unbuckles his belt and dagger and puts it down. He picks up the yew bough and goes upstage to the swimming-pool. Cecilia picks up the lilac orchises and follows him. Williams doesn't notice this, and he doesn't notice that Jakoby slowly goes down the steps and disappears into the water. Cecilia strews the water with the flowers. She talks to her sister.*

I do not know what you are thinking of,  
but you ought to feel a great relief.  
The men who got the mansion were the right.  
They had the courage to be men of action,  
they routed all your unresisting dreamers  
and made them perish, that's what they deserved.  
It would have been a very great disaster  
if their reveries had been accomplished.

MIRANDA

His dreams were killed because they let him down,  
not because he didn't have the courage.

CECILIA

Anyhow, the morning sun is shining,  
there's a breakfast table at the terrace  
and the maids are serving eggs and tea.  
The rolls are newly baked, the birds are singing.  
Come along, I have forgiven you.

*Exit Cecilia. Williams pours. Enter Rita.*

WILLIAMS

You haven't come to join the party, have you?  
It's too late, the visitors have gone.

RITA

I came back to fetch our common friend.

*She picks up the Rugby mask and looks at the glasses and the bottles.*

You have made a merry night of it.  
I suppose that I'm the one who's paying?

WILLIAMS  
You won't get any change so have a drink.

RITA  
Not for me. I need not look for comfort.

WILLIAMS  
Comfort?

RITA  
Yes, but I'm not blaming you.  
It's always troublesome to face the truth.

WILLIAMS *pointing to the mask*  
I thought that you were acting only once.

RITA  
You'll never finish with a man like him.  
We're preparing an expended version.

WILLIAMS  
You're always dreaming of a better world?

RITA  
We're not dreaming, we are working at it.  
What are you? *(Pause)*. I asked a question. *(Pause)*. Answer.

*He doesn't answer. She shakes her head, turns and is on the point of leaving, but Miranda grips her arm and stops her, leads her to the table and makes her pick up the red orchises. Miranda smiles. Of course Miranda is still 'invisible', so the scene demonstrates that Miranda's hope is passed on to Rita. Rita gives Williams an inquiring look, 'can I have them?'. He shrugs his shoulders. Exit Rita with the flowers in her hand. Miranda blows a kiss after her.*

WILLIAMS  
The fool will go to bed at noon, I think.

*He drinks.*

THE END