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# ODD JOB MAN

**By Peter Harrison**

## **CHARACTERS**

**Albert Pierrepoint**

**Anne Pierrepoint**

**Marie**

**Prison Warder**

**Terry**

**Chaplain**

## **The Characters**

Albert Pierrepoint. Middle-aged. Soberly dressed, white shirt, polka dot bow tie, black suit jacket, waistcoat and trousers, breast pocket handkerchief.

Anne Pierrepoint : Middle-aged. Respectable housewife. Blouse, cardigan, pearls, neat skirt.

Marie: Young, blonde, slim, in a summer dress.

The Warder: Middle-aged. Wearing prison uniform.

Terry : Young, open-necked shirt and trousers.

The Chaplain: Quite young. Dark suit, clerical collar.

## **Props List**

Polishing cloth ( Anne )

Small period suitcase ( Albert )

Striped pyjamas ( Albert )

Sherry bottle and glass ( set on bar )

Whisky glass ( set on bar )

Evening newspaper ( Warder )

Tin cup and contents ( set on table in condemned cell )

Leather strap for pinioning the prisoner's arms (Albert)

Prayer book ( Chaplain )

**Production Note**

The hanging scene will be conducted with the stage dimly lit. As the action moves to the actual execution the audience see only Terry in silhouette with a noose hanging down to his neck from above. As the trap crashes open ( S F/X ) his head jerks to one side. And is still.

*The Bar of the Help The Poor Struggler pub in Oldham. Anne is polishing the counter. Albert enters and places a battered old square suitcase on the counter, opens it and starts to check the contents. He makes a gesture of impatience.*

ALBERT: I'll forget me head next.

ANNE: Albert.

ALBERT: I was forgetting me pyjamas.

ANNE: Albert. Not on the counter. Please.

ALBERT: Sorry, love.

*( He places the suitcase on one of the bar chairs.)*

ALBERT: Forgot me pyjamas.

*( Albert goes out. Anne regards the suitcase balefully for a moment, then places it on the floor at the side of the table. Re-considers and places it under the table. She continues polishing the counter with great dedication. Albert returns with his striped pyjamas. )*

ANNE: Albert.

ALBERT: Yes, love.

ANNE: I don't think you should bring it in here at all. To be honest.

ALBERT: Me suitcase?

ANNE: I don't think it's ... seemly.

ALBERT: It's the tools of me trade. What's not seemly?

ANNE: Someone might come in. And I don't want folk seeing it. People are nosey enough.

ALBERT: It's only a suitcase, love.

ANNE: Wondering what's in it.

*( Albert retrieves the suitcase from the floor and places the pyjamas in it.)*

ANNE: When will you be back tomorrow?

ALBERT: You'd better expect me when you see me. I usually stop there and have a bit of breakfast.

*( Anne gives a little theatrical shiver.)*

ANNE: I don't know how you can.

ALBERT: How I can what?

ANNE: Eat your breakfast there ... in that place.

ALBERT: You know me, love. I can always eat. And if they know I'm coming they allus puts on something a bit special. They're disappointed if I can't stop.

ANNE: So give me some idea when you'll be back. Am I going to be opening up on my own?

ALBERT: Probably. It's all the formalities. The inquest. The paper work, sort of style.

ANNE: And what about that woman.

ALBERT: What woman?

ANNE: The woman who sent you that letter. Saying she was coming to see you. It's tomorrow.

ALBERT: ( *reprovingly* ) Oh, come on, Anne.

ANNE: Come on what?

ALBERT: You know how to get rid of her. You've done it often enough.

ANNE: And I'm fed up doing it. Why can't you do it?

ALBERT: Because where work's concerned I can have no contact with the public. So just send her packing. Like all the others. What about you, then? Haven't you got those ladies coming round this afternoon?

ANNE: Not now.

ALBERT: I thought you were having visitors. Those two friends you got talking to at chapel? They were coming round for a cup of tea, weren't they? You've done a sponge.

ANNE: Well, they're not coming now.

*( Albert looks puzzled as Anne resumes polishing the pump handles with increasing vigour.)*

ALBERT: Not coming?

ANNE: One of 'em pushed a note through the door. Saying they're not coming after all.

ALBERT: Did it say why?

ANNE: No. It didn't.

ALBERT: Why do you *think*?

ANNE: Why do I think? ... I think it's the same old story. Someone's told them who I am.

ALBERT: You mean who I am?

ANNE: If you like.

ALBERT: I don't know why you bother with that lot. I thought you had to be nice to be a Christian.

ANNE: ( *brightly* ) Talking of chapel, Albert, did I tell you, the Minister was giving his address the other Sunday and his subject was Heaven?

ALBERT: What about it?

ANNE: He was talking about couples being ... What's the word ... Re-united when they got to Heaven. To live there for ever. As a married couple. Never to be parted. In a little place of their own.

(*She pauses.*)

ANNE: Someone had read in the Scriptures that there would be no marriage or giving in marriage in Heaven and wondered if this was right. The minister said that *was* right. There wouldn't be any marriage in the sense of sharing a

double bed, and that sort of thing. But couples *would be* together. Only, though, if they'd both been good. And done no wrong. Down here. On Earth.

*(She pauses.)*

ALBERT: Well, go on. What are you getting at?

ANNE: I got the feeling he was looking at me.

ALBERT: Rubbish.

ANNE: Anyway, it got me thinking. *(pause)* What if we haven't been good. Down here on Earth?

ALBERT: You?

ANNE: Well, I was thinking more of you, Albert. What if doing what you've been doing for all those years has ... has counted against you?

ALBERT: Blooming heck, Anne. What sort of talk is that?

ANNE: Well, if the minister's right it might mean we'd be separated. In Heaven. If we ever get there.

ALBERT: That's rubbish, that is.

ANNE: I don't mean to be unkind, Albert. But it might mean I was the only one of us who qualified.

ALBERT: Well, I don't know what's got into you, Anne. I really don't.

ANNE: It's just started to prey a bit, you know, on me mind.

*(Pause.)*

ANNE: And another thing. What if we *did* end up together, in Heaven, after all, and got nicely settled in and one day they came calling. All those people. All those men and women. Wanting to know why you'd done it? I mean what would we do if they all came round, all those people, all at once, demanding an explanation?

*( For a moment Albert looks baffled.)*

ALBERT: Don't be daft. *( thoughtful pause )* I reckon they'll keep 'em well separate. People like that. But what you said about hose woman at chapel, I don't understand. It's got nothing to do with you.

ANNE: Oh, for Heaven's sake, Albert.

ALBERT: What?

ANNE: Nothing to do with me?

ALBERT: Well, it hasn't.

ANNE: I didn't tell you this but you may as well know --- since it's got nothing to do with me. I was in the Co-op the other day and I heard two women talking. I suppose they must have seen me come in ... and thought I couldn't hear ... or maybe actually they knew I could hear ... 'I don't know how she can bear it' ... one of 'em says.

*(She looks at Albert, considering.)*

ALBERT: Bear what?

ANNE: 'Just imagine it' she says ... those hands ... touching you ...all over you' ... 'horrible,' the other one says. 'it's enough to put you off it for life ...'

*(Albert looks stunned, perturbed.)*

ALBERT: So what did you do? Didn't you say something?

ANNE: Like what?

ALBERT: I don't know. Tell 'em to mind their own business.

ANNE: I paid for me stuff and then I left.

*(Pause.)*

ANNE: But don't worry. I'm used to it.

ALBERT: I wish I'd been there.

ANNE: Well, I'm glad you weren't there. It's bad enough as it is. I don't want you talking to people. Scaring them half to death.

ALBERT: I don't scare people.

ANNE: You what! You don't scare people!

ALBERT: Well, I don't mean to.

ANNE: You must have noticed how our Sheila never comes round now. *(pause)* Our Sheila says you scare *her*. You make her feel uncomfortable. She says ... she says she doesn't feel safe.

ALBERT: Safe? What is she talking about? Blinking 'eck , Anne. Is she off her head? Safe? What does she think I'm going to do?

ANNE: What do *you* think?

ALBERT: Any road, tell her not to come round then. And good riddance if you ask me.

ANNE: I don't have to tell her. I've just told you. She doesn't come round. Albert, face facts. You're the scariest man in Manchester. The scariest man in England. Probably

ALBERT: Rubbish. Not in the pub, I'm not.

ANNE: Oh, no? Haven't you seen the way they look at you? The ones who don't drink here regularly. The look on their faces when they come through that door and see you.

ALBERT: I can't help that.

ANNE: You could. If you wanted.

ALBERT: Not that again.

ANNE: Oh, come on, Albert. It's not as though we haven't discussed it. Endless times. You know how I feel.

ALBERT: Being a publican is me job, Anne. It's what I do. If we didn't have this pub what else could I do?

ANNE: Do you know what our Sheila says? She said it doesn't seem right ... watching you in the pub with the

customers, laughing and joking ... she says you ought to be more ... solemn. In her opinion.

ALBERT: And when I want your sister's opinion I'll go round and ask for it. You can't be a publican and be solemn. No one would ever come in the place. You've got to be a bit of a ... what's the word?

ANNE: Showman?

ALBERT: Nay. Not showman. What's the word when you're always having a laugh and a joke with someone no matter how you feel?

ANNE: Hypocrite?

*( Albert's demeanor suggests he is hurt by this remark but Anne regards him without contrition.)*

ANNE: It's wrong, Albert.

ALBERT: What is?

ANNE: You. Me. Keeping this pub.

ALBERT: Oh, Lord. Here we go again.

ANNE: Everyone coming in. Knowing who you are. You pulling pints. Having a laugh. Doing what you do, we should be out of the public eye.

ALBERT: Rubbish. I've nothing to be ashamed of.

*(Pause. Albert looks at Anne, questioningly.)*

ALBERT: You don't think I have, do you? I just wish you could be a bit more ... proud.

ANNE: Proud of what? What do you expect me to be proud about?

ALBERT: Proud of what I do. That's the trouble with you, Anne. You've never given me credit for me skills.

ANNE: Skills!

ALBERT: Aye. Skills.

ANNE: What's skilful about it? It only takes a few seconds. That's what it always says in the papers.

ALBERT: Aye. It does. They're right. And why do you think it only takes a few seconds? Because I know what I'm doing. Because I've got it down to a fine art. And that's taken years. I'm highly qualified, I am. I've served me time. I'm a

craftsman, I am. Like my father before me. And before him my uncle. 'What's skilful about it?' I'm surprised at you, Anne. I've had to learn the requisite skills. I have to know maths. Things they never taught us at school. I have to do ... calculations. You've never thought about that, have you?

ANNE : ( *sarcastically* ) No, I've got to admit I haven't.

ALBERT: The arithmetic of drops.

ANNE: I don't want to hear about drops.

ALBERT: Aye. Well, perhaps you should hear about it. I don't like you belittling what I do, Anne. I won't have it. I don't know what's got into you this morning.

ANNE: If you don't shut up about it I'm going.

( *Albert is now clearly very angry.* )

ALBERT: You can just stay and listen. Listen. And then you might realise what there is to be proud about. You might think it's simple but it's not. Like I say, the sums I have to do. Different every time. The Home Office give me the official tables. Minimum 3ft 6. Maximum 8ft. And that's it, is it? I just blooming wish it was. After that I'm on me own. No help from the Governor. No help from the doctor.

Just Albert Pierrepont, Elementary school education, in charge and required by law to make it seemly.

ANNE: Seemly? You call that seemly! People hanging there. Gasping for their breath.

ALBERT: You what?

ANNE: You heard me.

ALBERT: You don't know what you're talking about, Anne. Gasping for their breath! There's nobody fighting for their breath. That was in the old days. Things have come on since then. There's been a vast improvement in the technical side. I thought you knew that. These days they drop down the hole. The doctor goes down. He listens to their hearts. And they're dead. Instantaneous. In the medical parlance we use that's known as a fracture dislocation of the second and third vertebrae

ANNE: Congratulations.

ALBERT: Do you know what one pathologist said to me once? A very clever man. A highly qualified man. With letters stretching after his name. He turned to me, after a post-mortem.

*( Anne shudders and shakes her head.)*

ALBERT: No, just listen. For once. He turned to me and he said ... he said 'your work is anatomically perfect, Mr. Pierrepont.' Anatomically perfect. That's what he said. And that from a professional man to a working class lad from the back streets of Halifax. A lad with no medical training like him. A lad who'd worked his way up. Right to the very top. An integral part of the judicial process. Known. Recognised. Throughout the country. Throughout the world in fact. How many people with my background get to go to London, like I do? Like I say I just wish you could take a bit of pride in what I do. Easy? I wish it was easy.

*(Pause.)*

ALBERT: And what do I use to do what the law requires?

*(He gestures at the suitcase.)*

ALBERT: I use the stuff in that suitcase there. You've seen 'em.

ANNE: Aye, I have. But I wish I hadn't.

ALBERT: Two leather straps. One for the arms and one for the feet. And the 'ood.

ANNE: Oh, shut up, Albert, for God's sake. I don't want to talk about it.

ALBERT : ( *remorselessly* ) If I can't talk to me wife about it who can I talk to? Two straps. An 'ood to make sure they go down in the dark. And a length of rope supplied by the Home Office. And they never see that, either. Do you know why? Because Albert Pierrepoint, the scariest man in England, thought of using a bit of black cotton to tie the rope up to the beam, only to be cut and let the rope drop down, at the last minute. Thoughtless Albert thought of that. And because I'm good at what I do they don't even have time to be frightened. Twenty seconds after the warders open that door they're gone. Anyone can take a life with a knife or a gun. Blood and mess all over the place. But I have them two straps. And when they're gone there's not a mark on 'em. You'd swear they were sleeping. At peace.

ANNE: Dead, you mean.

ALBERT: Come on Anne. Don't be like this. I can't go if you're in this mood.

ANNE: Oh, you can't go? Albert Pierrepoint can't go. Well, at least old Tish will sleep easy in his bed tonight. If you don't turn up.

ALBERT: Oh, so that's what all this has been about, is it?

ANNE: All what?

ALBERT: You're upset about old Tish. That's understandable. We're all a bit upset It's only natural. He's a customer. Or he used to be. We all know him. It's only natural. But let's not fall out like this, about old Tish.

ANNE: I suppose you know there's been a lot of talk in the Snug.

ALBERT: Talk? What about?

ANNE: Not that you'd have heard it. They know better than that.

ALBERT: They've been discussing ... my job? In this pub? Knowing it's strictly against my rules?

ANNE: That's not all. They got up a petition.

ALBERT: You what!

ANNE: They got up a petition. Something about old Tish being mentally disturbed and not responsible for his actions.

ALBERT: And what did they do with their blooming petition?

ANNE: I don't know. I didn't ask.

ALBERT: You'd better tell me who they are, Anne.

ANNE: Why?

ALBERT: Because I'll ruddy bar them. The lot of 'em. For life. I'm not having customers talking about me in me own pub. Getting up ruddy petitions. Talking about me. Behind me back.

ANNE: The whole country talks about you, Albert. And tomorrow morning just after nine o' clock they'll be talking again. And they'll all be wondering the same thing -- how any man can go on ... doing what you do. Specially when it's someone mental like old Tish. You know as well as I do, Albert, that he's not right in the head.

ALBERT: I don't know anything of the sort.

ANNE: And you know that woman drove him to it. That ... floosie he strangled.

ALBERT: I don't concern myself with stuff like that. It's nothing to do with me. I get the letter and I go. And I do as I'm asked.

ANNE: Aye, you do, don't you? And you don't think about it. Shall I tell you something that's really worried me over the years? And I don't like to say this. I really don't. I've

often felt, Albert, that you must have a bit of a ... you know ... a bit of a cruel streak. To enjoy doing what you do.

ALBERT: Do you now? Well, I'll tell you something now, Anne ... something a very wise man said to me once.

ANNE: Do you have to?

ALBERT: Aye. I do have to.

ALBERT: He was a man whose opinions I really respected. A warder. A man who'd done the death watch many times. I don't mind telling you, he was against it. He was against the whole business. And one morning ...Afterwards ... he said to me that in his opinion death was not the punishment ... Death was the *end* of the punishment. And he said that was what I do. After the three clear Sundays required by the law, and the refusal of a reprieve by the 'Ome Secretary, I bring an end to the punishment. I bring ...Peace.

ANNE: As you will for old Tish tomorrow morning.

Pause

ANNE: Tell me something, Albert.

ALBERT: What?

ANNE: Would you hang me?

ALBERT: Goodness gracious, Anne, what sort of a question is that?

ANNE: I'm serious. Would you? I mean you're going to hang old Tish, a customer for all those years, a man you've sung with in this very bar, on many an occasion. A friend. How many nights has he stood here beside you, Albert, singing Danny Boy as though his life depended on it. A good man. Definitely. Everyone says so. But you'll hang him nevertheless. And anyone else they ask you to. No questions asked. So ... if I'd done wrong. Killed somebody and they said I had to be hanged ... would you do it, Albert ... would you come for me at nine 'o clock one morning? Sorry and all that. But it has to be done. No problem. Or would you maybe be good enough to ask someone else to do it?

ALBERT: I'm not going to have this conversation with you, Anne. I'm really not.

ANNE: What about me mother then? Oh, I bet you'd have hung me mother. You always said how she got on your nerves.

ANNE: And I'll tell you another thing that's been preying on me mind. Now we know it's never going to happen.

ALBERT: What's never going to happen?

ANNE: Now we're never going to have children. I have to tell you that lately it's been preying on me mind, Albert. What if ... what if it's a punishment? I can't create life. I'm ... a barren woman, with an empty womb. And you all those years. Doing what you do ... What if it's God's punishment on us?

*(Pause. Albert is clearly upset.)*

ALBERT: Is that another notion they've been putting in your head down at chapel?

ANNE: I'm sorry, Albert. It's just the way I've started thinking about things.

ALBERT: I'm going to have to be going, Anne.

ANNE: Go then. But before you do, tell me one thing. How are you going to feel tomorrow morning? I know it never bothers you. But when that blooming door opens and you see old Tish, sitting there, what are you going to say?

ALBERT: Do you really want to know?

*(Pause.)*

ALBERT: I'm going to say 'hello, Tish'. And he'll say 'hello Tosh, Just like always. In the Snug. And a few seconds later it'll all be over. Down the hole. And Tish at peace. At last.

*(For a moment Anne regards him with a strangely intense expression.)*

ANNE: It doesn't have to be.

ALBERT: What?

ANNE: It doesn't have to be. Albert.

ALBERT: What doesn't have to be?

ANNE: It doesn't have to be all over for old Tish. You could stop it. You could tell 'em about him not being right in the head. They don't hang people who are mentally disturbed. After all these years I know that much. You tell them. Tell them you've known old Tish for years and he's always been strange. Tell 'em tonight. When you arrive. Just give him time to be properly examined. By someone who knows about such things. I have to tell you, it's really upset me, this time, Albert, has this one.

ALBERT: ( *appalled* ) What are you saying, Anne? Are you asking me to defy the Home Office? The judiciary? The prison authorities who employ me?

ANNE: If you don't do it there's no one else to do it. And it won't happen.

ALBERT: If I don't do it I'm down the road. Goodbye Albert. Thanks for all your trouble. You're asking me to ... defy the law of the land.

ANNE: Just buy him some time. Tell them you know him. Make them examine him again. You're the last one, Albert. After you there's no one between a sick young man with voices in his head and that thing you have to do tomorrow morning.

ALBERT: What's got into you, Anne? Old Tish killed that young woman. The police collected all the facts. The jury found him guilty. And the judge passed the sentence. Now I have to carry it out. Do you think I'm going to enjoy it? Is that what you think?

ANNE: Why not? Just a minute ago you were saying you felt proud of what you do. That's what you said.

ALBERT : ( *desperately* ) I can't defy them, Anne. I can't just please myself. You don't know what you're asking.

ANNE: I know what I'm asking all right. I read the other day that it's now over 400. Over 400, Albert. Thirteen in one day when you did that job in Germany. After the War. Including a woman. Several women. And for the first time in 25 years I'm asking you to think about it. Think about old Tish. Your friend who is sick in the head and not responsible for his actions.

*( For a moment Albert regards her with consternation. He shakes his head, picks up his suitcase and moves towards the door.)*

ANNE: Albert. Come back please.

ALBERT: Oh, what is it now?

ANNE: I want you to give him my love. Tomorrow morning. I want you to give old Tish my love. And tell him I was thinking of him.

*( Albert moves towards the door again.)*

ANNE: Albert?

ALBERT: I can't do that. Anne. It would be the end of me, would that.

ANNE: Aye, and the end of Tish and all. Gone to his grave without a kindly word. Poor sad, barmy beggar.

### **BLACKOUT**

*( Time : Evening. A few weeks later. Upstage, in shadow, a prison cell and a cot with a prisoner seated on it. A prison warder sits reading his newspaper at a small table. Downstage Anne is sitting at the side of the bar, reading the evening paper. A woman enters the Snug. She is respectably dressed. In her early Twenties. She is a blonde of the delicate and ethereal type. It is quite important that she possesses or can assume a child-like quality so that the audience will believe that she could awaken dormant maternal feelings in Anne . Anne watches intently as the woman crosses to the bar. )*

MARIE: I'm sorry to bother you but I wonder can you tell me if Mr. Pierrepoint is in?

ANNE : He's out.

MARIE: Oh. Can you tell me when he might be back?

ANNE : I've no idea.

MARIE: Oh.

ANNE : And in any case I can tell you now he won't want to talk to you. If you are who I think you are.

MARIE: He told you?

ANNE : He mentioned your letter. Told me to say he couldn't discuss anything with you.

MARIE: Do you mind if I just sit down for a minute? It's taken me ages to get here.

ANNE : I really don't think there's much point.

*( Marie begins to weep. Despite herself Anne appears to sense the girl's vulnerability. )*

ANNE : You're Marie, aren't you? You're the one who wrote to my husband?

MARIE: That's right.

ANNE : He doesn't ... see people. He doesn't talk about things.

MARIE: I read about it. In the paper. About him retiring. That's why I thought he might talk to me.

ANNE : Well, I'm sorry but you've had a wasted journey.  
Have you come far?

MARIE: Quite far. Yes.

ANNE : Well, you're welcome to sit for a minute even though  
we don't usually like women sitting in here on their own.

MARIE: Thank you.

ANNE : Can I get you anything?

MARIE: I don't know anything about drink. To be truthful, I  
don't like the idea of being in a public house on my own.  
You get such funny looks.

ANNE : Could you manage a small sherry?

MARIE: That would be nice.

*( Anne goes to the bar and pours the sherry while discreetly  
observing Marie who closes her eyes and leans back wearily.*

*Anne calls out : 'Time Gentlemen, please.' She brings the  
drink to the table where Marie is sitting. Their room is empty  
but there are the sounds of departure from an adjoining  
room.)*

ANNE : He really isn't here. I'm not just saying that.

*( Marie takes the sherry.)*

MARIE: Thanks.

ANNE : And we're closing anyway. You're not from round here then?

MARIE: No.

ANNE : Can I ask why it is you want to speak to my husband? Is it important?

MARIE: It is to me.

ANNE : You don't know him, do you? You've never met.

MARIE: No. We've never met. *(she smiles in a slightly sinister way)* But he met my husband ... Once ... Just the once.

*( Anne regards her with dawning comprehension. Unaware, Marie sips the sherry appreciatively.)*

MARIE: Very nice. *( pause, then with slow deliberation and watching Mrs Pierrepont closely )* The point is, I came here, hoping I might be able to see Mr. Pierrepont, because a year ago, well, it's a little bit more than a year actually, Mr. Pierrepont ... your husband ... he hanged Terry, my husband.

*( Marie starts to weep. At first Anne seems, lost, flustered, unsure what to do. Then, decisively, she moves closer and takes Marie's hand.)*

MARIE: Do you know what I keep thinking about?

ANNE : What?

MARIE: It's silly, really. I keep thinking how weird it is that I'm now older than him. Do you know what I mean?

ANNE: I think so.

MARIE: He was nineteen when he ... when it happened. And I was a year younger. Now he 's still nineteen. But I'm twenty. I'm older than him. And every year I'll get older. But he'll stay the same. One day even our little girl will be older than him. Isn't that strange? At first she kept asking about him. Wondering why he didn't come up any more to tuck her up in bed. That was his job. Tucking her up. Last thing. Now it's me who does it and she can't understand. She gets quite ... not angry, more, you know, determined. 'I don't want you to do it --- I want my Daddy.'

ANNE : I seem to remember her name's Claire, isn't it?

MARIE : *( surprised )* That's right.

ANNE : I read about the trial in the papers. I don't know why but some of these ... cases seem to stay in my mind, more than others. I remember thinking what a nice name you'd chosen. 'Claire' .

MARIE: I've had to put the photos of Terry in a drawer. She kept going up to them and pointing.

ANNE : Your Mum's still alive, isn't she?

MARIE: You *have* remembered, haven't you?

ANNE: How is she taking it?

MARIE: Not my Mum. My Mother.

ANNE : How do you mean?

MARIE: It's just how I think of her. You know?

ANNE : It must have been hard for her, though. Losing your Dad. In that way.

MARIE: I don't know, to be honest.

ANNE : You've fallen out?

MARIE: We fell out, my Mother and me, the day I was born.

ANNE : I'm sorry.

MARIE: And we've just never got round to making it up.

ANNE : Well, in my opinion just because she's your Mother doesn't mean you have to get on. I've known lots of women who had problems with their mothers.

MARIE: I hate mine.

*( There is a silence between them.)*

ANNE : You don't mean that.

MARIE: Would I say a thing like that if I didn't mean it?  
*(then, brightly )* Do you want to know how we met? Terry and me?

*(Anne nods.)*

MARIE: I first met him at the pictures. When I was sixteen. He and his mate were sitting behind us but his mate did all the talking. You know, during the interval. It was really funny. Terry was so ... tongue-tied. Even when we started going out he just used to sort of stare at me. The girls used to say he worshipped the ground I walked on. To tell you the truth he wasn't very much to look at. But when I got to know him I found he had a lovely personality. He made me

laugh all the time. He was a very loving person. Not like the other lads - he never laid a wrong hand on me. But nothing to look at. More interested in his cricket than anything. Do you know one thing that I really loved about him? He had this lovely singing voice. There was never any singing in our house but sometimes when we used to go over to Terry's parents his Mum would play the piano. She was very good. She could read music and everything. She would get out this old song book, full of the old songs and Terry would sing. You know, really old-fashioned stuff. But Terry would sing those old songs as though ... you know, as though he already knew them. He specially loved all those old Irish songs. And how often do you hear lads singing these days ? ... ( *pause* ) I know I go on about him a bit. I still do as a matter of fact. But I can honestly say he was the first lad I ever really fancied. ( *pause* ) Bad luck, Terry.

ANNE : So you got married?

MARIE: We lived in our own little flat at first but after the baby was born it wasn't suitable. Too damp, you know, for a baby. So we went to live with my parents. For my Mother's sake, really. I don't want you to get the idea we were sponging off them. Terry had a good job. He was a postman, believe it or not. And we were saving up for our own place. We weren't sponging.

ANNE : Didn't they get on?

MARIE: Who?

ANNE : Terry and your father.

MARIE: My Father was a big man. Very strong. He was a shot firer. You know, down the pit. I think he looked down on Terry a bit. Because of his job. It was not a man's job, in his opinion. Being a postman. He used to make fun of Terry sometimes when he appeared in his uniform. Snatching his cap off and trying it on himself. To tell you the truth my Terry was a bit scared of him. Even though he would try to stand up to him. If he thought he was in the right.

ANNE : And what about you?

MARIE: What about me?

ANNE : How did you get on with your father?

*( There is a pause )*

MARIE: All right, I suppose.

ANNE : It can be difficult. Living with your parents.

MARIE: We used to try to keep out of the way. You know, staying in our own room. But then the baby started getting on their nerves. There were arguments. You know what it's like with grandparents. They forget that babies have to cry.

ANNE : Drink your sherry now.

*( Marie sips her drink.)*

ANNE : Actually, we haven't been blessed. With children.

MARIE: Oh.

*( Marie holds out her hand. )*

MARIE: Look at me. Shaking like a leaf.

ANNE : Are you all right? You don't mind talking about it?

MARIE: It was about a year later. We had been out to the pictures. Terry and me. Mum had been baby sitting. And he, my Father, had spent the evening in the pub. He spent most of his time down there. Anyway, about one in the morning the baby started crying. I took her in our bed but she wouldn't stop. She was hungry. So I got up and came down to heat a bottle up. I wasn't able to feed her myself, you see. When I got downstairs he was still up. He'd

brought some bottles home. And he was sitting there at the table in the kitchen.

ANNE : *( very gently )* Are you sure you're all right?

MARIE: We started to have words.

*( She falters. )*

ANNE : About the baby?

MARIE: Terry must have been wondering what was keeping me because next thing I know he's standing there in the doorway of the kitchen. They started fighting. Remember my Father was a lot bigger and stronger than Terry. It was awful. Next thing my father is lying on the floor. He's been stabbed. He never said another word. Just died there on the kitchen floor. It was us who sent for the police. They arrived in about five minutes. Tramping through the house. In the middle of the night. All the lights blazing. And when they left they took Terry with them. He never came home. And I never heard him singing again.

*( There is a pause during which she takes another sip at her drink, clearly fighting for control.)*

ANNE : Like I say, I read about it in the paper and what I couldn't understand was why they didn't - what's the word

they use - reduce the charge, you know, to manslaughter. With those facts. I couldn't understand it. Why murder?

MARIE: He pleaded Not Guilty. But his barrister wasn't very good. He didn't seem very interested, to tell you the truth. He came hurrying in on the afternoon the trial started. Bowing and scraping to the judge. Apologising because he thought the case wasn't coming on until the next day. He didn't even speak to Terry that afternoon before it started.

ANNE : But Terry did plead Not Guilty, didn't he?

MARIE: But you weren't in Court. The chap who was prosecuting kept going on at him about the fight. It must have been pre ... pre-meditated, he said, because Terry had gone to the drawer and taken the knife out. Asking how it was my father came to be stabbed in the back. Insisting that he must have been trying to get away from Terry. That didn't go down well with the jury either. I could tell. They found him Guilty. With a recommendation to mercy. In view of his age. (*pause, then softly*) But in the end he didn't get any mercy.

ANNE : Did you go? To the trial?

MARIE: Some days.

ANNE : Not every day?

MARIE: I was terrified. Just being there in court used to make me shake. I know what you're thinking. Don't you think I'm disgusted with myself? Not being there. For the times when he looked round. (*whispering*) I was only eighteen.

(*Her anguish intensifies.*)

MARIE: Everyone said he'd be reprieved. They were so confident. He was so confident. We used to talk about what we'd do when he finished his sentence and came out.

(*There is a pause.*)

ANNE : What was the quarrel about?

MARIE: (*sharply*) Why?

ANNE : I'm sorry, I just-

MARIE: - Why do you want to know that ?

ANNE : Well, it just seems a bit ... strange. A quarrel breaks out. In the early hours of the morning. And when it's all over your father is lying dead on the kitchen floor. And your husband is under arrest for murder. As you said I

wasn't in Court but I assume the jury were told what it was about. The quarrel.

MARIE: It just started from nothing. One minute they were talking. Then they were rowing. And then they were fighting. And he was dying. On the floor.

ANNE : But they must have said in court what it was about.

MARIE: I've told you. It started over nothing.

ANNE : How did you feel about him?

MARIE: Who?

ANNE : Your Father.

MARIE: He was my Father.

ANNE : I'm sorry, Marie. What I mean was did you love him? I'm thinking of what you said about your Mum ... your Mother.

MARIE: It's funny, I've never talked about all this to anyone. Not even to my Mother. Now I'm telling you.

*( Marie looks around the room.)*

MARIE: Where is he? Mr. Pierrepoint. He's taking his time, isn't he?

ANNE : Oh, I never know what time those LVA meetings are going to finish. I expect him when I see him ... So what about him? Your Father?

*( With her arms folded Marie appears to hug herself close.)*

MARIE: I hated him. *( pause, then softly but fiercely )* I hated him for the way he treated my mother. For the way he treated all of us. My brother. Me.

ANNE : *( softly )* Especially you.

*( For a moment Marie appears lost in her own private reverie and then she looks up at Mrs Pierrepoint imploringly, as though desperate to know if she can be trusted.)*

MARIE : *( very slowly and haltingly )* I was just a little girl. When it started. No more than nine or ten. Wrong things. Doing wrong things. Whenever we were in the house on our own. And then making me swear not to tell. Saying I'd be sent away if anyone found out. He used to tell me it was because I was so beautiful. He couldn't help it. I hated the way I looked. I still do. It went on for years, off and on, this secret between him and me. Until I met Terry. It was then I plucked up the courage to tell him to leave me alone. And

then I got married and even he wouldn't dare try anything on after that. But the night he died he'd been drinking all day.

*( There is a long pause.)*

ANNE : Go on.

MARIE: I came down into the kitchen with just my night-dress on. I should have put my dressing gown on. *( fiercely )*  
Why didn't I put my dressing gown on?

ANNE : Your Father tried to resume his old behaviour?

MARIE: Yes.

ANNE : And that's when Terry came down to find you? They started fighting. And your husband stabbed him.

MARIE : *( looking round )* Where's he got to? I thought you said he would be here any minute.

*( There is a long pause. )*

ANNE : And Terry stabbed him?

MARIE: No.

ANNE : No?

MARIE: Not exactly.

*( There is a long pause.)*

ANNE : ( *very softly* ) It didn't happen the way you said, did it?

*( Marie looks at Anne with deep consideration as though again trying to decide if she can be trusted. Anne for her part takes Marie's hand in hers in a motherly way.)*

MARIE : ( *very softly* ) Oh, Terry. You poor thing. *(pause)* Terry was worried because I hadn't come back upstairs. He came down to see what was happening. He found us struggling. Me and my father. Me trying to get away from him. They started fighting. Terry was getting the worst of it. So I took the knife from the drawer. *(pause)* I remember feeling amazed. How easy it went in. He never made a sound. And there he was lying on the floor. I was terrified.*(long pause)* Terry agreed to take the blame. I didn't ask him. Honestly, I didn't ask him. It was Terry's idea. He wanted to. I told you, he worshipped me. He told the police there had been a fight. They could tell anyway. His mouth was all bleeding. He said my father was drunk and attacking him with a knife and he took the knife away from him and stabbed him in self-defence. He had wiped

the knife and then left his finger prints on it, you see. Terry didn't even know about my father's little ways. Until that night.

ANNE : Didn't you tell the police about your Father?

MARIE: I was ashamed. I didn't want anyone to know. I thought it would be all over the papers. What he'd done to me. For all those years.

*( At this moment Albert enters the Snug in his outdoor clothes and with a cursory glance at the two he goes behind the bar and into the living quarters. )*

MARIE: Is that him? Is that Mr. Pierrepoint?

ANNE : Yes.

MARIE: It talked about this pub and your husband in the paper and it said he was ... what's the word? ... jovial. And that he liked a joke.

ANNE : But Marie, you let him gamble like that? You let Terry gamble with his life? How could you do that?

MARIE: He'd always taken care of me. And he could see that I was terrified. He thought that at the most he'd be in prison for just a few years. And might even be found Not

Guilty. But the prosecution kept going on about the knife being in the drawer and the stab wounds in the back. After the jury found him guilty I kept asking him if he wanted me to tell what really happened. Tell them that I was the guilty one. Believe me, I offered.

ANNE : And what did Terry say?

MARIE: He said no. He insisted. He said he couldn't bear the thought of going on living if anything happened to me.

ANNE : And you accepted it.

MARIE : ( *very softly* ) I pretended it was his decision. But I was terrified. I was terrified about what they might do to me. I kept thinking that if I said anything they would let Terry out and put me in there, in his place. I told myself that if anything happened to me little Claire would have no mother. ( *pause, then fiercely* ) In any case everyone kept telling me he'd be reprieved. In view of his age and my father's violent character. Even the solicitor said that. But he wasn't. The first I knew about it was when I read it in the evening paper. It said "that after a careful study of all the papers in the case the Home Secretary has determined that the law must take its course." ... A month later he was dead himself. The Home Secretary, I mean. ( *pause* ) From a brain tumour, it said. So I reckon he was in no fit state. On the night before Terry was ... on that last night I went to see

him in prison. Can you imagine it? You're sitting there with a pane of glass between you and you're looking at your husband for the last time. You won't ever see him again. And he won't ever see you. And the little girl was there as well. He looked at me through that glass and I could tell what he was thinking. But God forgive me, I didn't ask him. I kept thinking, it's only round the corner. The place where they do it. And if I say anything they'll make us ... change places. I was eighteen and I was terrified and I had my little girl to think about...

*( She shudders and puts her hands to her face, as though she is rapidly losing control.)*

MARIE: I think about it all the time. I keep seeing him. My poor Terry. In that awful place. So far from home. With his little girl looking at him through the glass. As I was leaving he suddenly let out the most awful sound I've ever heard. It was like an animal. And then he lunged at the window. Just threw himself at it. And it broke. Not the glass but the wooden frame holding it in. The wood must have been rotten or something. It just broke away from the frame and then he was over the table and trying to put his hand through the gap. Trying to touch us. God, he was so upset.

*( There is a long and anguished pause.)*

ANNE : So what is it you want to know from my husband, Marie?

MARIE: I just want to know what he was like that morning. At the very end.

ANNE : You know how unusual, is this? Coming here. Asking to speak to my husband? I just don't think there's much point asking him. I really don't. You just can't do that. It's against all the rules and regulations.

MARIE: He was so upset, Mrs. Pierrepoint . I just want to know that he was peaceful - at the end. I can't go on like this. Not knowing. I can't stop thinking about it. Even after all this time. I wake up in the morning and it's there. Every morning. Every morning when nine 'o clock comes round. Surely it can't make any difference now? Specially now they say they're going to stop hanging people.

ANNE : And what if he was not ... at peace ? At the end?

*( Marie does not reply.)*

ANNE : And you'll be satisfied if my husband just tells you that one thing? And then you'll leave?

*( Marie nods desperately.)*

ANNE : I'll go and see if he'll talk to you.

*( Anne goes into the back. Marie takes a tentative sip of her sherry but remains eyes downcast as though still uncomfortable with her surroundings. Anne returns with Albert.)*

ALBERT: I'm very sorry, Madame, but I have to tell you that this has been a wasted journey. I can't speak to you.

MARIE : *( diffidently )* Has Mrs. Pierrepont told you why I'm here?

ALBERT: I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to talk to you. Home Office regulations forbid any discussion of these matters.

MARIE: But it's going to be over soon.

ALBERT: What is?

MARIE: Hanging. I read in the paper they're abolishing hanging.

ALBERT: I'm sorry.

MARIE: It said in the paper that there is going to be a book. You are going to be telling about ... your life.

ALBERT: But there'll be no names. No one will be identified.

MARIE: I only want to know one thing.

ALBERT: Now if you'll excuse me, I must ask you to leave.  
We've already rung for Closing Time.

MRS PIERREOINT: Albert?

*( Albert turns in surprise.)*

ANNE : Albert, just listen to her question. Please.

ALBERT: I can't listen to her question.

ANNE : Just listen. And then decide. I'll go away, if you  
like. Just the two of you.

ALBERT: Anne, you know the rules. You've always known I  
can't talk. I don't understand. What's got into you?

*( Marie starts quietly to cry. Anne goes across, sits beside  
her, puts a maternal arm around her. )*

ANNE : Look at her, Albert. She's only a child herself.

ALBERT: There's no point.

MARIE: It was just over a year ago. He was nineteen years old. He was hanged for murdering my father.

ANNE : Albert, he didn't do it. Terry didn't do it. There's been a terrible mistake.

ALBERT: Terry?

ANNE : Albert, just listen to her. There's only one thing she wants to know. Just the one.

ALBERT : *( to Marie )* I cannot talk about any specific judicial execution. I am bound by my oath of silence.

*( There is a long silence between the three, in which Marie is still quietly sobbing. Anne continues to comfort her and then, fiercely, she look up at her husband.)*

ANNE : Why not, Albert?

ALBERT: Anne?

ANNE : If it's so right, why can't you talk about it?

ALBERT: Madame, will you please leave?

*( Marie goes as if to rise but Anne restrains her.)*

ANNE : No. Sit down love. Albert, I've never inquired. You know that. In all these years, I've just put up with all this. I didn't even ask you about poor old Tish the other week. The latest in a long line of dead people. Your friend. Our friend. But what I do know is that you couldn't even bring yourself to send him on his way with a kind word.

ALBERT: I told you at the time. It's against regulations. I can't be conversing with the condemned. And I've told you, Tish was fine.

ANNE: Fine? What do you call 'fine' ! Tish is dead, Albert. Poor barmy Tish who should have been in hospital. Not buried without a stone to remember him, under the walls of Strangeways. Like a lot of others who should be alive if you want my opinion. Like this young girl's hubby for one. Now I'm asking you. Not for me. But for this young girl here. Have a word with her. For my sake. Put her mind at rest.

ALBERT: Anne, I am surprised at you. You know the rules. You've always known the rules. These things are not to be talked about.

ANNE : Why are they not to be talked about? Anyone can attend the courts. The trials are there for all to see. The law books. The arguments. The verdict. The sentence. It's a public entertainment. All that legal ... paraphernalia.

*( Anne looks again at Marie who is still softly weeping. )*

ANNE : But your part. That's a secret. When it's your turn, from somewhere secret they send a secret letter. And God knows I've seen enough of them. And after that it all happens behind closed doors ...If it's all so right and proper, Albert, why can't we talk about it? All these years it's been there between us. Your secret. This thing that's always been there, stuck there, right in the middle of this marriage of ours .... do you know what I sometimes think? I think it's like as though our marriage was a lovely apple, only rotten inside, rotten in the very middle, with this filthy worm, just lying there, hiding away, a worm, right in the middle of a lovely, red apple... And the worst part is, I don't think it bothers you. Not for one moment. I honestly don't think you know any more what you're doing. I think ... I think you've done it for so long you've forgotten what it is you do. Do you know something, Albert? These days, I can't bring myself to look at your hands? Those strong hands of yours. I can't look at 'em. *( pause, then almost hysterically )* I'm fed up, Albert. I have to tell you, I'm blooming fed up with all this ... all this death.

*( There is a long silence in the room. broken only by the sound of Marie's sobbing.)*

ALBERT : *( to Marie )* What is it you want to know?

MARIE: Terry. Did he mention me?

*( Albert regards Marie reflectively for a moment. )*

ALBERT: You say you are that young lad's wife?

MARIE: Yes.

ALBERT: Marie?

MARIE : *( wonderingly )* That's right.

ALBERT: Do you really want to know?

MARIE: Yes.

ALBERT: Are you sure?

*( Marie hesitates, looks at Anne apprehensively. )*

MARIE: I have to know.

ALBERT: That lad loved you. That much I'm sure of.

MARIE: How do you know?

ALBERT: The warders told me. They said he talked about you all the time. Night and day. You and the little girl.

MARIE: But on that morning, how was he?

ALBERT: He spoke your name. At the end.

MARIE: But what did he say?

ALBERT: I can say no more.

MARIE: You're lying.

ALBERT: Albert Pierrepoint does not lie.

MARIE: You're only saying that.

ALBERT: And why would I lie?

MARIE: You're only saying it to make me feel better.

ALBERT: Madame, get one thing clear. Albert Pierrepoint does not lie. I give you my word as a gentleman. From everything I've heard about him your husband loved you very much, constantly talked about you, in very affectionate terms. And when he died, as I say, your name was on his lips.

MARIE: So, please, what did he say?

ALBERT: Enough now. I've already said too much. He loved you. Just remember that. ... So now I'd like you to be good enough to leave.

*( Marie rises to her feet.)*

MARIE: I just want to thank you, Mr. Pierrepoint. And I'm very sorry I had to come here tonight, perhaps upsetting you. And I hope I haven't caused any trouble between you and Mrs Pierrepoint. You see, it's just that I haven't been sleeping properly. For more than a year now. Ever since ... ever since it happened. Perhaps I'll sleep a bit better now. Now that I know. And I want you to know I don't ... I don't ... you know ... it was the law... you were just doing your job.

ALBERT: Aye, well, that could get me into trouble that lot I've just told you. So I'd be obliged if you said nothing to anyone.

ANNE : I'll let you out, love. *( pause )* Albert?

ALBERT: What?

ANNE : Thank you.

*( She leaves the room with Marie. Lights fade to leave a Spotlight on Albert. He puts his glass up to the optic and*

*pours another drink. He sips, staring blankly in front of him, then turns to the audience.)*

ALBERT: What I sometimes seem to see are faces, just before the hood comes down, frightened faces, so frightened, you wouldn't believe. They would try to hide it, some of them, in their different ways. Sometimes with a sort of smile. Sometimes they'd see me for the first time and they'd seem a little bit ... shy. You know on account of meeting someone a bit famous, like. But it was always a special look. A look I never saw anywhere else. Except there in the condemned cell, at one minute to nine in the morning. Scared. Oh, definitely scared. But in a funny sort of way ... curious. "Thou shalt not kill". That blooming woman they called The Woman in Black with that sign she always carried. "Thou shalt not kill". I talked to the prison chaplain about that. The first time I looked down from a prison window and saw her standing there, all night long, in the rain sometimes. "You do not kill, Mr. Pierrepont," the chaplain said. "you execute the judgement of the court. You are the instrument of justice". (*pause*) I attended a murder trial once, you know. No one saw me. They made sure of that. But I was there. I saw the ceremony of justice. The judicial process, taking its stately course. The judge up there in his red robes. The barristers in their wigs. All going at it, hammer and tongs, arguing the toss, for hours on end. (*softer*) The lovely oak paneling, the jury, the chaplain, the black cap ... And there, in a little side room, listening, waiting. Albert Pierrepont, born and bred in

Halifax, working class family. Left school at fourteen. A publican by day and also at one and the same time an official of the judiciary, the Home Office Number One, known throughout the world, trusted, dignified, calm and, I hope, a gentleman.

(Albert sips his whisky. Long pause.)

ALBERT: Do people think I didn't know that somebody loved 'em? That young girl just now. They were all loved by someone, weren't they? They were all missed by someone, once they'd gone down. Ruth Ellis, a beautiful woman. From what they say she was in a hell of a state when she fired the gun that killed that chap and she left a little girl, so I am told. Young Derek Bentley. They say he was a bit, you know, weak in the head, and he didn't actually fire the gun that killed that policeman and the one that did fire the gun got off. He'd got a big loving family, had Derek Bentley. That other lad, Timothy Evans. He was innocent, they are saying now, and a bit mental. It turned out eventually that the other chap, Christie, he was the murderer, another one of mine incidentally. No, I was never rough or angry with people like that. Ordinary people. I calmed their little fears. I was the last one on earth to touch them. I had that ... privilege. Not their mothers, not their wives, not their husbands, not their children. But me. The officials, the police, the judge, the barristers in their smart robes, the jury, the governor, the chaplain, the warders ... even the

blooming 'Ome Secretary, at the end they all stepped back, and they turned to me and it was me who saw it through to the end, me who looked into their eyes, just before the hood came down, the last one on earth they would ever see . I alone have seen it. The very last thing. I have seen death in the eyes of a man, aye, and a woman, too. Why would I be rough, or angry, in a moment like that? *(his voice rises agitatedly)* I wasn't paid to feel things. I was paid to exercise my skills. I felt nothing. I want that to be clearly understood. Nothing. I did my duty as quick as it could be done and I felt nothing. "You do not kill, Mr. Pierrepont, you execute the judgement of the court ... you are the instrument of justice"

BLACKOUT

*( Time: Just over a year earlier. The condemned cell. The warder is seated at the small table, reading his paper. Terry is on the cot, crouched in the corner, his face to the wall. )*

TERRY: What time is it now?

WARDER : Don't you go worrying about the time, Terry.

TERRY: What time is it?

WARDER : I can't tell you. I don't know. We don't wear watches in here, lad. Word of honour. I don't know.

TERRY: Where is it?

WARDER : Don't worry about that, lad.

TERRY: I want to know where it is. Is it a long walk?

WARDER : No.

TERRY: So where is it?

*( The warder approaches him with a metal cup.)*

WARDER : Not far. It's not far. Now come on. Drink this down, Terry.

TERRY: What is it?

WARDER: It's just something to help you through.

*( Terry drinks it down.)*

TERRY: Tell me.

WARDER: Like I said, Terry. It's not far.

TERRY: Oh, God.

WARDER : Come on Terry, lad. You've been very good. Don't lose it now.

TERRY: Jesus, I don't believe this. I don't believe it. I don't feel well. I don't honestly. I feel awful. I should see a doctor. I mean it. I'm not just saying it. Can I see a doctor?

WARDER: No, lad. I'm sorry.

TERRY: And I need to use the toilet.

WARDER: Go on, lad. Use the toilet if you have to.

TERRY: I can't. *(pause)* What was that? *(pause)* There's someone out there. There's someone outside the door. *(pause)* I heard something. God, I'm so scared.

WARDER : Don't be scared, Terry. It's quick. And it's gentle. I promise you. I'd never lie to you, lad. It's quick.

*( Terry stares at the cell door in terror.)*

TERRY: Oh, God, it's him, isn't it? Oh God. Jesus. No. *(he screams out)* Get away from that door. I know you're out there.

*( The warder goes to pull Terry away from the corner.)*

TERRY: Shut up. Leave me alone. I won't. Get off me. You bastard.

WARDER: Come on, Terry. Time to go.

TERRY: Oh, God. Oh Christ. No. I want me Mum.

*(mechanically)* I want me Mum. I want me Mum. I want me Mum.

*(The Warder reaches out and catches hold of both his hands.)*

WARDER : Terry. Listen. Listen to me now.

TERRY: *(moaning, low, like an animal)* No ...no... no ...no ... Oh, God, no.

WARDER: Listen to me, lad. Play the man. Play the man for the next few minutes. That's all. Don't go like this, lad. Don't shame yourself.

TERRY: *(moaning, low, like an animal)*: No ... no ... no ... no ... Oh, God, no.

*(Terry breaks away and slumps in a corner, weeping like a frightened child.)*

TERRY: I want me mother. I want me mother. I want me mother. Oh, God, no, I want my Mum.

*( The Warder kneels down beside him.)*

TERRY: I want to go home. I want to go home. I want to go home. Let me go home. Don't let him do it. Please.

*( Albert Pierrepoint enters the condemned cell accompanied by the chaplain who has a prayer book in his hand. )*

WARDER: *( gently )* Stand up, lad.

*( The chaplain approaches Terry.)*

CHAPLAIN: *(Reading from the prayer book )* The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down –

*( Terry tears the book from his hand and hurls it to the floor.)*

TERRY: Fuck off with your book.

*( The chaplain recovers the book from the floor.)*

CHAPLAIN : He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

TERRY: I told you – fuck off with your book.

*( Terry kicks out at the chaplain and connects with his leg. The chaplain staggers and falls against the wall of the*

*condemned cell. Wincing with pain, he leans for a moment against the wall.)*

CHAPLAIN: He leadeth me beside the still waters

*( Albert approaches Terry and moves his hands behind his back. )*

CHAPLAIN: He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

TERRY: No. You're not. (*very firmly*). You're not doing it. Get away. Get your hands off. I want my Mother. Bring my Mother. Please. Don't hurt me.

ALBERT: (*gently*) I won't hurt you, lad. Just do as I say. Just follow me. And it'll be over with. (*to the chaplain*) Padre, would you mind just leaving it now? I'm afraid you're upsetting the lad.

CHAPLAIN: (*He is growing more agitated*) Thou prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over.

ALBERT: Padre ! Stop now ! ... ( *gently* ) Please.

WARDER : Terry, listen to me.

TERRY: No, get away.

WARDER : Listen to me, Terry.

TERRY: Tell him to get away.

ALBERT: Now then, Tom. You know the form. Stand aside.

*( The Warder again picks up the tin cup from the cell table  
and offers it to Terry.)*

WARDER: Get this down, lad.

TERRY: I don't want to drink it. I want to go home. I'm  
going home.

*( Terry hurls the cup away. )*

WARDER: Listen to me, Terry. You be a brave lad ... now ...  
for the next minute ... you pull yourself together and I'll see  
that Marie gets to know. I promise you. We'll see that she's  
told how you went through that door like a man ... that's  
something, isn't it?

*( Albert goes to bind Terry's hands but the Warder holds up an arm in gentle restraint.)*

WARDER: Just for one minute, Terry. You straighten up and walk through there now, like the man I know you are. Like a soldier. Do it, lad, and I promise you, your Marie will always be proud when she thinks of you. I promise.

*( Albert binds his arms behind his back with the leather strap. The lights begin to dim, as though the scene is so shameful it must not be seen. Terry is led upstage.)*

TERRY : *( very firmly )* I said 'Get off.' You heard me. You're not doing it. Get away. Let go my arm. *( he screams )* Get away. I can't move my arms. I've got to scratch my face. My face is itching. I tell you it's itching. Listen, can I have a drink of water? Please. Get away. I'm not going in there. *( he screams )*. Mum. Mum. Mum. I want me Mother. Let me out. Oh, God I've messed meself. Honestly. I can feel it. I've shit meself.

*( Terry slumps to the floor. )*

ALBERT : *( very calmly )* Pick him up. Just lift him. *(pause )* I don't care if he has fainted. He's got to go. Pick him up. Now!

TERRY: No, I'm not going in there.

ALBERT: Carry him. Come on, lad. Keep your pluck up.  
Play the man.

TERRY: I'm not going. Leave me alone.

( *With the stage almost in darkness the sounds of struggling, kicking, dragging feet tell us the execution party has moved through to the scaffold.*)

ALBERT: Steady him. Hold him up.

TERRY: I can't breathe. Get it off me face.

CHAPLAIN: ( *gabbling loudly, repeats himself* ) He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

ALBERT: Padre, stand back. ( *sharply* ) For God's sake, Padre, will you stop interfering and get against the wall.

TERRY: Piss off, will you. It's too tight. I can't breathe. It's cutting into my neck. You're hurting me. Please, let me go home. Please. Oh, God, Please. Mum, help me. Mum, make

them get off me. I want to go home. Listen, I've got something to tell you. Just listen for a minute.

WARDER: ( *to the Padre* ) Get off the trap, Padre. Before I bloody throw you off.

CHAPLAIN: ( *hysterically* ) Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

TERRY : ( *screaming* ) Listen. Please. It's important.

ALBERT: Padre, you bloody fool. Get off the trap and on the plank. Stand away, man. You're done with him.

TERRY : ( *voice muffled* ) Listen, it wasn't me. Listen to me. I didn't do it. ( *screaming now* ) Oh, God. Listen, won't you? It was Marie. Marie stabbed him. It wasn't me. Take this thing off and I'll tell you. He'd been messing about with her for years. Her Dad. I'm telling you, Marie killed him. I didn't do it. Leave me alone. It wasn't me. Get off me. Go and get Marie. She'll tell you. She's the one who did it ... It was Marie. It was Marie. It was -

( *Terry cries out once in sheer terror. And then there is the resounding, echoing crash of the trap. A crash like doom*

*which must echo and resound through the theatre. And then  
silence. )*

*( Time. The present. Spot fades up on Albert who is back  
behind the bar of the Snug. Unsteadily, he puts his hand up  
to the optic and pours himself a drink. He sips. And then very  
softly he begins to sing. )*

ALBERT: *But when ye come,  
And all the flowers are dying,  
If I am dead, as dead I well may be,  
Ye'll come and find the place where I am lying,  
And kneel and say an Ave there for me,  
And I shall hear, though soft you tread above me,  
And all my grave will warmer, sweeter be,  
For you will bend and tell me that you love me,  
And I shall sleep in peace until you come to me.*

*( The song ends and Anne steals out from the living quarters  
behind the Snug. )*

ANNE : Albert?

ALBERT: Yes, love?

ANNE : You all right?

ALBERT: I'm fine.

ANNE : I heard you singing just now.

ALBERT: Yeah.

ANNE : Danny Boy.

ALBERT: It's always Danny Boy.

ANNE : You're not getting those pains again?

ALBERT: No.

ANNE : In your chest?

ALBERT: I've told you, no. Not at the moment, any road.

ANNE : You coming to bed?

ALBERT: Aye. In a minute.

ANNE : Come to bed, love. ( *tenderly* ) Come on.

ALBERT: Just give me a minute.

ANNE : I've not upset you, have I?

ALBERT: I'm not upset.

ANNE : Going on about your hands.

ALBERT: I'm not upset.

ANNE : What then?

ALBERT: Nothing. Don't worry.

ANNE : It was just ...

ALBERT: I know.

ANNE : You won't be long then?

ALBERT: No.

ANNE : Albert?

ALBERT: What?

ANNE : *Was* he all right?

ALBERT: Who?

ANNE : That young lad. Terry.

ALBERT: What difference does it make?

ANNE : I'd like to know. At the end. At the very end, was he all right?

ALBERT: After all these years? You're asking me questions?

ANNE : Not really.

ALBERT: What then?

ANNE : Just about Terry. That's all.

ALBERT: You want me to tell you how it went?

*( Pause.)*

ANNE : No.

ALBERT: What then?

ANNE : I just want to know that you told Marie the truth.

ALBERT: The truth?

ANNE: Yes.

ALBERT: No one knows the truth.

ANNE : I know.

ALBERT: Do you?

ANNE : I think I know.

ALBERT: Ah, but there's thinking. And there's knowing.

ANNE : But what you told her about what he said. What Terry said. You did hear him use Marie's name? At the very end.

ALBERT: That's right. I did.

ANNE : He was a lovely lad, Albert.

ALBERT: I'm sure he was.

ANNE: Don't be long, love. You're tired.

ALBERT: Aye. I'm tired all right.

ANNE : And you've not been sleeping.

ALBERT: No.

ANNE : Tossing and turning.

ALBERT: Aye.

ANNE : Albert?

ALBERT: What?

ANNE : I'm glad it's over.

*( Pause.)*

ANNE : I'm glad it's going to be finished with. After all these years.

*( Pause.)*

ANNE : And I'm glad you talked to her. To Marie. That was a nice thing for you to do. You're a good man, Albert.

ALBERT: Am I ?

ANNE : Yes. You are. And I don't think we'll be separated. When we die.

ALBERT: I hope not, love.

ANNE : I mean I do think we'll be together. In Heaven. I've thought about it a lot, lately. And something's only wrong if

you know it's wrong when you're doing it. And no one said it was wrong. Until now.

ALBERT: That's true.

*( Anne leaves. For a moment Albert remains standing behind the bar. He reaches up to the optic once more and pours another drink. And as he starts to sing again he is gently rubbing at his chest.)*

ALBERT : *( singing very softly )*

*But when ye come,  
And all the flowers are dying,  
If I am dead, as dead I well may be,*

*Albert's voice trails away and we segue into taped singing  
off-stage*

YOUNG, STRONG TENOR VOICE ( *Terry ?* ):

*Ye'll come and find the place where I am lying,  
And kneel and say an Ave there, for me,  
And I shall hear, though soft you tread above me,  
And all my grave will warmer, sweeter be,  
For you will bend and tell me that you love me,  
And I shall sleep in peace until you come to me.*

SLOW FADE TO BLACKOUT

**Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please see [the Odd Job Man information page](#).**