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PERCY AND ROSE

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SCENE ONE:

The Grainger home in Melbourne. Circa 1887. Percy, as an adult, is playing a music hall song on piano and singing as well. Rose is listening. In fact, the period of the song is from about thirty years later but we flashback almost immediately to this earlier period.

PERCY SINGS: While plodding on our way,
 The toilsome road of life,
 How few the friends that daily there we meet,
 Not many will stand by in trouble or in strife.
 But there is one whose smile will ever on us beam,
 Whose love is dearer far than any other!
 And where every we may turn,
 This lesson we may learn,
 A boy's best friend is his mother

CHORUS.
 Then cherish her with care,
 And smooth her silv'ry hair;
 When gone you will never get another,
 And where ever we may turn,
 This lesson we will learn.
 A boy's best friend is his mother.

He finishes the song with a flourish and then laughs loudly. Rose tries to hide her approval.

ROSE: Perks... that is a vulgar, crude piece of music hall.

PERCY: Ah ha... but I am very fond of vulgarity.

ROSE: I thought I had brought you up to be more noble and sophisticated than that.

He grins at her, then turns to the piano and practices his scales. We are now back to 1887. Rose stands over him.

ROSE: Again.

He repeats them.

ROSE: Again.

He plays them again, but this time, falters.

ROSE: That is an appalling mistake. Go to your room immediately. And consider while you wait, just what a stupid boy you are.

The real Percy has stayed at the piano. He remains there during all the early flashback part of the play. Rose watches the imaginary Percy walk out of the room. Annie enters with a cooking bowl in her hands.

ANNIE: Percy...? Perks?

She sees Rose.

ANNIE: Where is our big boy? I thought I could hear him practicing... I need someone to lick the pudding basin.

ROSE: I have sent him to his room.

ANNIE: Oh... was he naughty?

Rose smiles.

ROSE: Yes... he made a terrible mess of his scales... He has to learn.

ANNIE: When I was listening to him yesterday, he played brilliantly. I can scarcely believe that he is capable of making a mistake.

ROSE: Well he is... It's all just a question of control.

ANNIE: Of course... He is a clever boy though, for all that.

ROSE: Oh yes, I am proud of my boy, my golden haired boy. Proud of my independent little warrior. He plays well, like I taught him, he reads well like I taught him, he stands tall like I taught him... He pleases me...

She picks up the whip.

ROSE: You may read to him before he goes to sleep. My eyes are too tired.

Annie picks up a book and begins reading as she moves to one corner of the stage. It should be obvious that she is reading a bedtime story to a young Percy.

ANNIE: The bushes rustled a little in the thicket, and Father Wolf dropped with his haunches under him, ready for his leap. "A man's cub. Look!"

Directly in front of him stood a naked brown baby who could just walk -- as soft and as dimpled an atom as ever came into a wolf's cave at night.

"Is that a man's cub?" said Mother Wolf. "I have never seen one, bring it here... How little!... How naked!... and how bold!" said the Mother Wolf softly.

The baby was pushing its way between the cubs to get close to the warm hide.

"Ahai! He is taking his meal with the others. Now was there ever a wolf that could boast of a man's cub amongst her children?"

Just then, the moonlight was blocked out of the mouth of the cave, for the great square head and shoulders of the tiger Shere Khan were thrust into the entrance.

"My quarry, a man's cub went this way," said Shere Khan, "give it to me."

"The wolves are free people," said Father Wolf, "the man's cub is ours." The tiger's roar filled the cave with thunder. Mother Wolf shook herself clear of the cubs and sprang forward.

"The man's cub is mine, Shere Khan. He shall not be killed. He shall live to run with the wolf pack and to hunt with the pack. Now get thee hence... Go!"

Shere Khan knew he could not stand up against Mother Wolf, so he backed out of the cave growling, and then shouted,

"The cub is mine, and to my teeth he will come in the end, O bush-tailed thieves."

Mother Wolf threw herself down panting among the cubs.

"Keep him," she gasped, "he came naked, by night, alone and very hungry, yet he was not afraid. Keep him? Assuredly I will keep him. Lie still little frog, o thou Mowgli- for Mowgli the frog I will call thee."

Percy at the Piano yells

PERCY: Oh Mowgli... Mowgli... I am Mowgli... suckled by an unnatural breast... not worthy of his mother.

Rose enters and moves towards Annie.

ANNIE: He's asleep Ma'am.

ROSE: Isn't he the most beautiful boy you have ever seen Annie?

ANNIE: He is that Ma'am, and I love him very much.

Rose looks fondly at her son, but keeps her distance.

ROSE: I don't think you should get too attached to him Annie; after all, he will soon be big enough to be able to care for himself. Then you will be able to go.

ANNIE: Go!... But I don't ever want to go. He is after all, part of my flesh and blood now.

ROSE: Don't be ridiculous girl.

ANNIE: But he has drunk from my breast. My body has nurtured him, warmed him, comforted him. His is as much part of me as he is of you. Go? I can not just go and leave my golden boy.

Rose considers for a moment and then her face hardens.

ROSE: I'm afraid that you have no choice in the matter. You are dismissed.

Annie tries to cope with the situation.

ANNIE: But... what do you know about him?

ROSE: His is my own son... he sprang from my loins... I know all that there is to know.

ANNIE: But your illness... you still can't...

ROSE: The sores have long since disappeared. I can touch him now. I am clean. He will understand, after all he is from good stock. His weak brown-eyed father could not counteract the strength of the Aldridge blood. He is a Nordic Warrior, he cannot fail to succeed.

ANNIE: Please let me stay... For me... For Perks!

ROSE: I see no reason to prolong his attachment. You are no longer needed. There is only room for the two of us in my plans.

Annie is stunned.

ANNIE: Please Rose... Just for a while longer. This is too sudden. I cannot bear the thought of losing him.

ROSE: You are not losing him. He was never yours in the first place.

ANNIE: Please dear God?

ROSE: I don't want to listen to any exhortations to your silly old bearded gentleman in the sky. If you must invoke the Gods please call on Thor or Freye, not that effete Jewish deity. Now that is enough. Pack your things. I will inform my son in the morning that you have left. Quickly please.

Again from the piano, Percy yells.

PERCY: Annie! Annie! Where is my darling warm Annie?

Rose now has a book in her hands and is reading to Percy...

ROSE: Once upon a time, a tall, handsome boy visited a strange land. "What is the name of this land?" he asked an old man. "Whiteland" he replied and went on to ask the lad whence he came and what he was going to do. The lad told him all. "Aye, aye," said the old Viking, "now when you have walked a little further you'll come to three beautiful Princesses with their heads only out of the earth. The first will call out to you and beg you most prettily to come and help her, and the second will do the same. Make haste past them. But the third and prettiest you shall go to and do what she says... Then you shall have good luck."

When the lad came to the first Princess she begged him to come to her very prettily, but he passed her as though he saw her not. In the same way he passed the second, but to the third he went straight up. "If you'll do as I bid," she said, "you may have any of us as you please."

Yes, he was willing enough. She told him now how three Trolls had buried them in the earth, but before, they had lived in a castle.

"Now," she said, "you must go to the castle and let the Trolls whip you each night for each of us. If you bear that you'll set us free. After each whipping, if you take the flask that hangs on the wall and rub yourself with the oil that is in it, wherever the lash falls, you'll be as sound as ever. Then grasp the sword that hangs by the flask and strike the Troll dead."

During the telling of this story, Percy has begun to play, quite softly, one of his Danish folk song settings. At this point however he finishes with a crash and shouts...

PERCY: I am that brave, handsome lad travelled from a far land to this cold English city.

Rose does not react. She continues with the story.

ROSE: He did as the Princess told him, The first night there came a Troll with three heads and three rods and whipped the brave lad soundly. But he stood it till the Troll was done. Then he took the flask and rubbed himself and grasped the sword and slew the Troll.

Once again Percy cries out from his position behind the piano.

PERCY: I am that prince who has suffered the torment of the whips, felt the lashes of the rod and never asked for mercy.

Rose continues.

ROSE: When he went out the next morning, the Princesses stood out the earth up to their waist. The next night it was the same story over again, only this time the Troll had six heads and six rods and whipped him far worse than before. When he went out the next morning the three Princesses stood out of the earth as far as their knees.

PERCY: I am that Prince who wants to possess a Princess, wants to prove his fitness, his pureness, his rightness to be the owner of her soft, white flesh.

ROSE: The third night there came a Troll with nine heads and nine rods and he flogged the lad so long that he fainted away. Then the Troll took him and dashed him against the wall. The shock was so great that it brought down the flask which fell on the boy, burst, and spilled the oil over him so that he was as strong as ever. Then he wasn't slow. He grasped the sword and slew the Troll. Next morning when he went out the Princesses stood before him with all their bodies out of the earth. He took the youngest for his Queen and they lived happily ever after.

Percy cries out again, this time undressing as he does.

PERCY: But I am the Prince who is cursed with the curse of the werewolf.
Tainted with the stink of the dog

By this time Percy is naked. He stands in an open window and defies the cold. The style is very much "Heroic".

PERCY: So blow North Wind with sleet and snow,
Cut me to my bone marrow,
Blow ye winds all winter long,
Destroy this filth that does not belong.
Cleanse me high and cleanse me low,
With head held high I'll face the blow,
Make me clean that I can impress
And prove my worth to my Princess.

SCENE TWO - THERE IS NO BREAK

Hermann enters and sees the naked Percy standing in the window.

HERMANN: My dear Perks, whatever are you doing?

PERCY: Hermann.

HERMANN: Is this some ancient religious ritual or are you just trying to prove the adage that it pays to advertise?

PERCY: Advertise?

HERMANN: For pupils... I know the competition is stiff but...

Percy responds boldly.

PERCY: I am toughening myself up. Getting my body used to the rigours of this cold Northern climate.

HERMANN: Huh... catching your death more like. Here put this on, you make me feel quite uncomfortable.

PERCY: I don't see why it should affect you.

HERMANN: Well it does. Your mother said you would be here, I wish she'd warned me of your state though.

Percy clothes himself in a robe.

PERCY: There... is that better?

HERMANN: Yes.

They embrace joyfully. The next couple of sentences are spoken in Danish.

HERMANN: Now my Australian Iceberg, you are beautiful once more.

PERCY: Ah, but an Australian Iceberg is a poor cousin only of a true Nordic warrior.

The return to speaking English.

HERMANN: But we are brothers... we are warrior brothers.

PERCY: Yes. True Nordic warrior brothers! The scourge of the filthy Latins.

Hermann stands back and admires his friend again.

HERMANN: Ha ha... You certainly seem fit and boisterous as ever!

PERCY: My dear Hermann, I am so full of energy that I can barely sleep four hours a night. My poor mother says she gets tired just watching me. Why yesterday I went for a full five mile run to Marble Arch and back, and still I could barely sit still.

HERMANN: Do you manage to sit still in the middle of your concerts?

PERCY: Yes, yes. Usually. But last week I felt the first movement in the Tchaikovsky was going on too long so I dropped a couple of pages.

HERMANN: Ha... I am glad I was not conducting.

PERCY: Why? We have such splendid rapport that you would have picked my plan immediately. Besides, I was anxious to get out of the stuffy old chamber with its bad air and its blood-sucking, awful aristocratic hangers on.

HERMANN: And your composing? You can't just drop a few pages of that if you get bored.

PERCY: I work at it like fury, but alas, I am still very slow.

HERMANN: You try to do too much my friend.

PERCY: In what way?

Hermann tries to hide a wicked grin.

HERMANN: Well if you just concentrated on composing music it would be alright, but you try to compose notations as well.

PERCY: I gather you have seen Cyril.

HERMANN: Yes... He said that you were still using golfing expressions to describe your music.

PERCY: He always laughs at my music and my notations. But why should I have to make everything obscure? Why should I have to hide my intentions. If I mean my music to be "wayward and not draggish" why not say that? Why should I have to say that it is "andante con moto"? These foreign words are unwanted, unbecoming and unknowable to simple people.

HERMANN: I agree with you wholeheartedly.

Percy turns on him gleefully.

PERCY: Then why do you continue with Latin words in your music?

HERMANN: Ha ha... I don't agree with you THAT wholeheartedly.

PERCY: I see... You are a fair weather friend.

HERMANN: No I am not... I place your music amongst the highest rank, you know that. But still I can laugh at your notations. They are funny.

Percy takes all this good humouredly.

PERCY: You will see... Some day I will be vindicated on you all. The world will come to appreciate the rightness of Australian democratic thinking.

HERMANN: Ah, so it is because you are Australian that you do these things?

PERCY: Of course... Australia is a leader in the world of social experimentation, it will soon be a leader in the world of music too.

Hermann grins.

HERMANN: I shall wait with bated breath.

Percy wants to change the subject. He is restless.

PERCY: And you?... Have you been composing?

HERMANN: A little. But I tour too much... it's difficult.

PERCY: Why?

HERMANN: One cannot compose on trains.

PERCY: I can... They are full of inspiration. All the noise, all the movement, all the people... All the energy, vibrations, rhythms! What could be better?

HERMANN: What could be worse?

PERCY: You really are a stuffy old fool sometimes Hermann.

HERMANN: Huh... I remember one train journey on which you did not compose for one second.

PERCY: When?

HERMANN: You spent all you time trying to steal Alfchild from me.

PERCY: No... not steal... Share. We made a blissful trio.

HERMANN: I had no objections of course. What is mine is yours. She sends her love.

PERCY: Does she? I don't know what I saw in her. The woman is detestable.

HERMANN: Oh Perks you are cruel. Her love for you is very dear. You were such good friends once.

PERCY: She called my mother a devil. I can never forgive her. I wonder that you stay with her.

HERMANN: But of course I stay with her. I love her. I love her because she is so like you, and I love you.

PERCY: Huh... She is a silly creature. Full of maudlin Christian cant and goody-goodyness. I hate evangelising Christians.

HERMANN: You felt quite differently about her in the early days. It would make me so happy if we could all be friends again.

PERCY: My darling Hermann, that is quite out of the question. For you I have the deepest strongest, brotherly affection possible... the love that only two men used to fighting side by side against a common enemy can have for each other. We are mates, you and I, but a woman's role is far more precarious. They cannot be trusted. Alfild displayed this weakness. She hurt me terribly.

Hermann is quite upset. Percy tries to cheer things up a bit.

PERCY: Have you seen Roger or Balfour since you have been in England?

HERMANN: Roger briefly.

PERCY: Did you talk to him? Did you reminisce about our Frankfurt days together... the gang, the pranks, the fun!

Hermann manages a smile. He is starting to buck up.

HERMANN: Oh they made fun of you, poor Percy. They made fun of you!

Rose enters. She immediately addresses Herman with a most officious tone.

ROSE: It was nice of you to call around to see Percy, Hermann, but I'm afraid we have a very busy schedule to maintain, so would you leave now please?

Hermann is devastated.

HERMANN: Oh really...? But I have only just arrived.

He looks plaintively at Percy who can simply shrug powerlessly.

ROSE: You have been here almost ten minutes. That is quite enough.

HERMANN: But Percy?

PERCY: Mother's quite right Hermann. I really am horribly busy.

Rose is holding the door for Hermann.

ROSE: Thank you Hermann... Perhaps if you spent less time visiting you might achieve something worthwhile with your music, as Percy has done.

Percy lamely tries to make light of the situation.

PERCY: If you see Balfour, send him my love.

ROSE: That is quite enough Hermann... Good day.

Hermann is terribly upset. He leaves with barely a muttered goodbye. Rose turns to Percy.

ROSE: It was very thoughtful of him to visit.

PERCY: Yes... Are we really that busy my darling? It's such fun when Hermann visits.

ROSE: Of course it is, and I hate to interrupt, but then levity is so very unproductive and you have so much to do.

PERCY: Of course.

ROSE: I would prefer that your friends conducted more of their social chit chat through the post. It is far more efficient.

PERCY: Yes mother.

ROSE: Now run along and change for your appointment.

PERCY: Yes my darling.

He turns to leave, but then stops.

PERCY: I don't know what I would do without you!

He leaves. Rose waits until he has gone.

ROSE: Without me you'd be just some other clever boy, but without you, I would be nothing.

There is a knock at the door.

ROSE: Yes... Come in.

Margot enters.

MARGOT: I am Margot Harrison... The maid said...

ROSE: Yes, come in. I am Mrs Grainger, Percy's mother.

MARGOT: How do you do.

ROSE: Sit down Margot.

MARGOT: Thank you.

She sits down. Rose looks her over carefully.

ROSE: You are very pretty... More Celtic than Anglo Saxon but... I am sure you will be suitable.

MARGOT: Thank you.

ROSE: And the fee is to be two guineas a session. Agreed.

MARGOT: Yes

ROSE: Your father said that you were already proficient. What does that mean?

MARGOT: I started when I was seven and I have made good progress, according to my teacher.

ROSE: Who is?

MARGOT: Mr Louis Goldberg

Rose scoffs.

ROSE: Never heard of him... He sounds old, he sounds conservative and he sounds Jewish.

MARGOT: He is.

ROSE: Then you will have learned many bad habits from him. Possibly too many.

MARGOT: Bad habits, Mrs Grainger?

ROSE: My son, your teacher, is a genius Margot. He has very little patience with people who are not flexible enough to be moulded into his style.

MARGOT: Yes, of course.

ROSE: Not that he is dogmatic at all. In fact, my son possesses many unique qualities which I am sure you will soon come to appreciate. He is, apart from his general virtuosity, the greatest living interpreter of Grieg and Delius, as well as a composer of unique and extraordinary originality.

MARGOT: Yes, Mr Grainger is very famous.

Rose is shocked at her words.

ROSE: Mind your tongue girl! My boy is Percy Grainger, Perks to his friends. Mr Grainger is a philanderer of unspeakable profligacy and decadence. His name is not to be mentioned again.

MARGOT: I'm sorry.

ROSE: So am I... Now, to business. My son is a very busy man Miss Harrison, while you are here you must fit in with his schedules. The normal routine is that Percy is to practise for two hours from eight o'clock, followed by three hours of composition. We eat a light lunch only, at one o'clock. Two to three is reserved for any callers my son may have, so long as such calls are of a professional nature. Mere social visits are frowned upon. Your lessons will start at three o'clock and continue for two hours. After that, my son and I shall retire until tea time during which period we shall attend to any correspondence. Evenings are taken up with attending my son's concerts or visits to the theatre. You will be expected to maintain a lively interest in his career. Any questions?

MARGOT: What are my practice times Ma'am?

ROSE: That will depend on my son Miss Harrison. After all, he is your teacher.

MARGOT: Yes Ma'am.

ROSE: At all other times, you are to make yourself available to assist me in whatever way I should think fit. I must warn you my dear, that I am not a very well woman. I frequently suffer from paralysis, the result of a fall some years ago, and my eyesight is also failing.

MARGOT: I'm sorry to hear that.

ROSE: Yes... It's not easy being the mother of a genius.

MARGOT: No... of course.

Percy enters. He is wearing a suit of towelling clothes. Margot stifles a laugh at this comic costume but Percy is quite oblivious of her.

PERCY: Hello.

ROSE: Perks, this is Miss Harrison.

MARGOT: Margot. Hello Mr... Percy.

ROSE: Margot has just been telling me about herself.

PERCY: How nice

Margot cannot resist a question about the clothes.

MARGOT: I'm sorry to get you up.

PERCY: Pardon?

MARGOT: Well seeing that you are still in you pyjamas I thought...

Percy laughs quite unselfconsciously.

PERCY: Oh no... These are my working clothes.

ROSE: They are extremely practical.

PERCY: Mother made them.

Margot realises that they are serious. She tries to cover.

MARGOT: Hmm... They look very...er...comfortable.

Percy is tickled by her interest.

PERCY: They are... we adore wearing them. They are made out of towels you know.

MARGOT: Now that you mention it, I can see that... yes...

ROSE: Some people laugh, but what do we care? We have discovered a new cloth that has all the rugged virtues of the clothing of our ancestors.

Percy and Rose speak almost as one about this favourite subject.

PERCY: And the colours too. These soft blues and rich reds, these are the colours of Scandinavia, the colours of the Anglo Saxons.

ROSE: Strong colours. Not the dull, morbid tones of Southern European dress.

MARGOT: Yes... Very colourful...

PERCY: I wear them whenever possible. They inspire me.

ROSE: Especially here at home.

PERCY: It is a pity I cannot wear them on the concert platform,

ROSE: What a sensation it would be.

Percy and Rose laugh at the idea. Margot is not sure.

PERCY: It would set tongues wagging. Perhaps I should try.

ROSE: Not yet my darling. I think we should wait until the world catches up on our other ideas first.

PERCY: I think you're right.

Rose turns her attention back to Margot.

ROSE: You should make yourself a suit of towelling clothes Margot... I think they would look well on you.

MARGOT: Do you think so?

ROSE: Yes, I do.

Margot looks for an excuse.

MARGOT: I'm sure my needlework would not be up to your high standards.

ROSE: Fiddledeedee... My needlework is of no consequence. The beauty of these garments lies in their easygoing, form-less nature.

PERCY: And their freshness and cleanliness.

Margot gives in.

MARGOT: Well of course, I'd love to give them a try.

Rose is triumphant.

ROSE: There we are Perks. See what a splendid, open minded pupil I have organised for you?

PERCY: Thank you my darling.

ROSE: But, it is not for me to intrude on your first lesson Miss Harrison. Now I must leave you in my son's very capable hands.

MARGOT: Thank you Mrs Grainger.

Rose turns to leave but before she goes, she gives Percy one parting order.

ROSE: But mind you stop at five precisely Perks. This evening will be a strenuous one for you.

PERCY: Of course.

Rose leaves. Percy turns to Margot.

PERCY: Isn't she marvellous?

MARGOT: Yes... You two seem to get along awfully well.

PERCY: We are inseparable. That's only natural for a mother and son of course.

MARGOT: She must be very proud of you.

Percy laughs bitterly.

PERCY: Proud of me? No... I am most unproudworthy. I am but a poor facsimile of her.

Margot thinks he is joking. She laughs.

MARGOT: Oh Percy really!

PERCY: No, it is true... something I don't fully understand, but I must be a bitter disappointment to my mother, who is so capable and lovely in all things.

MARGOT: You can't be serious.

Percy pauses for a moment, almost as if he is shedding a tear. Then he suddenly changes and becomes business like.

PERCY: Are you familiar with my music?

MARGOT: Yes, I have made quite a study of it. I think it is very lovely... very sweet.

Percy is horrified.

PERCY: Lovely...? Sweet? See you don't understand. My music is all about violence and blood and gore. It's about murder and torture and physical combat.

MARGOT: Oh... I don't think I can have heard those!

PERCY: Then you have not heard any of it.

MARGOT: But I have!

PERCY: Oh but it is impossible.

Margot is conciliatory.

MARGOT: I will listen more carefully next time.

Once more Percy become a business like, and teacher like. Clearly his next speech is well rehearsed. Lesson one for all his pupils.

PERCY: The piano as a musical instrument is horribly limited. It has a mere 80 notes that are made by a series of hammers hitting a collection of wires. Each note is fixed and inflexible and can only be produced in one way. The notes cannot be plucked, stroked, rubbed, caressed or stretched. They are finite in everything but their loudness. Hence piano-forte... loud or soft. The instrument has all the restrictions that its accursed Latin name implies. You can vary anything you want, so long as you only vary the loudness. The piano forte has all the attributes of the narrow minded, hold tightish, obstinate bigotry of the Southern European minds that invented it. Playing the piano forte is simplicity itself. All one has to do is to hit a key with a finger and a sound results. A sound that is pleasing to the ear of many degenerate brown eyed simpletons, but which has very little appeal to anyone with a Scandinavian heritage... Getting music out of the damned thing is another matter altogether.

Margot is stunned at his outburst.

MARGOT: How do you do it?

PERCY: I don't.

MARGOT: Oh, but you do. I have been to many of your concerts.

PERCY: It's a trick... A nasty deceit that I have developed.

MARGOT: Oh really?

PERCY: I simply look as if I am making music. I run out onto the concert platform with mock enthusiasm, I smile sickeningly sweetly to all and sundry, my blonde hair and blue eyes look convincing, the conductor waves his wand, the tuneful instruments in the orchestra begin to play, and I sit there causing little hammers to hit lengths of wire. A lot of people are completely fooled by this charade into thinking that what they are hearing is music. Only a few discerning individuals can actually see through this silly deception.

MARGOT: I must admit that I am not one of those discerning few. I have always been totally captivated by your magic.

PERCY: Deceit, not magic.

MARGOT: Alright... but oh to be as deceitful.

Percy looks at her for a moment. His mood changes again.

PERCY: Let us begin... Lie on the floor.

MARGOT: I beg your pardon.

PERCY: On the floor. Lie down quickly.

She does so unhesitatingly.

MARGOT: But... why?

He speaks to her again rather bossily. This is still lesson one.

PERCY: Exercises... fitness... A tone player of any calibre must be fit and strong. The muscles of the arm must be ready for vigorous movements, be able to jump quickly, hit firmly. The fingers must not only be nimble and quick, they must also be powerful, so that they keys can be smacked, hit, punched and belted with all the power that one has... So, quickly, ten push-ups to start with.

He drops to the ground and begins doing push-ups.

PERCY: Follow me... one...two...three... Come on!

Margot is totally confused.

MARGOT: What am I supposed to be doing?

Percy stops.

PERCY: Push ups... Have you not exercised your arms before?

MARGOT: No... I don't do things like that. Its not ladylike.

Percy stops. Gets up and sits sulkily by the piano.

PERCY: Very well... Goodbye.

MARGOT: Pardon?

PERCY: Goodbye... You may leave. If you are not prepared to accept the lessons as I give them then you may as well go.

Margot has no idea what is happening.

MARGOT: But...

PERCY: I don't want silly giggling, laughmaking, girlish behaviour from my pupils. If you are to play the piano you are to be fit and strong, otherwise, leave it be.

She starts to understand his ploy.

MARGOT: I'm sorry... Could you just explain what an up-push is please.

PERCY: A push-up is performed like so.

He demonstrates.

PERCY: It is an ideal exercise for piano players as it strengthens the shoulders, gives stamina to the fingers, lengthens the arms and improves breathing. Try it.

She does but fails miserably.

MARGOT: I can play Tchaikovsky's First.

PERCY: No you can't... try again.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE- SOMETIME LATER.

Percy is much more relaxed. Margot plays the final chord of a piece.

PERCY: I am very pleased with you Margot.

MARGOT: Thank you.

PERCY: But I should never have doubted you. I should have seen at once that your fair features and clear eyes were the open windows of a nimble mind.

Margot intentionally mis-hears.

MARGOT: Did you say "feeble mind"?

PERCY: Ah ha... no no no... Nimble, alert, intelligent.

MARGOT: Why do you flatter me?

She really does not understand him.

PERCY: It's not flattery to tell the truth. In fact, I feel I must be short-changing you, for want of better words.

MARGOT: Oh come now Perks.

PERCY: No. 'Tis true. You are an English Rose... No... not a rose, not part of the degenerate Tudors and Plantagenets... You are a delightful poesy of weeds.

MARGOT: Huh!

PERCY: Of dandelions and briars and thistles and forget-me-nots.

MARGOT: I think I'd prefer to be a rose.

PERCY: Don't be silly! A rose is a sickly smelling cultivated thing. It is gross and unsubtle and fussy. But the weeds are energetic and lively... they ramble over wild places, they are delicate but hardy, free growing, natural, undisciplined and varied... Just like you.

Margot laughs.

MARGOT: I assume that was a compliment.

PERCY: No, it was an insult, because you are far nicer than words can convey, therefore words can never achieve your heights, they must undersell you. To compliment you is beyond the possibilities of words, therefore all words can do is to insult you.

Margot is struck dumb at Percy's extravagant outburst.

MARGOT: That's a lovely thing to say.

PERCY: Tonight I am playing in front of royalty, but there is only one Princess who I will be trying to impress. Are you happy?

MARGOT: Yes, of course. Very. Have we finished our lesson?

PERCY: Ah ha, my darling, how can it finish if it has no end. By the way, do you like playing football?

Margot stares blankly.

MARGOT: Football?

Percy takes this as a negative.

PERCY: Well, walking then?

This she understands.

MARGOT: Yes, I like to go walking.

He claps his hands with glee.

PERCY: Then we shall go walking together. We shall walk for mile after mile. We shall go to Australia and walk. You'd love it there. The soft rolling countryside of South Australia. To walk from hamlet to hamlet over miles and miles of beautiful, untouched, rambling desert... It is the best country in the world, and we shall walk it together I shall walk you until you drop. I will walk you to exhaustion. Would you enjoy that?

MARGOT: Yes, I'm sure I would.

Percy is ecstatic.

PERCY: Ah ha... She would... She would enjoy it. Mother... Mother.

He calls out.

PERCY: Mother come quickly... come quickly.

Rose enters.

ROSE: What is the matter my boy?

PERCY: We are going to go walking... This blue eyes, pretty picture and I are going to walk together from Melbourne to Ballarat, from Ballarat to Bordertown, from Keith to Kiki, from Kanmantoo to Kensington.

Rose is quite dazzled by this outburst. She smiles warily.

ROSE: That should be very nice for you.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

In the blackout we hear a duet being played on the piano. Possibly "Chopsticks". Rose and Percy are revealed having a whale of a time trying to interfere with each other's playing. They are like two kids. Eventually they laugh so much that they have to stop. They end up in each other's arms, each supporting the other.

ROSE: Ha ha... Oh dear... you are a terror Percy Grainger!

PERCY: Me!!! I was trying to play properly.

ROSE: If only your audience could see you now!

PERCY: My reputation would be in tatters.

Rose is exhausted. She sits down in a comfortable chair.

ROSE: You should know better at your age Percy Grainger.

PERCY: Huh... How can a boy be expected to grow up when his mother is still such a girl!

ROSE: Mind your tongue.

PERCY: We do have such fun.

Rose sighs and gathers her thoughts.

ROSE: How is Margot progressing with her work?

PERCY: Quite well... She tries hard.

ROSE: She is very pretty don't you think?

Percy is immediately defensive.

PERCY: Oh yes, quite... quite pretty... In her own way.

ROSE: I would have thought you could be kinder than that.

PERCY: Yes... yes... She is pretty.

ROSE: She is also bright and intelligent, and she has the right physical characteristics.

PERCY: My darling, you know how busy I am. I don't have time to notice these things.

ROSE: Perks, you know how I detest dishonesty.

PERCY: Yes darling.

ROSE: Then tell me. Do you find her attractive?

Percy realises that Rose is backing him into a corner.

PERCY: Yes, I find her attractive, but...

ROSE: Then you should marry her.

Percy is shocked at the idea.

PERCY: Marry...! Me...? But what on earth are you saying? I am an artist, I cannot share my passions with anyone... except you.

ROSE: I have stood in your way for too long.

Percy goes to her. Rose is playing to a plan.

PERCY: Darling, no... I owe everything to you.

ROSE: I cannot expect to keep you forever. I am after all, only a mother.

PERCY: What are you saying?

ROSE: I shall be able to survive on my own. I am still well enough to give lessons, and I could take in boarders, and if I ever got lonely I could get myself a doggie or a budgerigar.

Percy is quite upset by Rose's suggestion.

PERCY: Mother no!

ROSE: But darling, I insist, and little Margot is obviously a perfect match for you. I worry about you, my boy, you should be married. A mother cannot be a wife as well. You should be married, then perhaps you would not have these strange sexual tastes, your blue roses. I'm sure a little wife would satisfy you. Besides I cannot live forever.

PERCY: But I could not live without you. You are everything to me. A wife!!! I am not the sort of man who could have a wife! I am afraid of being married. Afraid that my vital energy would be dissipated, made to conform to normal standards. I am too democratic to get married.

ROSE: You must not let me stand in the way of your desires.

PERCY: You don't.

ROSE: Your genius belongs to the world. I fear that I am monopolising you unfairly.

Percy is getting frantic. He has been presented with a terrible choice.

PERCY: You must not say these things. I only live for you. Everything I am is of your doing. How many times have you said that you only live through me?

But Rose is adamant.

ROSE: You must do as I say.

PERCY: But if I cannot?

ROSE: You will!

PERCY: No!

ROSE: We must be strong. You must marry this girl. It is the only way you can be happy. I am your mother after all. I know how fond you are of her. I have no wish to come between you and your happiness. After all, I am old and I am sick. My happiness counts for nought. You must make arrangements to marry her. She loves you and you love her, by what right can I interfere.

Percy is shattered. Rose continues.

ROSE: You must propose to her immediately. I would also suggest that you begin having sex with her as well. She might as well get to know your tastes, and besides, I don't think that it is good for my boy to be kept on the boil, so to speak. Your life is tense enough as it is. Yes, you must propose to her. Tell me when the deed is done.

She walks out briskly. Percy remains. He returns to the "heroic" style that we saw earlier.

PERCY: Was ever a man blessed with such a mother... A mother who so loves her son that she will sacrifice everything for his pleasure. If only I was worthy of her. If only I was not a base, low, cowardly creature without even a dog's sense of loyalty. I am not worthy, I am not worthy. Oh Thor, Oh Freya, what is to be done?

SCENE FOUR - A VICTORIAN RAILWAY STATION

Herman is sitting on a bench with his cello next to him. He is rugged up against the cold. Percy is in shirt sleeves only and has a rucksack with him. We move directly into this scene without a blackout.

HERMANN: My dear friend either put a coat on or go away, I freeze just to look at you.

PERCY: But it is not even cold, it is just cleansingly and invigoratingly cool.

He soaks up the cold air with some joy.

HERMANN: how you have not died from exposure before now is a source of constant amazement to me.

PERCY: It is because I am a Nordic Warrior. I must be fit and tough for battle. So far my only real fight has been with the elements, but I have conquered.

HERMANN: Yes you don't seem to have much trouble with the elements, but with some people you are quite one of the vanquished.

PERCY: What do you mean?

HERMANN: I do not understand why you tolerate the lack of freedom in your life. It is not manly.

PERCY: Freedom? Freedom means nothing to a composer. All he requires is to be free of the humdrum problems of the outside world so that he can be free to pursue his own work. What other freedom is necessary?

HERMANN: Why, freedom to meet with friends. Freedom to be able to talk without fear of intrusion. Why is your mother so jealous of us?

PERCY: She is not jealous, she just has superior plans for me, that is all. It is not my place or yours to quibble with them... Now, do you want something to eat?

HERMANN: What have you got?

PERCY: Cheese and stale bread.

HERMANN: No thank you.

Percy is surprised at his refusal.

PERCY: But it is the food of the Gods.

HERMANN: Then I never want to be a God again.

A wicked gleam is on Percy's face.

PERCY: I might be able to dig up an old piece of black pudding.

HERMANN: You know I don't eat flesh.

PERCY: Yes, I do, and it makes me feel very sorry for those poor vegetables.

HERMANN: Sorry? Why?

PERCY: I have seen the terrible things you do as you wreak havoc on the poor things.

HERMANN: Whatever are you talking about?

PERCY: Your cruelty and ill-treatment of vegetables. The way you rip out the heart of the lettuce and then tear strips off an innocent pea-pod, or skin a poor carrot alive. It seems quite extraordinary in a normally gentle creature like you.

HERMANN: Perks, you are quite mad... How much longer must we wait for this train?

But Percy has not finished with the matter of cruelty yet.

PERCY: Whereas, of course, such pleasure-taking at the sight of pain is entirely consistent and only to be expected from someone as disgusting as me.

HERMANN: Oh yes, of course, dear Perks, you are a regular tyrant.

PERCY: I am serious.

Hermann continues, however to treat him mockingly.

HERMANN: I never for one moment thought otherwise my dear friend.

PERCY: Good. I always thought that you could see though my pathetically soft exterior, but the problem is, how do I explain my inner nature to Margot. The poor girl thinks that butter wouldn't melt in my mouth.

HERMANN: Perhaps, with luck, she will never find out.

PERCY: Oh no, I must tell her. I must make a clean breast of it.

HERMANN: All in good time perhaps.

PERCY: But my intentions towards the girl are entirely dishonourable.

Hermann is starting to wake up to what Percy is trying to say.

HERMANN: Are they?

PERCY: Why of course. It is in man's nature to want to destroy everything over which he has power.

Hermann is taken aback.

HERMANN: Is it?

PERCY: Yes... As a boy, didn't you want to pull the wings off flies and burn caterpillars with lighted matches?

HERMANN: Well yes... But I did those things out of curiosity, not for pleasure.

PERCY: I got enormous pleasure out of doing that sort of thing and I still do... It's the little boy in me.

HERMANN: When do you get time to catch flies?

PERCY: Not flies, pain. I get a lot of pleasure out of pain. Don't you?

Hermann ponders for a moment.

HERMANN: No... I only get pain out of pain.

PERCY: Then I am sorry for you.

HERMANN: It's alright... I get a lot of pleasure out of pleasure.

PERCY: I don't think that is very manly myself.

HERMANN: What has manliness got to do with it?

PERCY: A man has got to show himself to be tough. To be able to grow powerful out of suffering pain, and having proved himself manly then it is his job to use his power and strength to make women cower.

Hermann can barely believe his ears.

HERMANN: Is it?

PERCY: Oh yes... Otherwise women simply run away and giggle. A man has to have the strength to tie the women down, to stop her running away and he has to whip her to stop her giggling, just as a stallion sinks his teeth into the mare's neck as he mounts her. All of my sexual pleasure comes out of this cruel joy.

HERMANN: And what does your mother think of these habits?

PERCY: She disapproves. She claims to be ashamed of me.

HERMANN: Is that why she doesn't leave you alone with your friends for very long.

PERCY: No that has nothing to do with it. She's just the one who arranges my partners for me. She just doesn't understand. But you see I enjoy suffering pain as well as giving it. I like to whip myself until the blood flows... then my pleasure is at its greatest. But inflicting pain is also fun. To see red welts on white skin. I love the sight of white, pure, full breasts and yet all I want to do is to whip, burn, slash and desecrate them... Do you find that strange?

HERMANN: I have heard of such things before, but still, yes, I find it strange.

PERCY: To me it is the most natural desire in the world. I suppose you don't ever whip Alfild?

HERMANN: No... not often. She might whip me back.

PERCY: All the better.

HERMANN: And Margot? She is unaware?

PERCY: Quite deliciously, mind teasingly, innocent at the moment. But I must tell her. Her fair, sweet complexion is tempting in the extreme. How do you think she will react?

HERMANN: I think she will be surprised.

Percy ignores Hermann's understatement.

PERCY: But will she understand?

HERMANN: Can you not break it to her gently and then see what happens.

PERCY: Yes, but how?

HERMANN: Why not push her down a small flight of stairs and see whether she laughs or cries.

PERCY: You mock me Hermann. I thought better of you. You of all people who have stood by me when all else have abandoned me as being a joke. You mock me.

HERMANN: I'm sorry Perks, I agree, your problem is serious.

PERCY: More serious than you realise my friend.

HERMANN: Oh, why?

PERCY: Well, if Margot should be too shocked then I will lose her, and I don't want that to happen. On the other hand, if she accepts me, warts and all, then we will get married I suppose, and still I lose.

HERMANN: Lose what?

PERCY: Well my beautiful mother of course. Was ever any son faced with such a dilemma?

HERMANN: Here is the train at last.

Percy stands up.

PERCY: Yes, well enjoy your trip my friend.

HERMANN: What do you mean, my trip...? Aren't you coming?

PERCY: No I feel restless, there are things that I want to think about. I'll walk.

Herman is shocked.

HERMANN: Walk!!! But it is twenty miles.

PERCY: Yes, an excellent distance for a midnight ramble. It'll clean away a few cobwebs. Don't worry though dear friend, I shall be there in plenty of time for the concert.

Percy throws his rucksack over his shoulder and walks off. Hermann shakes his head in disbelief, then calls after him.

HERMANN: At least take my overcoat. I shan't need it and it will keep you dry.

There is no reply. Hermann laughs and waits for the train.

SCENE FIVE- THE GRAINGER HOUSE IN LONDON

Percy is still pondering his problem as Margot enters.

MARGOT: Percy, I was told to tell you that supper is ready... Perks... Is something wrong?

PERCY: I've just been thinking back on old times... Memories.

MARGOT: Fond ones?

PERCY: All memories are fond.

MARGOT: Even painful ones?

PERCY: Most especially painful ones.

MARGOT: What do you mean?

He hesitates and changes course slightly.

PERCY: We must keep everything.

MARGOT: Why?

PERCY: So that... so that others will know the reasons.

MARGOT: The reasons for what?

PERCY: For our genius, of course.

MARGOT: Oh.

PERCY: Everything must be kept. The good, the bad... the light and the dark. Everything.

MARGOT: Yes, I suppose.

PERCY: Think how much has been lost already. Most of our Anglo Saxon folk history has gone... we've got to preserve what we have left of our stories, our music, our language.

MARGOT: Oh, I thought you meant...

PERCY: Everything... everything we think or do. The memory, the collection of things that have happened is more important than the actual event, don't you think?

MARGOT: I wouldn't have thought so.

PERCY: Of course it is. If I make a piano roll record of a performance, the performance itself fades into insignificance but the roll, the memory, the record... that becomes very important. It's like our myths and legends. Who cares if there was ever a real Red Riding Hood? Or what she was like; who cares about real Trolls, Werewolves or Robin Hoods, the stories are good because of what they tell us about ourselves, the dark recesses of our own racial past. They are art... That is what art is.

MARGOT: But they are just fairy stories to be told to children before they go to sleep. They are not significant.

PERCY: But of course they are. They are stories that are truly significant, so significant they have been handed down from generation to generation.

MARGOT: Or perhaps so trivial that they can be remembered by even the most simple minds.

PERCY: No... no... no. You are being stupid, you are being girlish.

MARGOT: How can you say that! Just because you disagree!

PERCY: I suspect that the old stories are not meant for women, they are written in a code that only men understand and respond to.

MARGOT: How absurd, I understand them, I simply don't think that they amount to anything.

PERCY: Of course you don't. That is because they are Art. Art is for men. Art is manly. Art is about violence and death. Art is brutal, selfish, wilful. Art is about sex, about men,

MARGOT: No, Art is about ideals and beauty. How arrogant to claim all that for men.

PERCY: Women may be the subjects of great Art, but they can never be the creators of it because it is men who are driven in a mad passionate fury to create, to set down their violent inner beings for all to see. Artists want to control women by fixing them forever on a canvas or manuscript or in a statue. Art is about subjugation.

MARGOT: But where is the beauty?

PERCY: Fixed, controlled... bound hand and foot and gagged.

MARGOT: But you said Art was about sex, all you have talked about is violence.

Rose enters.

ROSE: Ah there you two are. Have you forgotten about supper?

MARGOT: Oh sorry... I did pass on the message.

ROSE: I'm glad to hear it. And you Percy, have you passed on my message to Margot?

MARGOT: What message is that?

PERCY: No mother, not yet!

MARGOT: What is the message?

ROSE: Margot darling, Percy would like to ask for your hand in marriage.

MARGOT: Would he?

PERCY: Yes, I would.

MARGOT: Well, will you?

PERCY: Yes I will.

MARGOT: When?

ROSE: Go on.

PERCY: Now.

MARGOT: Well?

PERCY: Will you?

MARGOT: I'll think about it.

Rose claps her hands with satisfaction.

ROSE: Splendid, I'll have Lucy move your things straight away.

Margot reacts.

MARGOT: Move them where?

ROSE: In with Perks of course.

MARGOT: I only said that I would think about it.

ROSE: Certainly, but you'll want to know what it's like first.

Margot is dumbfounded. Percy tries to help.

PERCY: I think what mother is suggesting...

MARGOT: Is that we live in sin!

ROSE: Sin! Piffle! What a silly word. I think that you should get to know each other. That is all.

MARGOT: I feel I know Percy very well by now.

ROSE: That may very well be, but he is not sure yet that he knows you well enough. And it is very important that he does feel confident about his choice. Don't forget, you will be replacing me in my son's affections and he needs to be sure that you will come up to scratch... After all, it is not easy looking after a man of his brilliance.

MARGOT: No, I can see that.

Rose burns.

MARGOT: But I am willing to try.

Percy is very agitated.

PERCY: Is it absolutely necessary that Margot replace you Mother? Is there not some other solution?

ROSE: Of course not. Two is company, three is perverse. Besides, if you take a wife you must commit all of your personal energies to her. You cannot afford, in your position to have divided allegiances. Isn't that right Margot?

Margot ponders for a moment and then decides to take up the gauntlet that has been thrown down to her. She answers Rose with defiance.

MARGOT: Yes, that is absolutely right.

Percy is clearly caught in the middle of these two warring factions. He retreats into his "heroic" fantasy again. The poem is "Mowgli's Song" (Modified from Kipling's "Jungle Book") which Percy set to music.

PERCY: (Spoken) The only son lay down again,
And dreamed that he dreamed a dream.
(Sung) For I have dreamed of a shaggy hide
whereon I went to rest.
And was I born of woman-kind

And laid on a fathers arm.
For I have dreamed of clashing teeth
That guarded me from harm.
And was I born an only son,
And did I play alone?
For I have dreamed of comrades twain
That bit me to the bones.
But I must out and see,
If those be wolves that wait outside.
Or my own kin to me.
She closed the bar, she slid the bolt,
She opened the door anon.
And a grey bitch wolf came out of the dark
And fawned on the only son.

He repeats the last two lines, speaking them.

SCENE SIX - SOME TIME LATER

Rose and Margot are together. Rose is writing, Margot is reading.

ROSE: I have had a letter from your father agreeing, in principle to the marriage.

MARGOT: Oh good.

ROSE: He seems a very nice man.

MARGOT: He is.

ROSE: He is to be admired for producing such a beautiful daughter.

MARGOT: Thank you.

Margot nods graciously, but ever so slightly suspicious.

ROSE: Percy and I are both very impressed with your progress.

MARGOT: It's all due to the wonderful atmosphere you have created.

ROSE: Such a pity it cannot go on.

Margot is now quite suspicious, but she keeps calm.

MARGOT: What cannot go on?

ROSE: Your lessons.

MARGOT: I see no reason for them to stop.

ROSE: Oh no, it will be quite impossible.

MARGOT: Why?

ROSE: There simply will be no time.

MARGOT: Why?

ROSE: But my dear, you will be my son's wife!

MARGOT: Yes.

ROSE: He needs a lot of looking after.

MARGOT: Oh come now, Mrs Grainger. Perks is a mature man. He is thirty three years old. He does not need apron strings to support him.

ROSE: Of course not. I have no such silly domestic idea in mind, but Percy nevertheless needs help with his business affairs, he has no idea of money, and with the organization of his days. There is also the matter of providing him with objective criticism of his work. He needs a strong hand in that area.

MARGOT: I have agreed to marry Percy, not to become his managing director.

ROSE: I don't care for sarcasm, young lady. This matter is serious.

Margot softens her approach.

MARGOT: But these tasks you have mentioned are all jobs that you carry out splendidly, why should I have to take them from you?

ROSE: There can only be room for one woman in Percy's life. If he chooses to marry then his wife must become that one woman.

MARGOT: I appreciate the need for fidelity in a marriage, however...

Rose reacts angrily. It is clear that her anger is motivated by a degree of irrationality over which Margot has no control.

ROSE: Fidelity has nothing to do with it. I am not talking about morality, you stupid girl. I am talking about commitment. About my son's need to have a central focus... This is what I am talking about.

MARGOT: I'm sorry, but I am rather confused.

Rose calms herself.

ROSE: Once my son decides on a wife, then my role in his life will be over. I will be like a schoolteacher handing over her class to the next grade. I will say, "here he is, I have done all I can for him. I have encouraged all his best qualities and done all I can to discourage all his bad. I have seen that he has been well fed, well clothed, that he has read widely, studied hard and achieved much"... That is all I can do. Now I hand him over and retire from the scene, completely. There can be no half way. And then, I will wait, thinking of him, hoping that he thinks of me. I will wait, knowing that even in death, I live on through him.

Margot is sympathetic, She speaks softly.

MARGOT: But my dear Mrs Grainger, you know that is impossible. Percy is far too attached to you. If we marry, I realise that I would never have him entirely to myself. Even if you were to go back to Australia, even if you were to die, I know that I would always be sharing him.

Again Rose reacts angrily.

ROSE: No, he is not like a peeled orange to be dished out in segments. You must take all of him, or none at all.

MARGOT: We will come to some arrangement.

Rose starts to display and increasing, and more obvious insanity.

ROSE: There are things you do not know. Things you cannot know until I have gone. Then you will see that I am right. Then you will hate me as much as I hate myself, then you will hate me as much as my son hates me. I have been cursed by his father and suffered under the spell. Oh Percy forgive me... I love you my son... Oh the pain... the headaches.

Margot is worried. She does her best to comfort the old woman.

MARGOT: It's alright... I'll get Perks for you.

Rose becomes officious again.

ROSE: Don't you move!

MARGOT: But you are not well.

ROSE: Keep away from him.

MARGOT: I'm sure he will know what to do.

ROSE: He is not to be disturbed.

Margot is in a dilemma.

MARGOT: I want to get him... for you.

ROSE: There is time for that. Right now he is busy.

MARGOT: But Rose!

ROSE: He must compose. He must have three hours uninterrupted work every day.

MARGOT: But surely this is important.

ROSE: Nothing, nothing can be more important than my son's work... If you do not accept that principle then you are not fit to be his wife.

MARGOT: It will not take long.

Rose screams.

ROSE: I forbid it... I absolutely and expressly forbid it!

MARGOT: Please... let me get him, for you.

ROSE: You stupid, fawning little bitch. What right have you got to ask anything. To think anything. You will do as you are told and nothing more.

Margot digs her heels in.

MARGOT: I will do as I wish.

ROSE: You will do as we wish. Your wishes are of no consequence.

MARGOT: This is absurd. I am not your maid, I am to marry your son.

Rose has now manipulated the situation to suit her own ends.

ROSE: You are not good enough for him. By what right do you think that you can come in here and brazenly take my son away from me. From me! His mother! The one who made him into a genius, who made him the toast of the musical world, the friend of royalty, the companion of the famous! By what right, you simpering, silly girl, do you think that you should have any hold on my son. The most wonderful, precious child any mother could have. By what right?

Margot realises that she cannot win.

MARGOT: I am sorry... I have made a mistake.

Rose is victorious. She calls out.

ROSE: Percy... Percy... Come here!

MARGOT: But Rose... there is still one hour!

Rose ignores her.

ROSE: Percy... Perks.

Percy enters.

PERCY: Yes my darling?

ROSE: I think you should reconsider your decision.

PERCY: Which decision are you talking about, my sweet?

ROSE: Margot and I have been talking. I don't think she is suitable.

PERCY: Are you not well, my sweet?

Rose almost collapses.

ROSE: Hold me in your arms, my son... hold me... I love you.

PERCY: Come... come on... We'll lie down... You must not tax yourself so.

He starts to take her out. He supports her firmly.

ROSE: Oh my boy... oh my darling boy... Tell me that you love me... Tell me... I am a woman and a mother, I need a great deal of love.

PERCY: Of course I love you. I love you above all else... Now come on my darling.

Margot watches these antics with a grim face. After they have left she stands a moment and considers. She arrives at her decision, which is obviously to get out, and begins immediately to gather together all her belongings in the room (i.e. music books, novels, etc). Percy re-enters quite buoyant, the previous scene apparently no longer affecting him.

PERCY: What are you doing?

MARGOT: Collecting my things.

PERCY: Oh.

Margot is brooding. She eventually says what is on her mind.

MARGOT: Why don't you stand up to her?

PERCY: To whom?

MARGOT: Your mother.

PERCY: But a son has no right to do such a thing.

MARGOT: But you are a man, a grown man, you must stand up to her.

PERCY: Ah ha, but there you are wrong. In fact, I am not grown up at all. I have, luckily, remained as a boy all these years. And like a boy I must obey and love my mother in all things. And also like a boy, my nature is at once exuberant and jolly and also cruel and nasty.

MARGOT: Cruel and nasty boys are not usually obedient.

PERCY: I know, but if their mothers love them they get punished for their disobedience.

MARGOT: And if their wives love them?

PERCY: Why all this talk of love...? A wife need not love her man, she needs only to lust after him. Lust is a much healthier emotion, it doesn't carry with it the all embracing commitment that love implies. Lust is free and spontaneous. It is lust that draws me to you, and you to me.

MARGOT: No, I desire you because you are gentle and sweet. You are funny and generous and peculiar and very clever. That is why I love you.

PERCY: But I am the foulest, most violent creature imaginable. If only you knew the depths of my madness, the dark secrets that I am afraid to tell, then you would realise that I am a creature to lust after, but never to love. Only a mother could love a tragic, cruel person like me.

MARGOT: Then I assume you have changed your mind about marrying me.

PERCY: No... no... no.

MARGOT: But you can only be loved by your mother, you must in return, only be able to love her.

PERCY: You keep coming back to that terrible word.

MARGOT: Do you expect me to marry you when you cannot love me? What sort of life do you expect me to live?

PERCY: But I would be generous. I would shower you with gifts, I would give you a fine house, everything you could want. I would not be jealous if you wanted other lovers. I would not object to anything you did, and we would have a most active and vigorous, lustful life.

Margot is unimpressed.

MARGOT: Isn't that love?

PERCY: It is lust that makes the blood rush faster, the heart beat quicker.

MARGOT: So your mother is to take care of your love life, whereas I, as your wife, am to be content with your lusts.

PERCY: Yes.

MARGOT: Even if I were to accept that Rose is not prepared to share you. She has made it clear that it is all or nothing.

PERCY: Please stay. I will talk to her. She was not well today,

MARGOT: And if I do stay? What will you tell her?

PERCY: It is difficult for her... she has these moods. But I will reassure her.

MARGOT: Oh good!

PERCY: She will agree eventually. She will realise just how much I need you.

MARGOT: Oh splendid. Well as soon as you have convinced her that all is right with the world, then you can try and convince me.

PERCY: Convince you of what?

MARGOT: That I should share you with her.

She turns on her heels and walks briskly out. Percy is under pressure again. Once more he looks to the mythical past for guidance.

PERCY: I am Mowgli, raised by a wolf. I am Mowgli suckled by dog's dirty breast. I am the werewolf that must wreak havoc on mere men until my curse is done. I am the werewolf who wants to eat Red Riding Hood and the mother; to consumer, to possess, to savage them. I the wolf want to rip out the guts of the girl, want to grip her pure breasts with fish hooks and pull her to me. I the wolf want to molest and destroy, rape and slash her clean white flesh. I want to mix my sperm with her blood. I, the wolf, want to ravish and violate, to assault and outrage all generations of women. I the wolf will have the girl and the mother too... But where is the hunter come to punish the wolf. To cut off his head. Where is the hunter with his axe come to cut off... to cut off... to cut off...

Percy has picked up a whip and is whipping himself as Rose enters.

ROSE: One day I will come and cut off that part of you that makes you do these awful things.

Percy is surprised at her entrance.

PERCY: Mother?

ROSE: I don't understand what possesses you to like these blue roses Perks.

Percy looks at the whip and smiles.

PERCY: Either do I... but I shall be eternally grateful to you.

ROSE: To me?

PERCY: Why of course... It was through you that I learned about the pleasures of the whip. It really is a wonderful boon.

ROSE: But you are such a good boy in other ways. I find it difficult to be proud of a son who has such strange fancies. Perhaps after you are married things will be different.

PERCY: I suppose so.

ROSE: Have you thought more about it?

PERCY: Constantly.

ROSE: Perhaps the thought of having children might change your attitudes.

Percy nods and continues to chat in a very matter-of-fact way.

PERCY: Oh yes, I should like to have children.

ROSE: Good. It is only right for a man to want to continue his line.

PERCY: Yes... and I would be very kind to them, and I would treat them well and not whip them until they were old enough to give their approval... You know Mother, the idea of whipping children is one of the most stimulating mind pictures I have.

Rose is aghast.

ROSE: Darling!

PERCY: And if I had daughters I should very much like to train them early into the ways of sex. To open their eyes to the way of the world without shame or embarrassment. Why should not a father and

daughter be able to share their pleasure? I think that would be the purest possible expression of love, don't you?

ROSE: Oh my son... why do you do this to me?

Percy goes to the piano and plays a lively, brisk, lovely version of "Country Gardens". Rose leaves and is replaced by Margot.

SCENE SEVEN

MARGOT: You seem very strange today, my darling.

PERCY: No stranger than normal, surely.

MARGOT: You seem... different.

Percy ignores her worries.

PERCY: Do you lust after me?

MARGOT: Yes... of course.

He grins wickedly.

PERCY: My mind is full of pictures of you.

MARGOT: You don't need to imagine me, I am here, in the flesh.

PERCY: Would you raise your skirts so that I might look at you?

Margot withdraws with mock horror.

MARGOT: Why, Percy Grainger!

PERCY: Please?

She demurely shows a bit of ankle.

PERCY: No, higher than that.

Her skirts are raised to her knees.

PERCY: I want to see the tender, white, full flesh of your thighs.

She holds her skirts to her waist. Percy admires them.

PERCY: Yes, they are very nice... like purest silk... Now bend over.

Margot is curious.

MARGOT: Are these exercises aimed at making me a better pianist?

PERCY: No... a better lover.

She bends over.

PERCY: Support yourself on the piano.

MARGOT: What is that for?

PERCY: Just do as you are told... Now I want to see your bum.

Margot is getting a bit worried.

MARGOT: But Perks... what if Rose should?

PERCY: She won't.

She raises her skirts over her waist again.

PERCY: Are you comfortable.

MARGOT: Oh yes, as comfortable as can be...

PERCY: I said I wanted to see your bum.

He wrenches her bloomers down. Margot is surprised.

MARGOT: Percy!

PERCY: Don't move.

She stays.

MARGOT: Can we not go to your bedroom?

He ignores her as he admires her bum.

PERCY: Your bum is so white, so clear, so unmarked.

MARGOT: Why should it be otherwise?

PERCY: You know, you are not progressing as well with your music as you should.

MARGOT: I don't get time to practice.

PERCY: You must be punished.

Margot laughs and turns to put her arms around his neck.

MARGOT: Punished! Oh Percy darling, whatever are you talking about?

He pushes her back down and holds her there by her hair.

PERCY: You ungrateful, untalented, wretched girl. How dare you come here and waste my valuable time.

He smacks her on the bum. She screams.

MARGOT: I will try harder in future.

PERCY: I know you will, for I will give you a lesson you will never forget.

He smacks her again.

MARGOT: Percy, stop it... You have no right...

PERCY: I have every right. You are a very disobedient pupil.

Smack.

MARGOT: That is enough Perks, it's not funny!

PERCY: Of course not... I am deadly serious (*smack*)... This is not a game... Now keep still... Do as you are told... (*smack*)

MARGOT: (Screams) Stop it! Stop It!

PERCY: Now that I have put some colour in your cheeks, don't you feel invigorated?

MARGOT: No...! Let me go!

She starts to lash out and kick at him in an attempt to get away.

PERCY: Well then, my flighty young mare, this calls for the horse whip!

As he reaches for the whip Margot struggles free.

MARGOT: No!!!

PERCY: Oh yes, I really must lay waste to your beautiful body.

MARGOT: What are you saying? Why are you doing this? Perks...!

She backs away as Percy approaches her with the whip.

PERCY: You will enjoy it I am sure.

MARGOT: No...! I don't want to... Stop it!! Stop it!!

She screams.

PERCY: But darling the joy is exquisite. You cannot imagine how wonderful it feels.

Margot is starting to sob hysterically.

MARGOT: I thought you loved me.

PERCY: I didn't say that... I said that I had great lust for you. And now I suddenly have an overwhelming desire to see your breasts. Are they as milky white as your bum was?

MARGOT: What have I done to hurt you...? Why don't you love me?

Percy ignores her and just hones in on her breasts.

PERCY: Please Margot, undo your bodice, please. I just want to look.

He lunges at her, they struggle but she manages to break away. She stands staring wildly at him. Perks appears to be repentant.

PERCY: Have I been awfully bad?

Margot won't answer.

PERCY: Here... you must punish me. I should never have suggested these things.

She stares at him.

PERCY: Please... whip me mercilessly... humiliate me... I am not worthy.

Margot shakes her head, realising the dilemma that Percy is in.

MARGOT: Oh Perks... I am sorry.

Percy is now quite worked up.

PERCY: How can I have you like you are? You are still buried in the sand... Still up to your neck in sand. Whip me, whip me with three rods that I might save you. Let me suffer so that I can see your milky white breasts. Let me suffer again with six rods that I can see your waist and your bum and your lovely white thighs. Let me suffer a third time with nine rods, my Princess, so that I

can have you and possess you. I am willing... Let me feel the pain... Whip me... Whip me...

Rose enters.

ROSE: Perks... What are you doing?

PERCY: Blue roses mother... She won't give me her blue roses.

Margot in confused and frightened.

MARGOT: I do love him Mrs Grainger, but not in that way.

Rose is very blunt with her.

ROSE: Then I think you should go.

MARGOT: Go? But we are betrothed... I cannot just "go". We must talk about it. I will try to understand.

ROSE: That cannot be I am afraid.

But Margot is not yet ready to give in completely.

MARGOT: But in the eyes of the world I am... I am taken... accounted for... What I am to do?

But Rose is just waiting for her to leave.

MARGOT: Percy...? What do you really want?

But Percy has sat down and is letting Rose talk for him.

ROSE: I think it is quite clear what he wants. It would never have worked out girl. He is not fit to marry, he is a dirty shameful boy.

MARGOT: I don't understand... Why did he want to do it?

ROSE: It's all for the best I am sure.

Margot persists.

MARGOT: Is this your choice Percy? Is this what you really want?

ROSE: As you can see girl, my son is quite overcome with disappointment, but it must be obvious, even to you, that you are not well matched. You are not quite the right type for Perks... So would you leave now please? As soon as possible, thank you.

Rose shows Margot to the door.

MARGOT: Oh Percy!

She leaves... Percy runs to Rose and they embrace.

PERCY: Oh Mother Mother Mother... Are you happy with my choice?

ROSE: It's all for the best my boy... My clever, shameful boy.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE- THE GRAINGER HOUSE IN LONDON

Percy is at the piano practicing or rehearsing. Hermann enters. He is in the uniform of the Danish Army. He shouts at Percy to get his attention.

HERMANN: Percy...! Perks...!

Percy looks up and beams as he sees his friend.

PERCY: Hermann, my dear Hermann, I am so pleased to see you!

They embrace warmly.

PERCY: But what is this uniform...? Have you joined the Boy Scouts?

HERMANN: No.

PERCY: Don't tell me your silly wife has made you join the Salvo's...

HERMANN: No, I have enlisted for the Danish Army. There is a war on you know Percy.

PERCY: Hmm...

HERMANN: And they need Nordic warriors like us.

Percy reacts to this line of argument.

PERCY: No... not warriors. Modern wars do not want warriors, they want cannon fodder. They want trigger pullers and lever pushers. This war is not a real war between trained healthy men, it's a war between machines.

Hermann remains unmoved.

HERMANN: They need men to operate the machines.

PERCY: They let them have them. There are plenty of trained machine users around, but they are not going to waste good warriors... Don't go Hermann.

HERMANN: But I must.

PERCY: Stay here... stay with us, and when the time is ripe we'll run away together.

HERMANN: No.

PERCY: It is such a waste. A warrior should only have to fight in hand to hand combat. He should fight with guile and cunning and strength. Modern warfare does not appreciate these warrior qualities.

HERMANN: Oh Perks... If I did not know you better I would suspect that you were simply afraid.

PERCY: Afraid? Oh what...? Pain?

HERMANN: I said, if I didn't know you better.

PERCY: Hmm.

HERMANN: It is going to be difficult to avoid fighting. Anyone who doesn't enlist will be under suspicion.

PERCY: Then I'll be a conscientious objector.

HERMANN: You spent a lot of time in your youth in Germany...

PERCY: But I despise the Germans.

HERMANN: I know of many men who have received white feathers through the mail.

Percy is beginning to see the seriousness of the situation.

PERCY: I see.

HERMANN: Of course, here in England it may be different. After all, this is an island... it will not be under direct threat. Perhaps attitudes will be different here, but in Denmark we are at risk... Germany is at our doorstep. It will be a struggle.

Percy ponders the news for a moment, but finds it distasteful.

PERCY: Yes, a terrible struggle and a terrible choice... Well what other news have you got for me? Have you seen any of the gang?

HERMANN: Huh... I am here on a brief visit and yet you ask me for the news. You are the one who should have all the delicious tit bits.

PERCY: Oh no... I am so dull that no-one ever bothers to pass on anything to me. I am so dull that my fiancé broke off our engagement. No my friend, I haven't heard any gossip.

HERMANN: Yes, I am sorry to hear that Margot was no longer going to marry you.

PERCY: Eventually she realised just what a terrible person I am. But I see that you have not been exactly out of contact with the gossipers. Who told you about Margot?

Hermann is defensive.

HERMANN: Oh... a... friend. Have the stories not got back to you?

PERCY: What stories?

Hermann is reluctant, but he goes on.

HERMANN: Margot appears to have spread some outrageous rumours.

PERCY: About me?

HERMANN: Yes... you really should be more careful Perks.

PERCY: More careful of what...? Silly ignorant rumour mongers who are totally fooled by my music. Why should my violent nature surprise them? My music is all violent, my playing is all bloodthirsty. Why should they expect my sex life to be any different.

HERMANN: It's not just that.

PERCY: If they snigger behind their fans then they should snigger at many others. At Rousseau and Swinburne, at Goldsmith and Butler. Flagellation has a proud and honoured tradition.

HERMANN: My darling Percy, your whips are laughed at, but the rumours are more sinister than that.

Percy is suddenly less sure of himself.

PERCY: What do you mean?

Hermann pauses.

HERMANN: They involve Rose as well.

PERCY: Mother...? But she is an angel.. she is pure... What can...?

HERMANN: Margot claims that you could not love her because you are too deeply in love with your mother.

Percy does not react to this news.

PERCY: Yes, that's right.

HERMANN: But don't you see?

PERCY: No.

HERMANN: They say that you don't live as mother and son, but rather as husband and wife.

Now Percy is shocked. He says nothing.

HERMANN: I'm sorry Percy, but that is what they are saying.

Percy recovers and responds coldly to Hermann.

PERCY: Well it's been splendid seeing you again, my friend. Goodbye.

Hermann hesitates, but then gets the picture.

HERMANN: Yes... yes... Alright... Auf Wiedersehn (or Danish equivalent)

Herman leaves. Percy sits down at the piano and fiddles. He is obviously in considerable turmoil. Rose enters.

ROSE: Now my Darling, you know what we do to boys who waste their time at practice.

Percy ignores her and continues tinkling.

ROSE: Perks... Stop this nonsense. If you are not going to play properly then get away from the keyboard. I abhor carelessness with instruments.

Percy tries to steer to subject away from the main problem in his mind.

PERCY: I have just seen Hermann. He has joined the Army.

ROSE: But he is a foreigner.

PERCY: The Danish Army.

ROSE: Oh.

PERCY: I think I should enlist.

Rose is horrified at the idea.

ROSE: Good Heavens no. You are a genius. Geniuses can't be expected to throw their lives away uselessly... After all, you are Australia's first composer of note, if you were to die it would set the cause back many years... I will forbid it.

Percy is noticeably distant.

PERCY: It would seem silly.

ROSE: Precisely. What other news did Hermann bring?

Percy tries to conceal the information but he cannot.

PERCY: Rumours.

ROSE: What does that mean?

PERCY: Margot has spread rumours about us.

ROSE: Then you have only yourself to blame. You are a lovely boy, a son that any mother could be proud to call her own... if it was not for your peculiar tastes.

PERCY: The rumours are about us!

ROSE: Do you mean that I am involved?

PERCY: Yes.

ROSE: Oh Perks...! How?

PERCY: They say our love is unnatural. That we live together as if... as if...

ROSE: As if what?

PERCY: As if we were married.

Rose is shocked.

ROSE: Oh... oh... my boy... my beautiful boy... It is not true, you must tell them it is not true.

PERCY: We must be brave.

ROSE: But why would anyone think that? Where would they have got the idea?

PERCY: I don't know... Whatever can we do?

Rose is clearly determined.

ROSE: We must leave.

PERCY: But mother.

ROSE: We no longer belong in England.

PERCY: But my darling, I have months of bookings.

ROSE: They must be cancelled. This country has become putrid with decadence. It is no longer the sort of place where pure minded people, brought up in Australia's clean atmosphere, can expect to live.

PERCY: But where can we go? The world is at war... Australia is at war.

Rose considers for a moment.

ROSE: America is not. They at least have retained a perspective. We shall move to America the Land of Hope and Glory.

Percy is delighted at the idea.

PERCY: My darling, you are brilliant. America...! The land of Whitman and Foster. A new life... a healthy life. (He sings) "Gwine to run all night, Gwine to run all day, I bet my money on the bob tailed nag, somebody to bet on the bay.

ROSE: We must move quickly Percy... and secretly. I don't want you to get conscripted by any press gangs.

Percy is quite excited.

PERCY: No... We will slip out of England under cover of night. We will travel of stealth... perhaps stowaway on a cargo ship and live for weeks cramped in a lifeboat, surviving on stale bread and cheese and drinking only rainwater. Oh it will be fun!

Rose has other ideas.

ROSE: We will get a first class cabin on a first class liner with a blue ribbon ship's surgeon. You forget my son that I am in constant pain... Now we must prepare.

PERCY: Yes Mother... (he muses)... Perhaps the ship will sink and we will have to take life-rafts in blizzard conditions... But never fear my dear, I will see you safely to the other side, even if I die in the process.

ROSE: A new adventure for us both.

Percy plays "Stars Spangles Banner" as we move across to the good old U.S of A.

SCENE TWO - THE GRAINGER HOME IN NEW YORK.

Percy continues to play as Rose, slumped in a chair gives orders to Colleen, the maid. Colleen is rearranging the furniture to suit Rose's taste.

ROSE: ...And put that low stool by the chair so that I may rest my foot on it... My leg is in almost constant pain. If I get comfortable, I might be able to sleep here, which will be a blessing. I very rarely get much sleep these days. I do miss my darling son when he is on tour.

COLLEEN: Yes Ma'am. You two seem to be very close.

ROSE: But he doesn't write often enough. He should write to his mother twice a day.

COLLEEN: He seems to most days, Ma'am.

ROSE: But not every day. I feel so terribly low when he is not here. He is all I have in the world... I keep getting these awful headaches. He must write me and tell me that he loves me... Do you think he enjoys all these tours Colleen?

COLLEEN: He must get some pleasure out of it Ma'am.

Rose starts to fret at this news.

ROSE: But he has no right to... He is to work when he is away from me. He must be loyal. He must be devoted.

COLLEEN: I'm sure he is Ma'am.

Rose becomes suspicious.

ROSE: Have you heard about him...? My famous son?

COLLEEN: Why of course Ma'am. There are stories about him in the paper almost everyday.

Rose panics.

ROSE: Stories...? Rumours... Oh my son, we are being pursued! Why aren't you here to help me? Why aren't you here?

Percy enters. He sees Rose despondent in her chair and moves across to her. She starts suddenly and slaps him.

ROSE: Where have you been?

She goes to slap him again, but this time he catches her wrist.

PERCY: I don't like to be slapped like a child.

Rose is quite irrational.

ROSE: You hate me don't you? You cannot hide it from me

Percy is very gentle with her.

PERCY: No my Darling... I don't hate you at all... Have you been sleeping well whilst I have been away?

Rose starts to cry.

ROSE: No, it has been awful. I have barely slept in all that time.

PERCY: My poor Princess.

ROSE: And headaches... at times I cannot open my eyes. Oh Perks, I do not want to go blind, for if I was blind I could not see my darling boy.

PERCY: I am back now, my darling. I shall look after you.

ROSE: You must never go away again.

Percy suddenly changes the subject.

PERCY: I almost forgot. I have some wonderful gifties for my angel. Close your eyes.

ROSE: Presents...! Oh Perks, you are a lovely boy.

Percy opens a rucksack that he has with him.

PERCY: Look a beautiful beaded headband that I bought from a Navajo village in Nevada... and this lovely pair of moccasins. I do love Indian beadwork.

ROSE: Oh Perks, they are quite superb.

She holds them up to admire them, then she sees something else in the rucksack that catches her attention.

ROSE: But what is this?

Percy is embarrassed. It is an Army shirt.

PERCY: An Army shirt, Mother. I have joined the Army.

Rose is shocked.

ROSE: Oh my boy... Oh my sweet Percy... What have you done? Oh what a stupid thing to do.... Oh my boy has volunteered to die in this stupid war.

PERCY: I don't think so darling.

ROSE: Oh my son, how could you? How could you throw away all that has ever been between us. My boy, my genius, a common soldier, just another target for bullets... Oh no... Oh tell me it isn't true.

Percy smirks.

PERCY: It isn't true.

Rose clutches at her heart.

ROSE: Perks... you are cruel. That is a cruel joke.

PERCY: But my darling, you didn't let me explain... I am not going to be a soldier, I have enlisted for the Army Band. I am to become an ordinary saxophonist in the 15th Band of the Coast Artillery Corp.

ROSE: And you won't be going into battle?

PERCY: No, of course not.

Rose clutches him to her.

ROSE: Oh Percy, my clever boy.

PERCY: I am so looking forward to my Army life.

Rose stops.

ROSE: Did you say you were to be a saxophonist?

PERCY: Yes.

ROSE: But you have never played a saxophone.

PERCY: I know. Won't it be fun!

Rose panics again but Percy is amused.

ROSE: Oh my darling, what if they find you out? You'll be court-martialled and shot for being a fraud.

PERCY: If that's the case then they will have to put the whole band in front of the firing squad. My darling at the first rehearsal the sound that we produced was extraordinary. For the first time I heard music without rhythm, harmony or melody... It was wonderful.

ROSE: Oh my dear Percy. My dear clever Percy.

Percy is crowing triumphantly.

PERCY: A soldier but not a soldier. A pacifist but not a pacifist.

ROSE: They will find you out in the end.

PERCY: But in the meantime won't it be fun! Living in barracks, eating army food, being a totally unknown and lowly member of a brass band... Ah ha... I can't wait.

ROSE: Oh no, they will find you out... they will discover your genius. Oh my boy, you are going to be such a success.

SCENE THREE - PERCY ON TOUR. A PERFORMANCE.

Percy stands and addresses the audience.

PERCY: Thank you. I am very honoured to have been chosen by the wonderful American Army to do this charity concert tour. My first piece is one of my own room music tit-bits that has become enormously popular since I dished it up some years ago. It is a clog dance called Handel in the Strand. If anyone has brought their clogs along, feel free to join in.

He takes his position at the piano and plays "Handel in the Strand".

A rucksack slung over the piano indicates that he is on tour. During the playing of the piece, a key gets stuck. He stops.

PERCY: Bother.

He lifts up the piano top and peers inside.

PERCY: Excuse me for a minute... The accursed thing is stuck... I bet it's a German piano... Yes... Typical... Now let me see... Hmm...

He asks the audience.

PERCY: Has anyone got a screwdriver...? Oh not to worry, my penknife here should do the trick.

He fiddles under the piano lid, chatting all the while.

PERCY: I know it's only one note in sixty but it's a good one. I need it... Not that anyone would notice, I hit so many wrong ones as it is... Aha... fixed... Now where were we?

He finishes the piece, bows and exits.

SCENE FOUR - BACK AT THE GRAINGER HOUSE.

Rose is quite disturbed. Colleen enters with the mail.

COLLEEN: Your mail Mrs Grainger.

ROSE: Is there any word from my son?

COLLEEN: Of course. There are two letters.

ROSE: Oh thank heavens he has not forgotten me.

COLLEEN: But he sends you at least two letters every day.

ROSE: Yes but there is much that I need to know.

She hands a bundle of letters to Colleen.

ROSE: These are for him. Would you see that they are posted.

COLLEEN: Of course Ma'am.

ROSE: I do hope he is wearing his singlet. It can get very cold at this time of year.

COLLEEN: I am sure he will look after himself.

Rose speaks abruptly.

ROSE: Please leave me now. I wish to read my son's letters in private.

Colleen is surprised.

COLLEEN: Are you sure that your eyes are up to it Ma'am.

ROSE: Away with you girl, I am anxious to know his news.

COLLEEN: Yes Ma'am.

Colleen leaves reluctantly. Rose picks up the letters and fondles them tenderly. She speaks to the envelopes as if they are in fact Percy himself.

Rose They said it would be better after the war, but we don't seem to be able to get very good help here in New York, do we my boy...? Now you sit down... That's a good boy, and I'll read what you have written. Are you proud of it? Oh good... Now let me see...

She looks lovingly at the unopened envelope.

ROSE: To Mrs R. Grainger, White Plains, New York... Very nicely done... you have a good clear hand. Now what is inside?

She opens the letter and tries to read.

ROSE: "My Darling Mother,... I...It...when..."

She pleads to the heavens.

ROSE: Oh eyes let me see... let me read what my son has written.

She tries again.

ROSE: "My Darling Mother... It... I..."

She drops the letter and holds her eyes with her hands.

ROSE: Won't someone take the film from across my eyes...? Oh insanity, let me at least take comfort in my son's letters.

She yells.

ROSE: Nurse... nurse... Colleen.

Colleen comes running.

COLLEEN: Yes Ma'am.

ROSE: I cannot read these letters of my son's. Please read them for me.

Colleen takes the open letter, sits down and reads.

COLLEEN: "My Darling Mother, Everything is going splendidly here. Los Angeles is a very pretty city, but lacking, I fear, real passion. The countryside reminds me much of my beloved Ninety Mile Desert in South Australia. So wonderfully, mind pleasingly monotonous and gentle. I met a lot of film people yesterday. They all seemed to be Jews. A pity, as I find moving pictures thrilling. Weather has been warm. How are things in New York? I wish so much that you were with me. Perhaps when you get over your current illness we could come back here together. I miss you terribly as usual. Will write again after tonight's concert. Longing to hold you in my arms again... Your loving..."

Rose snatches the letter from Colleen.

ROSE: That will be all. Thank you.

COLLEEN: Very well Ma'am.

Colleen shrugs and leaves.

ROSE: Oh my silly, simple Perks. You must not talk like that. You must not feed the rumours, they have already driven me insane... We are accused of things we had never thought of. But no one will believe me... I have never loved you wrongly. Our love has been only healthy and natural.

ROSE: It is your fault, John Grainger. I knew it all along, with your brown eyes and swarthy skin. You brought disaster to the Aldridges. You brought your filthy habits and your filthy past into my life. It is a terrible price I have had to pay for my indiscretions, for abandoning my race. You gave me the sores John Grainger. My life was perfect until I met you... My childhood memories... so happy... so... Mother, Father, don't forget little Rosa... Don't forget me!

Pause

ROSE: Is it not enough that you have contaminated me with these boils... these festering carbuncles on a fair skin that had never previously seen a blemish? And now my poor boy...? Will the sins of the father be visited upon the son and upon his son...? Oh my beautiful baby Adonis, I am not fit to touch you, not fit to nurture you... I am cursed with the filth of your father... Oh Annie... Annie...

Colleen comes running.

COLLEEN: What is it Mrs Grainger?

ROSE: Annie, please forgive me. I am an awful jealous woman. Please forgive me.

COLLEEN: I am not Annie Mrs Grainger. I am Colleen, remember?

Rose tries to control herself.

ROSE: Yes... yes... I am sorry... I keep... I get so confused sometimes. Has the mail arrived yet?

COLLEEN: Yes, here are the letters... I read you one... Here they are.

ROSE: Thank you. You may go.

COLLEEN: Very well Ma'am.

Colleen hesitates, then turns, but she doesn't get far.

ROSE: Just one minute young lady

COLLEEN: Yes?

ROSE: This letter from my son has already been opened.

COLLEEN: Yes my dear... You opened it yourself, remember?

ROSE: Fiddlesticks and poppycock... I did no such thing. I have not read anything from my boy is such a long time.

COLLEEN: Of course.

ROSE: I would like to ask you that in future you do not interfere with correspondence between my son and I.

Colleen realises that there is not point in arguing.

COLLEEN: No Ma'am.

Rose flies off the handle at here all the same.

ROSE: You vixen... You disgraceful bitch. We took you into our home. You were honoured in being chosen as a pupil of my sons. You were honoured in being chosen as his partner, his fiancé, his confidante. And then you abused our honours. You spread dirty, smutty, nasty stories about my poor boy and me. You disgusting, rumour mongering, jealous, lying whore... I want to rip your tongue out... You cannot have him. You will not have him. My boy loves only me. Do you understand. He loves only me, and there can be nothing purer than our love.

COLLEEN: Come now Mrs Grainger, calm yourself.

ROSE: If only my darling Perks did not prefer blue roses... I brought him up to be a noble, gentle boy... Why has he turned on me so? Why...? Why can't he be satisfied with being a genius, why must he be mad as well?

COLLEEN: Shall I get you a hot drink... Cocoa perhaps?

ROSE: I am so, so ashamed.

SCENE FIVE - A RAILWAY STATION.

Hermann and Percy are together again.

HERMANN: My dear Perks, I have never seen you like this! Here you are with the world at your feet and a six hour train journey ahead of us, and you sit there as if you were worried about where your next meal was going to come from.

Percy remains depressed.

PERCY: Seeing you Hermann has made me remember so many lost memories and lost friends.

HERMANN: Lost friends? Why? Who have you lost?

PERCY: We have been together over a week now and yet you have not once mentioned any good wishes that may have been sent from Roger or Cyril or Balfour.

HERMANN: I had forgotten.

PERCY: No, they have forgotten. They have forgotten me. Rejected me because I chose to live in America. Rejected me because I chose to join the American Army and not the British... Do they consider me a traitor?

Hermann hesitates, but he must say it.

HERMANN: Yes.

PERCY: Fair weather friends... Who would have thought.

HERMANN: But don't worry Perks... Time will change things... You'll see.

PERCY: No, it was a fatal mistake. In coming here I revealed to the world just what a low and loathsome coward I am.

HERMANN: But you worked hard for the war effort.

PERCY: I ran away... Who could forgive such unmanly behaviour.

HERMANN: Oh Perks, what does it matter that these old cronies are bitter. Here, you are an enormous success. Your music, your playing, your lessons. Everything you touch has turned to gold.

PERCY: Herman you are a facile idiot at times. Do you not see what is happening? I am becoming a slave to the concert platform, and the compositions for which I am known are frivolous little bits of fairy floss. My truly innovative and original work is laughed at. I

am laughed at as a quaint, histrionic eccentric. But those pieces are not me. They are just workmanlike adaptations. Craft, not art. The work that I care most about is ignored. My old and valued friends ignore me. I am known by the moronic imbecilities reported by newspaper journalists and critics... The real music world has forgotten me... I don't know whether to applaud their clever judgement of me as a vile and fraudulent coward, which I am, or whether to rant and rave against a musical establishment that is narrow minded, class bound, pompous and backward looking... which it is.

HERMANN: I did not expect to find you like this.

Percy shakes his head in despair.

PERCY: It is disgraceful that I should have invited you over here. Disgraceful that I should have wasted your valuable time, my darling Hermann.

HERMANN: No it is not. I am truly honoured, but slightly disappointed that your invitation did not extend to Alfhid.

Pause.

HERMANN: And how is Rose?

PERCY: She is not well. She has been ill for months now... Oh Hermann, I am worried, that is why I have not spoken of her. My poor darling is alone and suffering while I gallivant around the countryside having a whale of a time... I can scarce bear to think of her. I am sick with worry and guilt.

Hermann tries to comfort his friend.

HERMANN: You must live your own life Perks.

PERCY: No I must not. That is a stupid saying and one that I do not subscribe to. I must live for my mother. She is all I have to live for. My mother and my music, that is all I have in the world.

SCENE SIX - Antonia Sawyer's office in New York. She is Percy's agent. N.B.

I do not think that we need to point this up. There does not need to be any set changes as the real location is of no significance here. Rose is dressed in very light clothes. Colleen has a heavy overcoat on. There is a portrait of Percy on the wall.

ROSE: I don't feel well Colleen. Could you get me a cool drink please.

COLLEEN: Are you sure you'll be alright Ma'am... There are no facilities in this office, I'll have to go downstairs to get something.

Rose smiles inanely at her.

ROSE: Very kind of you my dear. Thank you.

Colleen leaves.

ROSE: Isn't it hot in here...? So hot for such a cool day.

She goes to the window and opens it, staring out momentarily. She then turns back and stares at Percy's portrait.

ROSE: My famous son... My beautiful boy... Can you ever forgive me?

She walks to the window and looks out again.

ROSE: It is very quiet up here... The city is very pleasant on a Sunday... Look there I can see Central Park in the distance... A lovely park. When I grew up we lived by the parks... the parklands, the racecourse... so many parks in that other city... our city. I am a foreigner here. I like to look at it from up here... to look at it from this distance, spread out below me. I should not like to be buried in this place... I want to go back to our city...

She moves back to Percy.

ROSE: You know, my darling, I have become quite insane. Quite useless. This morning I had to get the Nurse to dress me. I wish you were here... I rang Bertha yesterday and asked her about those rumours. I should never have mentioned them. She had heard them... I think she even believed them... It makes me sick... There is only one way to stop them... We have achieved so much, you and I... We have achieved so much...

She matter-of-factly walks to the window again and jumps out.

SCENE SEVEN - THE GRAINGER HOUSE.

A coffin decked with flowers is in the room. The coffin is open. Percy has a camera. He is taking photos of Rose in her coffin. He is calmer than we would expect.

PERCY: My poor darling. My poor mother... To think that you have done this for me.

He looks fondly at her.

PERCY: Still beautiful... Still an Angel.

He takes a couple of photos of her.

PERCY: You have such a sweet smile... It's going to make a pretty picture... It's for the book that I am going to write about us. It is my Nordic duty to tell the world how I love you. It must be said. Do you remember when we first came here? No one could tell whether we were brother and sister or husband and wife. Little did they know we were mother and son... Little did they know... Well Mowgli, little frog, where are you going to find your breast now?

SCENE EIGHT - THE DECK OF A SHIP.

Herman is playing Deck Quoits.

HERMANN: My dear Perks, you must relax. You will run yourself into an early grave if you are not careful... Perks... Perks! My God you barely seem to stop to even sleep.

Perks runs past Hermann as if on a lap of the deck.

PERCY: The devil finds work for idle hands.

HERMANN: Huh... You don't believe in the devil.

PERCY: Oh yes, the devil... I believe in him.

He is off again.

HERMANN: Perks... Please... At least challenge me to a game with these stupid things. Playing on one's own is a terrible bore.

Percy returns.

PERCY: I am sorry my friend... Of course I would love to have a game with you.

HERMANN: Very well. You may go first.

Percy lines up the target.

PERCY: Do you know who I first played this game with?

HERMANN: Not your mother by any chance?

Percy is genuinely surprised at Hermann's guess.

PERCY: Why yes it was... Why Hermann, however did you guess?

HERMANN: I must be psychic.

PERCY: Oh no... Not you too. Cyril claims to be psychic now... He's making a profession out of it.

HERMANN: So I gather.

PERCY: He claims to have contacted mother.

HERMANN: Really?

PERCY: Obviously Poppycock... Still, it is going to be grand seeing the old gang again.

Percy has thrown all his quoits. He grabs them and returns to the mark.

PERCY: You know, Mother was a terrible player of this game. I could win every time. It always appalled me that she was so terrible. And all she ever did was stand and laugh and giggle. Most unlike her really... Oh I do miss her so.

Percy starts to throw the quoits again.

HERMANN: Excuse me!

PERCY: What is it my friend?

HERMANN: It's my turn.

PERCY: Of course it is... Sorry.

HERMANN: I realise that you will beat me terribly, but...

PERCY: No... Never...

HERMANN: At the game...

PERCY: Oh.

HERMANN: But I don't think that you should regard me as totally indispensable.

PERCY: Sorry.

Percy hands Hermann the Quoits.

PERCY: I should do some work.

HERMANN: You should relax.

PERCY: But I have so much to do... So many ideas to write down, so many theories.

HERMANN: Oh? What are you trying to prove?

PERCY: Why, that music is too bogged down in the tyrannical concepts of rhythm and set scales... I want to free music from these silly conventions. I feel that I have only just begun.

HERMANN: My darling Perks, why do you punish yourself so? You should be starting to slow down... to take things easy.

PERCY: You know I can never do that... I am a man possessed. I feel that I have a duty to use my genius to seek after purity. Purity of race, purity of music, purity of life. Did I tell you that I have become a vegetarian?

Hermann laughs.

HERMANN: You!!! Vegetarian!!!

PERCY: Yes.

HERMANN: The bloodthirsty warrior? The violent boy? A vegetarian.

PERCY: I don't see why poor dumb animals should suffer.

HERMANN: Only poor dumb Percy.

PERCY: There is too much death and suffering.

HERMANN: But you don't like vegetables!

PERCY: Oh, I'm quite fond of boiled rice and cream cakes.

Hermann shakes his head.

HERMANN: Oh Perks, after all these years... My friend, you are still a wonder...

Ella enters to take in the sun on the sports deck. She has a ukelele with her which she strums and attempts to tune. Percy does not notice her immediately. He throws his quoits carelessly.

PERCY: This is a silly, girlish game. Wouldn't you prefer something more vigorous like football, Hermann?

HERMANN: No.

Percy shrugs and goes to retrieve the quoits. He then notices Ella and is stunned. He turns to Hermann.

PERCY: Hermann... Do you see her?

HERMANN: You mean the lady?

PERCY: She is not a lady, she is a Goddess... Oh Hermann, I have never seen such beauty... Look at her fair skin, her blue eyes... Oh Hermann...

Ella signals to them. She has quite a strong Scandinavian accent.

ELLA: Excuse me... I am this ukelele trying to learn, but the tuning I am not sure of... Can you help me?

Percy is standing mouth agape.

PERCY: That accent Hermann?

HERMANN: Swedish... definitely not Danish... Swedish.

PERCY: A Nordic Goddess, if ever there was one.

ELLA: Do you speak English?

Percy can only nod his response.

ELLA: Do you know anything about music?

He nod's again. Ella is doing her best to break the ice.

ELLA: I was told to sing, "My Dog Has Fleas", to tune it... But I cannot tell.

Percy almost grovels at her feet.

PERCY: I will... I will do it for you.

ELLA: That you so much... My name is Ella Strom.

PERCY: Percy... I'm just Percy.

HERMANN: Wie geht es. Meine Namen ist Hermann (ie. Danish)

ELLA: Guten Tag. (Danish)

Percy tunes the Uke.

PERCY: There... Now will you play for me?

Ella is modest.

ELLA: But I only know one song.

PERCY: Then play it... Please.

ELLA: It is just a common vulgar song.

PERCY: Oh splendid... All the better... I love vulgarity.

Ella strums and begins to sing.

ELLA: I want to be happy,
But I can't be happy.
Till I make you happy too.

Percy jumps with glee.

PERCY: I know it... I know it!

He joins in as does Hermann, and continues with the next verse of the song. All three sing and dance. They laugh and fall about. When they stop, we should have the impression that it is some time later.

PERCY: Oh I love you, I love you, I love you... Like a sister I love you.

Ella is taken aback.

ELLA: A sister...? I was hoping you might have had another sort of love for me.

PERCY: Ah but a sister is someone to whom my lusts are sharper and more unbridled than towards a non related sweetheart. A sister... Oh how I have wanted a sister. A racially pure lover... My sister, my sister, my dreams come true.

Ella tries to cool his fire a bit.

ELLA: You must not expect too much of me. My career has been, shall we say, black and white.

Percy ignores her warnings.

PERCY: But you are so Nordic, so blue eyed, so like an Aldridge. You are so tempting... I am ravenously randy... and you are so supernaturally clean and honourable.

ELLA: Oh no I am not.

He carries on.

PERCY: You are holy and noble... In you I see the Goddess of my Race... the mother of my children... You must marry me.

Percy jumps at Hermann and grabs him.

PERCY: Ah ha... Hermann... Do you not see this angel. I must have her. I must clutch her white full bosom to me. I can think of nothing more fulfilling that to have her queenly body writhing and straining beneath me... Such eyes, such hair, such thighs, such breasts...

He turns back to Ella.

PERCY: Say you will marry me... I will give you everything. I will restrict you in nothing and my sex powers are so great that you will be forever satisfied. Say you will.

Ella laughs.

ELLA: I will.

PERCY: Ah ha... Do you hear that my dear Hermann... I am so proud I want to draw her to me, I want to prance before her and spread my peacock feathers... Oh was ever a Nordic Warrior so bedrunkenly happy as me. The purest milk-white princess that ever lived.

Hermann tries to put a brake on things.

HERMANN: Don't you think you should get to know each other first?

PERCY: No... no... no... The blue roses can wait. Right now I only have thoughts of red, white and pink ones... Come my darling,

Percy gives Ella a firm smack on the rump. Ella grins wickedly and returns the smack. Percy is even more ecstatic. He exclaims joyously to the world...

PERCY: Oh my Goddess, my Princess, my sister, my wife, my lover. Look, look well o wolves, your Mowgli has proved himself at last.

Percy and Ella embrace.

THE END

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