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*Under Milk Wood*  
*A Play for Voices*

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**by Dylan Thomas**

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# Contents

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## Silence

### FIRST VOICE (*Very softly*)

To begin at the beginning:

It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeback, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboatbobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine to-night in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock, the shops in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widows' weeds. And all the people of the lulled and dumbfound town are sleeping now.

Hush, the babies are sleeping, the farmers, the fishers, the tradesmen and pensioners, cobbler, schoolteacher, postman and publican, the undertaker and the fancy Woman, drunkard, dressmaker, preacher, policeman, the webfoot cocklewomen and the tidy wives. Young girls lie bedded soft or glide in their dreams, with rings and trousseaux, bridesmaided by glowworms down the aisles of the organplaying wood. The boys are dreaming wicked or of the bucking ranches of the night and the jollyrodgered sea. And the anthracite statues of the horses sleep in the fields, and the cows in the byres, and the dogs in the wetnosed yards; and the cats nap in the slant corners or lope sly, streaking and needling, on the one cloud of the roofs.

You can hear the dew falling, and the hushed town breathing. Only *your* eyes are unclosed to see the black and folded town fast, and slow, asleep. And you alone can hear the invisible starfall, the darkest-beforedawn minutely dewgrazed stir of the black, dab-filled sea where the *Arethusa*, the *Curlew* and the *Skylark*, *Zanzibar*, *Rhiannon*, the *Rover*, the *Cormorant*, and the *Star of Wales* tilt and ride.

Listen. It is night moving in the streets, the processional salt slow musical wind in Coronation Street and Cockle Row, it is the grass growing on Llaregyb Hill, dewfall, starfall, the sleep of birds in Milk Wood.

Listen. It is night in the chill, squat chapel, hymning in bonnet and brooch and bombazine black, butterfly choker and bootlace bow, coughing like nannygoats, sucking mintoes, fortywinking hallelujah; night in the four-ale, quiet as a domino; in Ocky Milkman's lofts like a mouse with gloves; in Dai Bread's bakery flying like black flour. It is to-night in Donkey Street, trotting silent, With seaweed on its hooves, along the cockled cobbles, past curtained fernpot, text and trinket, harmonium, holy dresser, watercolours done by hand, china dog and rosy tin teacaddy. It is night neddying among the snuggeries of babies.

Look. It is night, dumbly, royally winding through the Coronation cherry trees; going through the graveyard of Bethesda with winds gloved and folded, and dew doffed; tumbling by the Sailors Arms.

Time passes. Listen. Time passes.

Come closer now.

Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. Only you can see, in the blinded bedrooms, the coms. and petticoats over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.

From where you are, you can hear their dreams.

Captain Cat, the retired blind sea-captain, asleep in his bunk in the seashelled, ship-in-bottled, shipshape best cabin of Schooner House dreams of

**SECOND VOICE** never such seas as any that swamped the decks of his *S.S. Kidwelly* bellying over the bedclothes and jellyfish-slippery sucking him down salt deep into the Davy dark where the fish come biting out and nibble him down to his wishbone, and the long drowned nuzzle up to him.

**FIRST DROWNED** Remember me, Captain?

**CAPTAIN CAT** You're Dancing Williams!

**FIRST DROWNED** I lost my step in Nantucket.

**SECOND DROWNED** Do you see me, Captain? the white bone talking? I'm Tom-Fred the donkeyman...we shared the same girl once...her name was Mrs Probert...

**WOMAN'S VOICE** Rosie Probert, thirty three Duck Lane. Come on up, boys, I'm dead.

**THIRD DROWNED** Hold me, Captain, I'm Jonah Jarvis, come to a bad end, very enjoyable.

**FOURTH DROWNED** Alfred Pomeroy Jones, sea-lawyer, born in Mumbles, sung like a linnet, crowned you with a flagon, tattooed with mermaids, thirst like a dredger, died of blisters.

**FIRST DROWNED** This skull at your earhole is

**FIFTH DROWNED** Curly Bevan. Tell my auntie it was me that pawned he or-molu clock.

**CAPTAIN CAT** Aye, aye, Curly.

**SECOND DROWNED** Tell my missus no I never

**THIRD DROWNED** I never done what she said I never.

**FOURTH DROWNED** Yes they did.

**FIFTH DROWNED** And who brings coconuts and shawls and parrots to *my* Gwen now?

**FIRST DROWNED** How's it above?

**SECOND DROWNED** Is there rum and laverbread?

**THIRD DROWNED** Bosoms and robins?

**FOURTH DROWNED** Concertinas?

**FIFTH DROWNED** Ebenezer's bell?

**FIRST DROWNED** Fighting and onions?

**SECOND DROWNED** And sparrows and daisies?

**THIRD DROWNED** Tiddlers in a jamjar?

**FOURTH DROWNED** Buttermilk and whippets?

**FIFTH DROWNED** Rock-a-bye baby?

**FIRST DROWNED** Washing on the line?

**SECOND DROWNED** And old girls in the snug?

**THIRD DROWNED** How's the tenors in Dowlais?

**FOURTH DROWNED** Who milks the cows in Maesgwyn?

**FIFTH DROWNED** When she smiles, is there dimples?

**FIRST DROWNED** What's the smell of parsley?

**CAPTAIN CAT** Oh, my dead dears!

**FIRST VOICE** From where you are you can hear in Cockle Row in the spring, moonless night, Miss Price, dressmaker and sweetshop-keeper, dream of

**SECOND VOICE** her lover, tall as the town clock tower, Samsonsyrup-gold-maned, whacking thighed and piping hot, thunderbolt-bass'd and barnacle-breasted, flailing up the cockles with his eyes like blowlamps and scooping low over her lonely loving hotwaterbottled body.

**MR EDWARDS** Myfanwy Price!

**MISS PRICE** Mr Mog Edwards!

**MR EDWARDS** I am a draper mad with love. I love you more than all the flannelette and calico, candlewick, dimity, crash and merino, tussore, cretonne, crepon, muslin, poplin, ticking and twill in the whole Cloth Hall of the world. I have come to take you away to my Emporium on the hill, where the change hums on wires. Throw away your little bedsocks and your Welsh wool knitted jacket, I will warm the sheets like an electric toaster, I will lie by your side like the Sunday roast.

**MISS PRICE** I will knit you a wallet of forget-me-not blue, for the money, to be comfy. I will warm your heart by the fire so that you can slip it in under your vest when the shop is closed.

**MR EDWARDS** Myfanwy, Myfanwy, before the mice gnaw at your bottom drawer will you say

**MISS PRICE** Yes, Mog, yes, Mog, yes, yes, yes.

**MR EDWARDS** And all the bells of the tills of the town shall ring for our wedding.

**FIRST VOICE** Come now, drift up the dark, come up the drifting sea-dark street now in the dark night seesawing like the sea, to the bible-black airless attic over Jack Black the cobbler's shop where alone and savagely Jack Black sleeps in a nightshirt tied to his ankles with elastic and dreams of

**SECOND VOICE** chasing the naughty couples down the grassgreen gooseberried double bed of the wood, flogging the tosspots in the spit-and-sawdust, driving out the bare bold girls from the sixpenny hops of his nightmares.

**BLACK JACK** (*Loudly*) Ach y fi! Ach y fi!

**FIRST VOICE** Evans the Death, the undertaker,

**SECOND VOICE** laughs high and aloud in his sleep and curls up his toes as he sees, upon waking fifty years ago, snow lie deep on the goosefield behind the sleeping house ; and he runs out into the field where his mother is making welsh-cakes in the snow, and steals a fistful of snowflakes and currants and climbs back to bed to eat them cold and sweet under the warm, white clothes while his mother dances in the snow kitchen crying out for her lost currants.

**FIRST VOICE** And in the little pink-eyed cottage next to the undertaker's, lie, alone, the seventeen snoring gentle stone of Mister Waldo, rabbitcatcher, barber, herbalist, catdoctor, quack, his fat pink hands, palms up, over the edge of the patchwork quilt, his black boots neat and tidy in the washing-basin, his bowler on a nail above the bed, a milk stout and a slice of cold bread pudding under the pillow; and, dripping in the dark, he dreams of

**MOTHER**

This little piggy went to market  
This little piggy stayed at home  
This little piggy had roast beef  
This little piggy had none  
And this little piggy went

**Little Boy** wee wee wee wee wee

**Mother** all the way home to

**Wife** (*Screaming*) Waldo! Wal-do!

**MR WALDO** Yes, Blodwen love?

**WIFE** Oh, what'll the neighbours say, what'll the neighbours...

**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Poor Mrs Waldo

**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** What she puts up with

**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Never should of married

**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** If she didn't had to

**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Same as her mother  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** There's a husband for you  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Bad as his father  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** And you know where he ended  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Up in the asylum  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** Crying for his ma  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Every Saturday  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** He hasn't got a log  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** And carrying on  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** With that Mrs Beattie Morris  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Up in the quarry  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** And seen her baby  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** It's got his nose  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** Oh it makes my heart bleed  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** What he'll do for drink  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** He sold the pianola to  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** And her sewing machine  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** Falling in the gutter  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Talking to the lamp-post  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** Using language  
**FIRST NEIGHBOUR** Singing in the w  
**SECOND NEIGHBOUR** Poor Mrs Waldo  
**WIFE** (*Tearfully*)  
**MR WALDO** Hush, love, hush. I'm widower Waldo now.  
**MOTHER** (*Screaming*)  
Waldo, Wal-do!  
**LITTLE BOY** Yes, our mum?  
**MOTHER**  
Oh, what'll the neighbours say, what'll the neighbours...  
**THIRD NEIGHBOUR** Black as a chimbley  
**FOURTH NEIGHBOUR** Ringing doorbells  
**THIRD NEIGHBOUR** Breaking windows  
**FOURTH NEIGHBOUR** Making mudpies  
**THIRD NEIGHBOUR** Stealing currants

**FOURTH NEIGHBOUR** Chalking words  
**THIRD NEIGHBOUR** Saw him in the bushes  
**FOURTH NEIGHBOUR** Playing mwchins  
**THIRD NEIGHBOUR** Send him to bed without any supper  
**FOURTH NEIGHBOUR** Give him sennapods and lock him in the dark  
**THIRD NEIGHBOUR** Off to the reformatory  
**FOURTH NEIGHBOUR** Off to the reformatory  
**TOGETHER:** Learn him with a slipper on his b.t.m.  
**ANOTHER MOTHER** (*Screaming*)  
Waldo, Wal-do! what you doing with our Matti?  
**LITTLE BOY** Give us a kiss, Matti Richards.  
**LITTLE GIRL** Give us a penny then.  
**MR WALDO** I only got a halfpenny.  
**FIRST WOMAN** Lips is a penny.  
**PREACHER** Will you take this Woman Matti Richards  
**SECOND WOMAN** Dulcie Prothero  
**THIRD WOMAN** Effie Bevan  
**FOURTH WOMAN** Lil the Gluepot  
**FIFTH WOMAN** Mrs Flusher  
**WIFE:** Blodwen Bowen  
**PREACHER** To be your awful wedded wife  
**LITTLE BOY** (*Screaming*) No, no, no!  
**FIRST VOICE** Now, in her iceberg-white, holily laundered crinoline nightgown, under virtuous polar sheets, in her spruced and scoured dust-defying bedroom in trig and trim Bay View, a house for paying guests, at the top of the town, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard widow, twice, of Mr Ogmores, linoleum, retired, and Mr Pritchard, failed bookmaker, who maddened by besoming, swabbing and scrubbing, the voice of the vacuum-cleaner and the fume of polish, ironically swallowed disinfectant, fidgets in her rinsed sleep, wakes in a dream, and nudges in the ribs dead Mr Ogmores, dead Mr Pritchard, ghostly on either side.  
**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** Mr Ogmores!  
Mr Pritchard!  
It is time to inhale your balsam.  
**MR OGMORE** Oh, Mrs Ogmores!  
**MR PRITCHARD** Oh, Mrs Pritchard!

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** Soon it will be time to get up.

Tell me your tasks, in order.

**MR OGMORE** I must put my pyjamas in the drawer marked pyjamas.

**MR PRITCHARD** I must take my cold bath which is good for me.

**MR OGMORE** I must wear my flannel band to ward off sciatica.

**MR PRITCHARD** I must dress behind the curtain and put on my apron.

**MR OGMORE** I must blow my nose.

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** In the garden, if you please.

**MR OGMORE** In a piece of tissue-paper which I afterwards burn.

**MR PRITCHARD** I must take my salts which are nature's friend.

**MR OGMORE** I must boil the drinking water because of germs.

**MR PRITCHARD** I must make my herb tea which is free from tannin.

**MR OGMORE** And have a charcoal biscuit which is good for me.

**MR PRITCHARD** I may smoke one pipe of asthma mixture.

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** In the woodshed, if you please.

**MR PRITCHARD** And dust the parlour and spray the canary. IS

**MR OGMORE** I must put on rubber gloves and search the peke for fleas.

**MR PRITCHARD** I must dust the blinds and then I must raise them.

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** And before you let the sun in, mind it wipes its shoes.

**FIRST VOICE** In Butcher Beynon's, Gossamer Beynon, daughter, schoolteacher, dreaming deep, daintily ferrets under a fluttering hummock of chicken's feathers in a slaughterhouse that has chintz curtains and a three-pieced suite, and finds, with no surprise, a small rough ready man with a bushy tail winking in a paper carrier.

**GOSSAMER BEYNON** At last, my love,

**FIRST VOICE** sighs Gossamer Beynon. And the bushy tail wags rude and ginger.

**ORGAN MORGAN** Help,

**SECOND VOICE** cries Organ Morgan, the organist, in his dream,

**ORGAN MORGAN** There is perturbation and music in Coronation Street! All the spouses are honking like geese and the babies singing opera. P.C. Attila Rees has got his truncheon out and is playing cadenzas by the pump, the cows from Sunday Meadow ring like reindeer, and on the roof of Handel Villa see the Women's Welfare hoofing, bloomed, in the moon.

**FIRST VOICE** At the sea-end of town, Mr and Mrs Floyd, the cocklers, are sleeping as quiet as death, side by wrinkled side, toothless, salt and brown, like two old kippers In a box.

And high above, in Salt Lake Farm, Mr Utah Watkins counts, all night, the wife-faced sheep as they leap the knees on the hill, smiling and knitting and bleating just like Mrs Utah Watkins.

**UTAH WATKINS** (*Yawning*) Thirty - four, thirty - five, thirty - six, forty - eight, eighty-nine...

**MRS UTAH WATKINS** (*Bleating*) Knit one slip one Knit two together Pass the slipstitch over...

**FIRST VOICE** Ocky Milkman, drowned asleep in Cockle Street, is emptying his churns into the Dewi River,

**OCY MILKMAN** (*Whispering*) regardless of expense,

**FIRST VOICE** and weeping like a funeral.

**SECOND VOICE** Cherry Owen, next door, lifts a tankard to his but nothing flows out of it. He shakes the tankar ' It turns into a fish. He drinks the fish.

**FIRST VOICE** P.C. Attila Rees lumps out of bed, dead to the dar and still foghorn-ing, and drags out his helmet from under the bed; but deep in the backyard lock-up of his slee a mean voice murmurs

**A VOICE** (*Murmuring*) You'll be sorry for this in the morning,

**FIRST VOICE** and he heave-ho's back to bed. His helmet swashes in the dark.

**SECOND VOICE** Willy Nilly, postman, asleep up street, walks fourteen miles to deliver the post as he does every day of the night, and rat-a-tats hard and sharp on Mrs Willy Nilly.

**MRS WILLY NILLY** Don't spank me, please, teacher,

**SECOND VOICE** whimpers his wife at his side, but every night of her married life she has been late for school.

**FIRST VOICE** Sinbad Sailors, over the taproom of the Sailors Arms, hugs his damp pillow whose secret name is Gossamer Beynon.

A mogul catches Lily Smalls in the wash-house.

**LILY SMALLS** Ooh, you old mogul!

**SECOND VOICE** Mrs Rose Cottage's eldest, Mae, peels off her pink-and-white skin in a furnace in a tower in a cave in a waterfall in a wood and waits there raw as an onion for Mister Right to leap up the burning tall hollow splashes of leaves like a brilliantined trout.

**MAE ROSE COTTAGE** (*Very close and softly, drawing out the words*) Call me Dolores Like they do in the stories.

**FIRST VOICE** Alone until she dies, Bessie Bighead, hired help, born in the work-house, smelling of the cowshed, snores bass and gruff on a couch of straw in a loft in Salt Lake Farm and picks a posy of daisies in Sunday Meadow to put on the grave of Gomer Owen who kissed her once by the pig-sty when she wasn't looking and never kissed her again although she was looking all the time.

And the Inspectors of Cruelty fly down into Mrs Butcher Brynon's dream to persecute Mr Beynon for selling

**BUTCHER BEYNON** owlmeat, dogs' eyes, manchop.

**SECOND VOICE** Mr Beynon, in butcher's bloodied apron, spring-heels down Coronation Street, a finger, not his own, in his mouth. Straightfaced in his cunning sleep he pulls the legs of his dreams and

**BUTCHER BEYNON** hunting on pigback shoots down the wild giblets.

**ORGAN BEYNON** (*High and softly*) Help!

**GOSSAMER BEYNON** (*Softly*) My foxy darling.

**FIRST VOICE** Now behind the eyes and secrets of the dreamers in the streets rocked to sleep by the sea, see the

**SECOND VOICE** titbits and topsyturvies, bobs and buttontops, bags and bones, ash and rind and dandruff and nailparings, saliva and snowflakes and moulted feathers of dreams, the wrecks and sprats and shells and fishbones, whale-juice and moonshine and small salt fry dished up by the hidden sea.

**FIRST VOICE** The owls are hunting. Look, over Bethesda gravestones one hoots and swoops and catches a mouse by Hannah Rees, Beloved Wife. And in Coronation Street, which you alone can see it is so dark under the chapel in the skies, the Reverend Eli Jenkins, poet, preacher, turns in his deep towards-dawn sleep and dreams of

**REV. ELI JENKINS** Eisteddfodau.

**SECOND VOICE** He intricately rhymes, to the music of crwth and pibgorn, all night long in his druid's seedy nightie in a beer-tent black with parchs.

**FIRST VOICE** Mr Pugh, schoolmaster, fathoms asleep, pretends to be sleeping, spies foxy round the droop of his nightcap and pssst! whistles up

**MR PUGH** Murder.

**FIRST VOICE** Mrs Organ Morgan, groceress, coiled grey like a dormouse, her paws to her ears, conjures

**MRS. ORGAN MORGAN** Silence.

**SECOND VOICE** She sleeps very dulcet in a cove of wool, and trumpeting Organ Morgan at her side snores no louder than a spider.

**FIRST VOICE** Mary Ann Sailors dreams of

**MARY ANN SAILORS** The Garden of Eden.

**FIRST VOICE** She comes in her smock-frock and clogs away from the cool scrubbed cobbled kitchen with the Sunday-school pictures on the whitewashed wall and the farmers' almanac hung above the settle and the sides of bacon on the ceiling hooks, and goes down the cockleshelled paths of that applepie kitchen garden, ducking under the gippo's clothespegs, catching her apron on

the blackcurrant bushes, past beanrows and onion-bed and tomatoes ripening on the wall towards the old man playing the harmonium in the orchard, and sits down on the grass at his side and shells the green peas that grow up through the lap of her frock that brushes the dew.

**FIRST VOICE** In Donkey Street, so furred with sleep, Dai Bread, Polly Garter, Nogood Boyo, and Lord Cut-Glass sigh before the dawn that is about to be and dream of

**DAI BREAD** Harems.

**POLLY GARTER** Babies.

**NOGOOD BOYO** Nothing.

**LORD** Cut-Glass: Tick tock tick tock tick tock tick tock.

**FIRST VOICE** Time passes. Listen. Time passes. An owl flies I home past Bethesda, to a chapel in an oak. And the dawn inches up.

**FIRST VOICE** Stand on this hill. This is Llaregyb Hill, old as the hills, high, cool, and green, and from this small circle, of stones, made not by druids but by Mrs Beynon's Billy, you can see all the town below you sleeping in the first of the dawn.

You can hear the love-sick woodpigeons mooning in bed. A dog barks in his sleep, farmyards away. The town ripples like a lake in the waking haze.

**VOICE** of a Guide Book: Less than five hundred souls inhabit the three quaint streets and the few narrow by-lanes and scattered farmsteads that constitute this small, decaying watering-place which may, indeed, be called a 'backwater of life' without disrespect to its natives who possess, to this day, a salty individuality of their own. The main street, Coronation Street, consists, for the most part, of humble, two-storied houses many of which attempt to achieve some measure of gaiety by prinking themselves out in crude colours and by the liberal use of pinkwash, though there are remaining a few eighteenth-century houses of more pretension, if, on the whole, in a sad state of disrepair. Though there is little to attract the hillclimber, the healthseeker, the sportsman, or the weekending motorist, the contemplative may, if sufficiently attracted to spare it some leisurely hours, find, in its cobbled streets and its little fishing harbour, in its several curious customs, and in the conversation of its local 'characters,' some of that picturesque sense of the past so frequently lacking in towns and villages which have kept more abreast of the times. The River Dewi is said to abound in trout, but is much poached. The one place of worship, with its neglected graveyard, is of no architectural interest.

### **A cock crows**

**FIRST** Voice The principality of the sky lightens now, over our green hill, into spring morning larked and crowed and belling.

## Slow bell notes

**FIRST** Voice: Who pulls the townhall bellrope but blind Captain Cat? One by one, the sleepers are rung out of sleep this one morning as every morning. And soon you shall see the chimneys' slow upflying snow as Captain Cat, in sailor's cap and seaboots, announces to-day with his loud get-out-of-bed bell.

### SECOND VOICE

The Reverend Eli Jenkins, in Bethesda House, gropes out of bed into his preacher's black, combs back his bard's white hair, forgets to wash, pads bare-foot downstairs, opens the front door, stands in the doorway and, looking out at the day and up at the eternal hill, and hearing the sea break and the gab of birds, remembers his own verses and tells them softly to empty Coronation Street that is rising and raising its blinds.

### REV ELI JENKINS

Dear Gwalia! I know there are Towns lovelier than ours, And fairer hills and loftier far, And groves more full of flowers,

And boskier woods more blithe with spring And bright with birds' adorning, And sweeter bards than I to sing Their praise this beauteous morning.

By Cader Idris, tempest-torn, Or Moel yr Wyddfa's glory, Carnedd Llewelyn beauty born, Plinlimmon old in story,

By mountains where King Arthur dreams, By Penmaenmawr defiant, Llaregyb Hill a molehill seems, A pygmy to a giant.

By Sawdde, Senny, Dovey, Dee, Edw, Eden, Aled, all, Taff and Towy broad and free, Llyfnant with its waterfall,

Claerwen, Cleddau, Dulais, Daw, Ely, Gwili, Ogwr, Nedd, Small is our River Dewi, Lord, A baby on a rushy bed.

By Carreg Cennen, King of time, Our Heron Head is only A bit of stone with seaweed spread Where gulls come to be lonely.

A tiny dingle is Milk Wood By Golden Grove 'neath Grongar, But let me choose and oh! I should Love all my life and longer

To stroll among our trees and stray In Goosegog Lane, on Donkey Down, And hear the Dewi sing all day, And never, never leave the town.

**SECOND VOICE** The Reverend Jenkins closes the front door. His morning service is over.

## Slow bell notes.

**FIRST VOICE** Now, woken at last by the out-of-bed-sleepy-head-Polly-put-the-kettle-on townhall bell, Lily Smalls, Mrs Beynon's treasure, comes downstairs from a dream of royalty who all night long went larking with her full of sauce

in the Milk Wood dark, and puts the kettle on the primus ring in Mrs Beynon's kitchen, and looks at herself in Mr Beynon's shaving-glass over the sink, and sees

**LILY SMALLS**

Oh there's a face! Where you get that hair from? Got it from a old tom cat. Give it back then, love. Oh there's a perm!

Where you get that nose from, Lily? Got it from my father, silly. You've got it on upside down! Oh there's a conk!

Look at your complexion! Oh no, you look. Needs a bit of make-up. Needs a veil. Oh there's glamour!

Where you get that smile, Lil? Never you mind, girl. Nobody loves you. That's what you think.

Who is it loves you? Shan't tell. Come on, Lily. Cross your heart then? Cross my heart.

**FIRST VOICE** And very softly, her lips almost touching her reflection, she breathes the name and clouds the shaving-glass.

**MRS BEYNON** (*Loudly, from above*) Lily!

**LILY SMALLS** (*Loudly*) Yes, mum.

**MRS BEYNON** Where's my tea, girl?

**LILY** Smalls: (*Softly*) Where d'you think? In the cat-box?  
(*Loudly*) Coming up, mum.

**FIRST VOICE** Mr Pugh, in the School House opposite, takes up the morning tea to Mrs Pugh, and whispers on the stairs

**MR PUGH** Here's your arsenic, dear. And your weedkiller biscuit. I've throttled your parakeet. I've spat in the vases. I've put cheese in the mouseholes. Here's your... *Door creaks open* ...nice tea, dear.

**MRS PUGH** Too much sugar.

**MR PUGH** You haven't tasted it yet, dear.

**MRS PUGH** Too much milk, then. Has Mr Jenkins said his poetry?

**MR PUGH** Yes, dear.

**MRS PUGH** Then it's time to get up. Give me my glasses.

No, not my *reading* glasses, I want to look out. I want to see

**SECOND VOICE** Lily Smalls the treasure down on her red knees washing the front step.

**MRS PUGH** She's tucked her dress in her bloomers—oh, the baggage!

**SECOND VOICE** P.C. Attila Rees, ox-broad, barge-booted, stamping out of Handcuff House in a heavy beef-red huff, black browed under his damp helmet...

**MRS PUGH** He's going to arrest Polly Garter, mark my words,

**MR PUGH** What for, dear?

**MRS PUGH** For having babies.

**SECOND VOICE** ...and lumbering down towards the strand to see that the sea is still there.

**FIRST VOICE** Mary Ann Sailors, opening her bedroom window above the tap-room and calling out to the heavens

**MARY ANN SAILORS** I'm eighty-five years three months and a day!

**MRS PUGH** I will say this for her, she never makes a mistake.

**FIRST VOICE** Organ Morgan at his bedroom window playing chords on the sill to the morning fishwife gulls who, heckling over Donkey Street, observe

**DAI BREAD** Me, Dai Bread, hurrying to the bakery, pushing in my shirt-tails, buttoning my waistcoat, ping goes a button, why can't they sew them, no time for breakfast, nothing for breakfast, there's wives for you.

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** Me, Mrs Dai Bread One, capped and shawled and no old corset, nice to be comfy, nice to be nice, clogging on the cobbles to stir up a neighbour. Oh, Mrs Sarah, can you spare a loaf, love? Dai Bread forgot the bread. There's a lovely morning! How's your boils this morning? Isn't that good news now, it's a change to sit down. Ta, Mrs Sarah.

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO** Me, Mrs Dai Bread Two, gypsied to kill in a silky scarlet petticoat above my knees, dirty pretty knees, see my body through my petticoat brown as a berry, high-heel shoes with one heel missing, tortoiseshell comb in my bright black slinky hair, nothing else at all but a dab of scent, lolling gaudy at the doorway, tell your fortune in the tea-leaves, scowling at the sunshine, lighting up my pipe.

**LORD CUT-GLASS** Me, Lord Cut-Glass, in an old frock-coat belonged to Eli Jenkins and a pair of postman's trousers from Bethesda Jumble, running out of doors to empty slops—mind there, Rover!—and then running in again, tick tock.

**NOGOD BOYO** Me, Nogood Boyo, up to no good in the wash-house

**MISS PRICE** Me, Miss Price, in my pretty print housecoat, deft at the clothesline, natty as a jenny-wren, then pit-pat back to my egg in its cosy, my crisp toast-fingers, my home-made plum and butterpat.

**POLLY GARTER** Me, Polly Garter, under the washing line, giving the breast in the garden to my bonny new baby. Nothing grows in our garden, only washing. And babies. And where's their fathers live, my love? Over the hills and far away. You're looking up at me now. I know what you're thinking, you poor little milky creature. You're thinking, you're no better than you should be, Polly, and that's good enough for me. Oh, isn't life a terrible thing, thank God?

**Single long high chord on strings.**

**FIRST VOICE** Now frying-pans spit, kettles and cats purr in the kitchen. The town smells of seaweed and breakfast all the way down from Bay View, where Mrs OgmoresPritchard, in smock and turban, big-besomed to engage the dust, picks at her starchless bread and sips lemon-rind tea, to Bottom Cottage, where Mr Waldo, in bowler and bib, gobbles his bubble-and-squeak and kippers and swigs from the saucebottle. Mary Ann Sailors

**Mary Ann Sailors praises the Lord who made porridge.**

**FIRST VOICE** Mr Pugh

**MR PUGH** remembers ground glass as he juggles his omelet.

**FIRST VOICE** Mrs Pugh

**MRS PUGH** nags the salt-cellar.

**FIRST VOICE** Willy Nilly postman.

**Willy Nilly downs his last bucket of black brackish tea and rumbles out bandy to the clucking back where the hens twitch and grieve for their tea-soaked sops.**

**FIRST VOICE** Mrs Willy Nilly

**Mrs Willy Nilly full of tea to her double-chinned brim broods and bubbles over her coven of kettles on the hissing hot range always ready to steam open the mail.**

**FIRST VOICE** The Reverend Eli Jenkins

**Rev. Eli Jenkins finds a rhyme and dips his pen in his cocoa.**

**FIRST VOICE** Lord Cut-Glass in his ticking kitchen

**Lord Cut-Glass scampers from clock to clock, a bunch of clock-keys in one hand, a fish-head in the other.**

**FIRST VOICE** Captain Cat in his galley

**CAPTAIN CAT** blind and fine-fingered savours his sea-fry.

**FIRST VOICE** Mr and Mrs Cherry Owen, in their Donkey Street room that is bedroom, parlour, kitchen, and scullery, sit down to last night's supper of onions boiled in their overcoats and broth of spuds and baconrind and leeks and bones.

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** See that smudge on the wall by the picture of Auntie Blossom? That's where you threw the sago.

## Cherry Owen laughs with delight

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** You only missed me by a inch.

**CHERRY OWEN** I always miss Auntie Blossom too.

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** Remember last night? In you reeled, my boy, as drunk as a deacon with a big wet bucket and a fish-frail full of stout and you looked at me and you said, 'God has come home!' you said, and then over the bucket you went, sprawling and bawling, and the floor was all flagons and eels.

**CHERRY OWEN** Was I wounded?

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** And then you took off your trousers and you said, 'Does anybody want a fight!' Oh, you old baboon.

**CHERRY OWEN** Give me a kiss.

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** And then you sang 'Bread of Heaven,' tenor and bass.

**CHERRY OWEN** I always sing 'Bread of Heaven.'

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** And then you did a little dance on the table.

**CHERRY OWEN** I did?

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** Drop dead!

**CHERRY OWEN** And then what did I do?

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** Then you cried like a baby and said you were a poor drunk orphan with nowhere to go but the grave.

**CHERRY OWEN** And what did I do next, my dear?

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** Then you danced on the table all over again and said you were King Solomon Owen and I was your Mrs Sheba.

**CHERRY OWEN** (*Softy*)

And then?

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** And then I got you into bed and you snored all night like a brewery.

**Mr and Mrs Cherry Owen laugh delightedly together.**

**FIRST VOICE** From Beynon Butchers in Coronation Street, the smell of fried liver sidles out with onions on its breath. And listen! In the dark breakfast-room behind the shop, Mr and Mrs Beynon, waited upon by their treasure, enjoy, between bites, their everymorning hullabaloo, and Mrs Beynon slips the gristly bits under the tasselled tablecloth to her fat cat.

**Cat purrs**

**MRS BEYNON** ! Mrs Beynon (*Hysterical*)

What's that got to do with it?

**MR BEYNON** Yesterday we had mole.

**MRS BEYNON** Oh, Lily, Lily!

**MR BEYNON** Monday, otter. Tuesday, shrews.

### **Mrs Beynon screams**

**LILY SMALLS** Go on, Mrs Beynon. He's the biggest liar in town.

**MRS BEYNON** Don't you dare say that about Mr Beynon.

**LILY SMALLS** Everybody knows it, mum.

**MRS BEYNON** Mr Beynon never tells a lie. Do you, Ben?

**MR BEYNON** No, Bess. And now I am going out after the corgies, with my little cleaver.

**MRS BEYNON** Oh, Lily, Lily!

**FIRST VOICE** Up the street, in the Sailors Arms, Sinbad Sailors, grandson of Mary Ann Sailors, draws a pint in the sunlit bar. The ship's clock in the bar says half past eleven. Half past eleven is opening time. The hands of the clock have stayed still at half past eleven for fifty years. It is always opening time in the Sailors Arms.

**SINBAD** Here's to me, Sinbad.

**FIRST VOICE** All over the town, babies and old men are cleaned and put into their broken prams and wheeled on to the sunlit cockled cobbles or out into the backyards under the dancing underclothes, and left. A baby cries.

**OLD MAN** I want my pipe and he wants his bottle.

### **School bell rings**

**FIRST VOICE** Noses are wiped, heads picked, hair combed, paws scrubbed, ears boxed, and the children shrilled off to school.

**SECOND VOICE** Fishermen grumble to their nets. Nogood Boyo goes out in the dinghy *Zanzibar*, ships the oars, drifts slowly in the dab-filled bay, and, lying on his back in the unbaled water, among crabs' legs and tangled lines, looks up at the spring sky.

**NOGOOD BOYO** (*Softly, lazily*)

I don't know who's up there and I don't care.

**FIRST VOICE** He turns his head and looks up at Llaregyb Hill, and sees, among green lathered trees, the white houses of the strewn away farms, where farmboys

whistle, dogs shout, cows low, but all too far away for him, or you, to hear. And in the town, the shops squeak open. Mr Edwards, in butterfly-collar and straw-hat at the doorway of Manchester House, measures with his eye the dawdlers-by for striped flannel shirts and shrouds and flowery blouses, and bellows to himself in the darkness behind his eye

**MR EDWARDS** (*Whispers*)

I love Miss Price.

**FIRST VOICE** Syrup is sold in the post-office. A car drives to market, full of fowls and a farmer. Milk-churns stand at Coronation Corner like short silver policemen. And, sitting at the open window of Schooner House, blind Captain Cat hears all the morning of the town.

**School bell in background. Children's voices. The noise of children's feet on the cobbles.**

**CAPTAIN CAT** (*Softly, to himself*)

Maggie Richards, Ricky Rhys, Tommy Powell, our Sal, little Gerwain, Billy Swansea with the dog's voice, one of Mr Waldo's, nasty Humphrey, Jackie with the sniff....Where's Dicky's Albie? and the boys from Ty-pant? Perhaps they got the rash again.

**A sudden cry among the children's voices**

**CAPTAIN CAT** Somebody's hit Maggie Richards. Two to one it's Billy Swansea. Never trust a boy who barks.

**A burst of yelping crying**

Right again! It's Billy.

**FIRST VOICE** And the children's voices cry away.

**Postman's rat-a-tat on door, distant**

**CAPTAIN CAT** (*Softly, to himself*)

That's Willy Nilly knocking at Bay View. Rat-a-tat, very soft. The knocker's got a kid glove on. Who's sent a letter to Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard?

**Rat-a-tat, distant again**

**CAPTAIN CAT** Careful now, she swabs the front glassy. Every step's like a bar of soap. Mind your size twelveses. That old Bessie would beeswax the lawn to make the birds slip.

**WILLY NILLY** Morning, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard.

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** Good morning, postman.

**WILLY NILLY** Here's a letter for you with stamped and addressed envelope enclosed, all the way from Builth Wells. A gentleman wants to study birds and can he have accommodation for two weeks and a bath vegetarian.

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** No.

**WILLY NILLY** (*Persuasively*)

You wouldn't know he was in the house, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard. He'd be out in the mornings at the bang of dawn with his bag of breadcrumbs and his little telescope...

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** And come home at all hours covered with feathers. I don't want persons in my nice clean rooms breathing all over the chairs...

**WILLY NILLY** Cross my heart, he won't breathe.

**MRS OGMORE-PRITCHARD** ...and putting their feet on my carpets and sneezing on my china and sleeping in my sheets...

**WILLY NILLY** He only wants a single bed, Mrs Ogmores. Pritchard.

**Door slams.**

**CAPTAIN CAT** (*Softly*)

And back she goes to the kitchen to polish the potatoes.

**FIRST VOICE** Captain Cat hears Willy Nilly's feet heavy on the distant cobbles.

**CAPTAIN CAT** One, two, three, four, five...That's Mrs Rose Cottage. What's to-day? To-day she gets the letter from her sister in Gorslas. How's the twins' teeth?

He's stopping at School House.

**WILLY NILLY**

Morning, Mrs Pugh. Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard won't have a gentleman in from Builth Wells because he'll sleep in her sheets, Mrs Rose Cottage's sister in Gorslas's twins have got to have them out...

**MRS PUGH** Give me the parcel.

**WILLY NILLY** It's for Mr Pugh, Mrs Pugh.

**MRS PUGH** Never you mind. What's inside it?

**WILLY NILLY** A book called *Lives of the Great Poisoners*.

**CAPTAIN CAT** That's Manchester House.

**WILLY NILLY**

Morning, Mr Edwards. Very small news. Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard won't have birds in the house, and Mr Pugh's bought a book now on how to do in Mrs Pugh.

**MR. EDWARDS** Have you got a letter from *her*?

**WILLY NILLY**

Miss Price loves you with all her heart. Smelling of lavender to-day. She's down to the last of the elderflower wine but the quince jam's bearing up and she's knitting roses on the doilies. Last week she sold three jars of boiled sweets, pound of humbugs, half a box of jellybabies and six coloured photos of Llaregyb. Yours for ever. Then twenty-one X's.

**MR. EDWARDS** Oh, Willy Nilly, she's a ruby! Here's my letter. Put it into her hands now.

### Slow feet on cobbles, quicker feet approaching

**CAPTAIN CAT** Mr Waldo hurrying to the Sailors Arms. Pint of stout with a egg in it. *Footsteps stop*

*(Softly)* There's a letter for him.

**WILLY NILLY** It's another paternity summons, Mr Waldo.

**FIRST VOICE** The quick footsteps hurry on along the cobbles and up three steps to the Sailors Arms.

**MR WALDO** *(Calling out)*

Quick, Sinbad. Pint of stout. And no egg in.

**FIRST VOICE** People are moving now up and down the cobbled street.

**CAPTAIN CAT** All the women are out this morning, in the sun. You can tell it's Spring. There goes Mrs Cherry, you can tell her by her trotters, off she trots new as a daisy. Who's that talking by the pump? Mrs Floyd and Boyo, talking flatfish. What can you talk about flatfish? That's Mrs Dai Bread One, waltzing up the street like a jelly, every time she shakes it's slap slap slap. Who's that? Mrs Butcher Beynon with her pet black cat, it follows her everywhere, miaow and all. There goes Mrs Twenty-Three, important, the sun gets up and goes down in her dewlap, when she shuts her eyes, it's night. High heels now, in the morning too, Mrs Rose Cottage's eldest Mae, seventeen and never been kissed ho ho, going young and milking under my window to the field with the nannygoats, she reminds me all the way. Can't hear what the women are gabbing round the pump. Same as ever. Who's having a baby, who blacked whose eye, seen Polly Garter giving her belly an airing, there should be a law, seen Mrs Beynon's new mauve jumper, it's her old grey jumper dyed, who's dead, who's dying, there's a lovely day, oh the cost of soapflakes!

## Organ music, distant

**CAPTAIN CAT** Organ Morgan's at it early. You can tell it's Spring.

**FIRST VOICE** And he hears the noise of milk-cans.

**CAPTAIN CAT** Ocky Milkman on his round. I will say this, his milk's as fresh as the dew. Half dew it is. Snuffle on, Ocky, watering the town...Somebody's coming. Now the voices round the pump can see somebody coming. Hush, there's a hush! You can tell by the noise of the hush, it's Polly Garter. (*Louder*)  
Hullo, Polly, who's there?

**POLLY GARTER** (*Off*)

Me, love.

**CAPTAIN CAT**

Hullo, Polly my love, can you hear the dumb goose-hiss of the wives as they huddle and peck or flounce at a waddle away?

Who cuddled you when? Which of their pandering hubbies moaned in Milk Wood for your naughty mothering arms and body like a wardrobe, love?

Scrub the floors of the Welfare Hall for the Mothers' Union Social Dance, you're one mother won't wriggle her roly poly bum or pat her fat little buttery feet in that wedding-ringed holy to-night though the waltzing breadwinners snatched from the cosy smoke of the Sailors Arms will grizzle and mope.

## A cock crows

**CAPTAIN CAT** Too late, cock, too late

**SECOND VOICE** for the town's half over with its morning.

The morning's busy as bees.

## Organ music fades into silence.

**FIRST VOICE** There's the clip clop of horses on the sunhoneyed cobbles of the humming streets, hammering of horse-shoes, gobble quack and cackle, tomtit twitter from the bird-ounced boughs, braying on Donkey Down. Bread is baking, pigs are grunting, chop goes the butcher, milk-churns bell, tills ring, sheep cough, dogs shout, saws sing. Oh, the Spring whinny and morning moo from the clog dancing farms, the gulls' gab and rabble on the boat-bobbing river and sea and the cockles bubbling in the sand, scamper of sanderlings, curlew cry, crow caw, pigeon coo, clock strike, bull bellow, and the ragged gabble of the beargarden school as the women scratch and babble in Mrs Organ Morgan's general shop where everything is sold custard, buckets, henna, rat-traps, shrimp-nets, sugar, stamps, confetti, paraffin, hatchets, whistles.

**FIRST WOMAN** ! Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard ! Second Woman la di da  
**FIRST WOMAN** got a man in Builth Wells  
**THIRD WOMAN** and he got a little telescope to look at birds  
**SECOND WOMAN** Willy Nilly said  
**THIRD WOMAN** Remember her first husband? He didn't need a telescope  
**FIRST WOMAN** he looked at them undressing through the keyhole  
**THIRD WOMAN** and he used to shout Tallyho  
**SECOND WOMAN** but Mr Ogmores was a proper gentleman  
**FIRST WOMAN** even though he hanged his collie.  
**THIRD WOMAN** Seen Mrs Butcher Beynon?  
**SECOND WOMAN** she said Butcher Beynon put dogs in the mincer  
**FIRST WOMAN** go on, he's pulling her leg  
**THIRD WOMAN** now don't you dare tell her that, there's a dear  
**SECOND WOMAN** or she'll think he's trying to pull it off and eat it,  
**FOURTH WOMAN** There's a nasty lot live here when you come to think.  
**FIRST WOMAN** Look at that Nogood Boyo now  
**SECOND WOMAN** too lazy to wipe his snout  
**THIRD WOMAN** and going out fishing every day and all he ever brought back  
was a Mrs Samuels  
**FIRST WOMAN** been in the water a week.  
**SECOND WOMAN** And look at Ocky Milkman's wife that nobody's ever seen  
**FIRST WOMAN** he keeps her in the cupboard with the empties  
**THIRD WOMAN** and think of Dai Bread with two wives  
**SECOND WOMAN** one for the daytime one for the night.  
**FOURTH WOMAN** Men are brutes on the quiet.  
**THIRD WOMAN** And how's Organ Morgan, Mrs Morgan?  
**FIRST WOMAN** you look dead beat  
**SECOND WOMAN** it's organ organ all the time with him  
**THIRD WOMAN** up every night until midnight playing the organ.  
**MRS ORGAN MORGAN** Oh, I'm a martyr to music.  
**FIRST VOICE** Outside, the sun springs down on the rough and tumbling town.  
It runs through the hedges of Goosegog Lane, cuffing the birds to sing. Spring  
whips green down Cockle Row, and the shells ring out. Llaregyb this snip of a  
morning is wildfruit and warm, the streets, fields, sands and waters springing  
in the young sun.

**SECOND VOICE** Evans the Death presses hard with black gloves on the coffin of his breast in case his hearts jumps out,

**EVANS THE DEATH** (*Harshly*) Where's your dignity. Lie down.

**SECOND VOICE** Spring stirs Gossamer Beynon schoolmistress like spoon.

**GOSSAMER BEYNON** (*Tearfully*)

Oh, what can I do? I'll never be refined if I twitch.

**SECOND VOICE** Spring this strong morning foams in a flame in Jack Black as he cobbles a high-heeled shoe for Mrs Dai Bread Two the gypsy, but he hammers it sternly out.

**BLACK JACK** (*To a hammer rhythm*)

There is *no leg* belonging to the foot that belongs to this shoe.

**SECOND VOICE** The sun and the green breeze ship Captain Cat sea-memory again.

**CAPTAIN CAT** No, *I'll* take the mulatto, by God, who's captain here? Parlez-vous jig jig, Madam?

**SECOND VOICE** Mary Ann Sailors says very softly to herself as she looks out at Llaregyb Hill from the bedroom where she was born

**MARY ANN SAILORS** (*Loudly*)

It is Spring in Llaregyb in the sun in my old age, and this is the Chosen Land.

**A choir of children's voices suddenly cries out on one, high, glad, long, sighing note.**

**FIRST VOICE** And in Willy Nilly the Postman's dark and sizzling damp tea-coated misty pygmy kitchen where the spittingcat kettles throb and hop on the range, Mrs Willy Nilly steams open Mr Mog Edwards' letter to Miss Myfanwy Price and reads it aloud to Willy Nilly by the squint of the Spring sun through the one sealed window running with tears, while the drugged, bedraggled hens at the back door whimper and snivel for the lickerish bog-black tea.

**MRS WILLY NILLY**

From Manchester House, Llaregyb. Sole Prop: Mr Mog Edwards (late of Twll), Linendrapery, Haberdasher, Master Tailor, Costumier. For West End Negligee, Lingerie, Teagowns, Evening Dress, Trouseaux, Layettes. Also Ready to Wear for All Occasions. Economical Outfitting for Agricultural Employment Our Speciality, Wardrobes Bought. Among Our Satisfied Customers Ministers of Religion and J.P 's. Fittings by Appointment. Advertising Weekly in the *Twll Bugle*. Beloved Myfanwy Price my Bride in Heaven,

**MOG EDWARDS**

I love you until Death do us part and then we shall be together for ever and ever. A new parcel of ribbons has come from Carmarthen to-day, all the colours in the rainbow. I wish I could tie a ribbon in your hair a white one but it cannot be. I dreamed last night you were all dripping wet and you sat on my lap as the Reverend Jenkins went down the street. I see you got a mermaid in your lap he said and he lifted his hat. He is a proper Christian. Not like Cherry Owen who said you should have thrown her back he said. Business is very poorly. Polly Garter bought two garters with roses but she never got stockings so what is the use I say. Mr Waldo tried to sell me a Woman's nightie outside he said he found it and we know where. I sold a packet of pins to Tom the Sailors to pick his teeth. If this goes on I shall be in the workhouse. My heart is in your bosom and yours is in mine. God be with you always Myfanwy Price and keep you lovely for me in His Heavenly Mansion. I must stop now and remain, Your Eternal, Mog Edwards.

**MRS Willy Nilly:**

And then a little message with a rubber stamp. Shop at Mog's!!!

**FIRST VOICE**

And Willy Nilly, rumbling, jockeys out again to the three-seated shack called the House of Commons in the back where the hens weep, and sees, in sudden Springshine,

**SECOND VOICE**

Herring gulls heckling down to the harbour where the fishermen spit and prop the morning up and eye the fishy sea smooth to the sea's end as it lulls in blue. Green and gold money, tobacco, tinned salmon, hats with feathers, pots of fish-paste, warmth for the winter-to-be, weave and leap in it rich and slippery in the flash and shapes of fishes through the cold sea-streets. But with blue lazy eyes the fishermen gaze at that milkmaid whispering water with no nick or ripple as though it blew great guns and serpents and typhooned the town.

**FISHERMAN** Too rough for fishing to-day.

**SECOND VOICE** And they thank God, and gob at a gull for luck, and moss-slow and silent make their way uphill, from the still still sea, towards the Sailors Arms as the children

### **School bell.**

**FIRST VOICE** spank and scamper rough and singing out of school into the drag-gletail yard. And Captain Cat at his window says soft to himself the words of their song.

**CAPTAIN CAT** (*To the beat of the singing*)

Johnnie Crack and Flossie Snail Kept their baby in a milking pail  
Flossie Snail and Johnnie Crack One would pull it out and one would put it back

O it's my turn now said Flossie Snail To take the baby from the milking pail And  
it's my turn now said Johnnie Crack To smack it on the head and put it back  
Johnnie Crack and Flossie Snail Kept their baby in a milking pail One would put  
it back and one would pull it out And all it had to drink was ale and stout For  
Johnnie Crack and Flossie Snail Always used to say that stout and ale Was *good*  
for a baby in a milking pail.

**Long pause.**

**FIRST VOICE** The music of the spheres is heard distinctly over Milk Wood. It is  
'The Rustle of Spring.'

**SECOND VOICE** A glee-party sings in Bethesda Graveyard, gay but muffled.

**FIRST VOICE** Vegetables make love above the tenors

**SECOND VOICE** and dogs bark blue in the face.

**FIRST VOICE** Mrs Ogmore-Pritchard belches in a teeny hanky and chases the  
sunlight with a flywhisk, but even she cannot drive out the Spring from one of  
the finger-bowls a primrose grows.

**SECOND VOICE** Mrs Dai Bread One and Mrs Dai Bread Two are sitting outside  
their house in Donkey Lane, one darkly one plumply blooming in the quick,  
dewy sun. Mrs Dai Bread Two is looking into a crystal ball which she holds in  
the lap of her dirty yellow petticoat, hard against her hard dark thighs.

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO**

Cross my palm with silver. Out of our housekeeping money. Aah!

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** What d'you see, lovie?

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO**

I see a featherbed. With three pillows on it. And a text above the bed. I can't read  
what it says, there's great clouds blowing. Now they have blown away. God is  
Love, the text says.

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** (*Delighted*) That's *our* bed.

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO** And now it's vanished. The sun's spinning like a top.  
Who's this coming out of the sun? It's a hairy little man with big pink lips. He  
got a wall eye.

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** It's Dai, it's Dai Bread!

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO**

Ssh! The featherbed's floating back. The little man's taking his boots off. He's  
pulling his shirt over his head. He's beating his chest with his fists. I le's climb-  
ing into bed.

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** Go on, go on.

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO**

There's two women in bed. He looks at them both, with his head cocked on one side. He's whistling through his teeth. Now he grips his little arms round one of the women.

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** Which one, which one?

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO**

I can't see any more. There's great clouds blowing again.

**MRS DAI BREAD ONE** Ach, the mean old clouds!

**Pause. The children's singing fades.**

**FIRST VOICE** The morning is all singing. The Reverend Eli Jenkins, busy on his morning calls, stops outside the Welfare Hall to hear Polly Garter as she scrubs the floors for the Mothers' Union Dance to-night.

**POLLY GARTER** (*Singing*)

I loved a man whose name was Tom He was strong as a bear and two yards long  
I loved a man whose name was Dick He was big as a barrel and three feet thick  
And I loved a man whose name was Harry Six feet tall and sweet as a cherry But  
the one I loved best awake or asleep Was little Willy Wee and he's six feet deep.

O Tom Dick and Harry were three fine men And I'll never have such loving  
again But little Willy Wee who took me on his knee Little Willy Wee was the  
man for me.

Now men from every parish round Run after me and roll me on the ground But  
whenever I love another man back Johnnie from the Hill or Sailing Jack I always  
think as they do what they please Of Tom Dick and Harry who were tall as trees  
And most I think when I'm by their side Of little Willy Wee who downed and  
died.

O Tom Dick and Harry were three fine men And I'll never have such loving  
again But little Willy Wee who took me on his knee Little Willy Weazel is, the  
man for me.

**REV ELI JENKINWS** Praise the Lord! We are a musical nation.

**SECOND VOICE** And the Reverend Jenkins hurries on through the town to visit  
the sick with jelly and poems.

**FIRST VOICE** The town's as full as a lovebird's egg.

**MR WALDO** There goes the Reverend,

**FIRST VOICE** says Mr Waldo at the smoked herring brown window of the un-  
washed Sailors Arms,

**MR WALDO** with his broolly and his odes. Fill 'em up, Sinbad, I'm on the treacle  
to-day.

**SECOND VOICE** The silent fishermen flush down their pints.

**SINBAD** Oh, Mr Waldo,

**FIRST VOICE** sighs Sinbad Sailors,

**SINBAD**

I dote on that Gossamer Beynon. She's a lady all over.

**FIRST VOICE** And Mr Waldo, who is thinking of a Woman soft as Eve and sharp as sciatica to share his bread-pudding bed, answers

**MR WALDO** No lady that I know is

**SINBAD**

And if only grandma'd die, cross my heart I'd go down on my knees Mr Waldo and I'd say Miss Gossamer I'd say

**CHILDRENS' VOICES**

When birds do sing hey ding a ding a ding Sweet lovers love the Spring...

**SECOND VOICE** Polly Garter sings, still on her knees,

**POLLY GARTER** Tom Dick and Harry were three fine men And I'll never have such

**CHILDREN** ding a ding.

**POLLY GARTER** again.

**FIRST VOICE**

And the morning school is over, and Captain Cat at his curtained schooner's porthole open to the Spring sun tides hears the naughty forfeiting children tumble and rhyme on the cobbles.

**GIRLS' VOICES** Gwennie call the boys They make such a noise.

**GIRL** Boys boys boys Come along to me'.

**GIRLS' VOICES**

Boys boys boys Kiss Gwennie where she says Or give her a penny. Go on, Gwennie.

**GIRL** Kiss me in Goosegog Lane Or give me a penny. What's your name?

**FIRST BOY** Billy.

**GIRL** Kiss me in Goosegog Lane Billy Or give me a penny silly.

**FIRST BOY** Gwennie Gwennie I kiss you in Goosegog Lane.

Now I haven't got to give you a penny.

**GIRLS' VOICES**

Boys boys boys Kiss Gwennie where she says Or give her a penny. Go on, Gwennie.

**GIRL** Kiss me on Llaregyb Hill Or give me a penny. What's your name?

**SECOND BOY** Johnnie Cristo.

**GIRL** Kiss me on Llaregyb Hill Johnnie Cristo Or give me a penny mister.

**SECOND BOY**

Gwennie Gwennie I kiss you on Llaregyb Hill. Now I haven't got to give you a penny.

**GIRLS' VOICES**

Boys boys boys Kiss Gwennie where she says Or give her a penny. Go on, Gwennie.

**GIRL** Kiss me in Milk Wood Or give me a penny. What's your name?

**THIRD BOY** Dicky.

**GIRL** Kiss me in Milk Wood Dicky Or give me a penny quickly.

**THIRD BOY** Gwennie Gwennie I can't kiss you in Milk Wood.

**GIRLS' VOICES** Gwennie ask him why.

**GIRL** Why?

**THIRD BOY** Because my mother says I mustn't.

**GIRLS' VOICES** Cowardy cowardy custard Give Gwennie a penny.

**GIRL** Give me a penny.

**THIRD BOY** I haven't got any.

**GIRLS' VOICES**

Put him in the river Up to his liver  
Quick quick Dirty Dick  
Beat him on the bum With a rhubarb stick.  
Aiee! Hush!

**FIRST VOICE** And the shrill girls giggle and master around him and squeal as they clutch and thrash, and he blubbers away downhill with his patched pants falling, and his tear-splashed blush burns all the way as the triumphant bird-like sisters scream with buttons in their claws and the bully brothers hoot after him his little nickname and his mother's shame and his father's wickedness with the loose wild barefoot women of the hovels of the hills. It all means nothing at all, and, howling for his milky mum, for her cawl and buttermilk and cowbreath and welshcakes and the fat birth-smelling bed and moonlit kitchen of her arms, he'll never forget as he paddles blind home through the weeping end of the world. Then his tormentors tussle and run to the Cockle Street sweet-shop, their pennies sticky as honey, to buy from Miss Myfanwy Price, who is cocky and neat as a puff-bosomed robin and her small round buttocks tight as ticks, gobstoppers big as wens that rainbow as you suck, brandyballs, winegums, hundreds and thousands, liquorice sweet as sick, nougat to tug and ribbon out like another red rubbery tongue, gum to glue in girls' curls, crimson coughdrops to spit blood,

ice-cream comets, dandelion-and-burdock, raspberry and cherryade, pop goes the weasel and the wind.

**SECOND VOICE** Gossamer Beynon high-heels out of school The sun hums down through the cotton flowers of her dress into the bell of her heart and buzzes in the honey there and couches and kisses, lazy-loving and boozed, in her red-berried breast. Eyes run from the trees and windows of the street, steaming 'Gossamer,' and strip her to the nipples and the bees. She blazes naked past the Sailors Arms, the only Woman on the Dai-Adamed earth. Sinbad Sailors places on her thighs still dewdamp from the first mangrowing cockcrow garden his reverent goat-bearded hands.

**GOSSAMER BEYNON** I don't care if he *is* common,

**SECOND VOICE** she whispers to her salad-day deep self,

**GOSSAMER BEYNON** I want to gobble him up. I don't care if he *does* drop his aitches,

**SECOND VOICE** she tells the stripped and mother-of-the-world big-beamed and Eve-hipped spring of her self,

**GOSSAMER BEYNON** so long as he's all cucumber and hooves.

**SECOND VOICE** Sinbad Sailors watches her go by, demure and proud and schoolmarm in her crisp flower dress and sun-defying hat, with never a look or lilt or wriggle, the butcher's unmelting icemaiden daughter veiled for ever from the hungry hug of his eyes.

**SINBAD SAILORS** Oh, Gossamer Beynon, why are you so proud?

**SECOND VOICE** he grieves to his guinness,

**SINBAD SAILORS**

Oh, beautiful beautiful Gossamer B,  
I wish I wish that you were for me.  
I wish you were not so educated.

**SECOND VOICE**

She feels his goatbeard tickle her in the middle of the world like a tuft of wiry fire, and she turns in a terror of delight away from his whips and whiskery conflagration, and sits down in the kitchen to a plate heaped high with chips and the kidneys of lambs.

**FIRST VOICE**

In the blind-drawn dark dining-room of School House, dusty and echoing as a dining-room in a vault, Mr and Mrs Pugh are silent over cold grey cottage pie. Mr Pugh reads, as he forks the shroud meat in, from *Lives of the Great Poisoners*. He has bound a plain brown-paper cover round the book. Slyly, between slow mouthfuls, he sidespies up at Mrs Pugh, poisons her with his eye, then goes on reading. He underlines certain passages and smiles in secret.

**MRS PUGH** Persons with manners do not read at table,

**FIRST VOICE** says Mrs Pugh. She swallows a digestive tablet as big as a horse-pill, washing it down with clouded peasoup water.

### Pause

**MRS PUGH** Some persons were brought up in pigsties.

**MR PUGH** Pigs don't read at table, dear.

**FIRST VOICE** Bitterly she flicks dust from the broken cruet. It settles on the pie in a thin gnat-rain.

**MR PUGH** Pigs can't read, my dear.

**MRS PUGH** I know one who can.

**FIRST VOICE** Alone in the hissing laboratory of his wishes, Mr Pugh minces among bad vats and jeroboams, tiptoes through spinneys of murdering herbs, agony dancing in his crucibles, and mixes especially for Mrs Pugh a venomous porridge unknown to toxicologists which will scald and viper through her until her ears fall off like figs, her toes grow big and black as balloons, and steam comes screaming out of her navel.

**MR PUGH** You know best, dear,

**FIRST VOICE** says Mr Pugh, and quick as a flash he ducks her in rat soup.

**MRS PUGH** What's that book by your trough, Mr Pugh?

**MR PUGH** It's a theological work, my dear. *Lives of the Great Saints*.

**FIRST VOICE** Mrs Pugh smiles. An icicle forms in the cold air of the dining-vault.

**MRS PUGH** I saw you talking to a saint this morning. Saint Polly Garter. She was martyred again last night. Mrs Organ Morgan saw her with Mr Waldo.

**MRS ORGAN MORGAN** And when they saw me they pretended they were looking for nests,

**SECOND VOICE** said Mrs Organ Morgan to her husband, with her mouth full of fish as a pelican's.

**MRS ORGAN MORGAN**

But you don't go nesting in long combinations, I said to myself, like Mr Waldo was wearing, and your dress nearly over your head like Polly Garter's. Oh, they didn't fool me.

**SECOND VOICE** One big bird gulp, and the flounder's gone. She licks her lips and goes stabbing again.

**MRS ORGAN MORGAN**

And when you think of all those babies she's got, then all I can say is she'd better

give up bird nesting that's all I can say, it isn't the right kind of hobby at all for a Woman that can't say No even to midgets. Remember Bob Spit? He wasn't any bigger than a baby and he gave her two. But they're two nice boys, I will say that, Fred Spit and Arthur. Sometimes I like Fred best and sometimes I like Arthur. Who do you like best, Organ?

**ORGAN MORGAN** Oh, Bach without any doubt. Bach every time for me.

**MRS ORGAN MORGAN**

Organ Morgan, you haven't been listening to a word I said. It's organ organ all the time with you..

**FIRST VOICE**

And she bursts into tears, and, in the middle of her salty howling, nimbly spears a small flatfish and pelicans it whole.

**ORGAN MORGAN** And then Palestrina,

**SECOND VOICE** says Organ Morgan.

**FIRST VOICE**

Lord Cut-Glass, in his kitchen full of time, squats down alone to a dogdish, marked Fido, of peppery fish-scraps and listens to the voices of his sixty-six clocks, one for each year of his loony age, and watches, with love, their black-and-white moony loudlipped faces tocking the earth away slow clocks, quick clocks, pendulumed heart-knocks, china, alarm, grandfather, cuckoo; clocks shaped like Noah's whirring Ark, clocks that bicker in marble ships, clocks in the wombs of glass women, hourglass chimers, tu-wit-tuwoo clocks, clocks that pluck tunes, Vesuvius clocks all black bells and lava, Niagara clocks that cataract their ticks, old time-weeping clocks with ebony beards, clocks with no hands for ever drumming out time without ever knowing what time it is. His sixty-six singers are all set at different hours. Lord Cut-Glass lives in a house and a life at siege. Any minute or dark day now, the unknown enemy will loot and savage downhill, but they will not catch him napping. Sixty-six different times in his fish-slimy kitchen ping, strike, tick, chime, and tock.

**SECOND VOICE** The lust and lilt and lather and emerald breeze and crackle of the bird-praise and body of Spring with its breasts full of rivering May-milk, means, to that lordly fish-head nibbler, nothing but another nearness to the tribes and navies of the Last Black Day who'll sear and pillage down Armageddon Hill to his double-locked rusty-shuttered tick-tock dust-scrabbled shack at the bottom of the town that has fallen head over bells in love.

**POLLY GARTER** And I'll never have such loving again,

**SECOND VOICE** pretty Polly hums and longs.

**POLLY GARTER** (*Sings*)

Now when farmers' boys on the first fair day  
Come down from the hills to drink  
and be gay, Before the sun sinks I'll lie there in their arms  
For they're good bad boys from the lonely farms,

But I always think as we tumble into bed  
Of little Willy Wee who is dead, dead,  
dead...

### A silence.

**FIRST VOICE** The sunny slow lulling afternoon yawns and moons through the dozy town. The sea lolls, laps and idles in, with fishes sleeping in its lap. The meadows still as Sunday, the shut-eye tasselled bulls, the goat-anddaisy dingles, nap happy and lazy. The dumb duck-ponds snooze. Clouds sag and pillow on Llaregyb Hill. Pigs grunt in a wet wallow-bath, and smile as they snort and dream. They dream of the acorned swill of the world, the rooting for pig-fruit, the bagpipe dugs of the mother sow, the squeal and snuffle of yesses of the women pigs in rut. They mud-bask and snout in the pig-loving sun; their tails curl; they rollick and slobber and snore to deep, smug, after-swill sleep. Donkeys angelically drowse on Donkey Down.

**MRS PUGH** Persons with manners,

**SECOND VOICE** snaps Mrs cold Pugh,

**MRS PUGH** do not nod at table.

**FIRST VOICE** Mr Pugh cringes awake. He puts on a soft-soaping smile it is sad and grey under his nicotine-eggyellow weeping walrus Victorian moustache worn thick and long in memory of Doctor Crippen.

**MRS PUGH** You should wait until you retire to your sty,

**SECOND VOICE** says Mrs Pugh, sweet as a razor. His fawning measly quarter-smile freezes. Sly and silent, he foxes into his chemist's den and there, in a hiss and prussic circle of cauldrons and phials brimful with pox and the Black Death, cooks up a fricassee of deadly nightshade, nicotine, hot frog, cyanide and bat-spit for his needling stalactite hag and bednag of a pokerbacked nutcracker wife.

**MR PUGH** I beg your pardon, my dear,

**SECOND VOICE** he murmurs with a wheedle.

**FIRST VOICE** Captain Cat, at his window thrown wide to the sun and the clippered seas he sailed long ago when his eyes were blue and bright, slumbers and voyages; ear-ringed and rolling, I Love You Rosie Probert tattooed on his belly, he brawls with broken bottles in the fug and babel of the dark dock bars, roves with a herd of short and good time cows in every naughty port and twines and souses with the drowned and blowzy-breasted dead. He weeps as he sleeps and sails.

**SECOND VOICE** One voice of all he remembers most dearly as his dream buckets down. Lazy early Rosie with the flaxen thatch, whom he shared with Tom-Fred the donkeyman and many another seaman, clearly and near to him speaks from the bedroom of her dust. In that gulf and haven, fleets by the dozen have

anchored for the little heaven of the night; but she speaks to Captain napping Cat alone. Mrs Probert...

**ROSIE PROBERT FROM DUCK LANE**

Jack.

Quack twice and ask for Rosie.

**SECOND VOICE**

...is the one love of his sea-life that was sardined with women.

**ROSIE Probert** (*Softly*)

What seas did you see,  
Tom Cat, Tom Cat,  
In your sailing days  
Long long ago?  
What sea beasts were  
In the wavery green  
When you were my master?

**CAPTAIN CAT**

I'll tell you the truth.  
Seas barking like seals,  
Blue seas and green,  
Seas covered with eels  
And mermen and whales.

**ROSIE PROBERT**

What seas did you sail Old whaler when  
On the blubbery waves  
Between Frisco and Wales  
You were my bosun?

**CAPTAIN CAT**

As true as I'm here Dear you Tom Cat's tart  
You landlubber Rosie You cosy love  
My easy as easy My true sweetheart,  
Seas green as a bean Seas gliding with swans  
In the seal-barking moon.

**ROSIE PROBERT**

What seas were rocking  
My little deck hand  
My favourite husband

In your seaboots and hunger  
My duck my whaler  
My honey my daddy  
My pretty sugar sailor.  
With my name on your belly  
When you were a boy  
Long long ago?

**CAPTAIN CAT**

I'll tell you no lies.  
The only sea I saw  
Was the seesaw sea  
With you riding on it.  
Lie down, lie easy.  
Let me shipwreck in your thighs.

**ROSIE PROBERT**

Knock twice, Jack,  
At the door of my grave  
And ask for Rosie.

**CAPTAIN CAT** Rosie Probert.

**ROSIE PROBERT**

Remember her.  
She is forgetting.  
The earth which filled her mouth  
Is vanishing from her.  
Remember me.  
I have forgotten you.  
I am going into the darkness of the darkness for ever.  
I have forgotten that I was ever born.

**CHILD** Look,

**FIRST VOICE** says a child to her mother as they pass by the window of Schooner House,

**CHILD** Captain Cat is crying

**FIRST VOICE** Captain Cat is crying

**CAPTAIN CAT** Come back, come back,

**FIRST VOICE** up the silences and echoes of the passages of the eternal night.

**CHILD** He's crying all over his nose,

**FIRST VOICE** says the child. Mother and child move on down the street.

**CHILD** He's got a nose like strawberries,

**FIRST VOICE**

The child says; and then she forgets him too.  
She sees in the still middle of the bluebagged bay  
Nogood Boyo fishing from the *Zanzibar*.

**CHILD** Nogood Boyo gave me three pennies yesterday but I wouldn't,

**FIRST VOICE** the child tells her mother.

**SECOND VOICE** Boyo catches a whalebone corset. It is all he has caught all day.

**NOGOOD BOYO** Bloody funny fish!

**SECOND VOICE** Mrs Dai Bread Two gypsies up his mind's slow eye, dressed  
only in a bangle.

**NOGOOD BOYO**

She's wearing her nightgown. (*Pleadingly*)  
Would you like this nice wet corset, Mrs Dai Bread Two?

**MRS DAI BREAD TWO** No, I *won't!*

**NOGOOD BO YO** And a bite of my little apple?

**SECOND VOICE** he offers with no hope.

**FIRST VOICE**

She shakes her brass nightgown, and he chases her out of his mind; and when  
he comes gusting back, there in the bloodshot centre of his eye a geisha girl grins  
and bows in a kimono of ricepaper.

**NOGOOD BO YO** I want to be *good* Boyo, but nobody'll let me,

**FIRST VOICE** he sighs as she writhes politely. The land fades, the sea flocks  
silently away; and through the warm white cloud where he lies, silky, tingling,  
uneasy Eastern music undoes him in a Japanese minute.

**SECOND VOICE** The afternoon buzzes like lazy bees round the flowers round  
Mae Rose Cottage. Nearly asleep in the field of nannygoats who hum and gently  
butt the sun, she blows love on a puffball.

**MAE ROSE COTTAGE** (*Lazily*)

He loves me He loves me not  
He loves me He loves me not  
He *loves* me!—the dirty old fool.

**SECOND VOICE** Lazy she lies alone in clover and sweet-grass, seventeen and  
never been sweet in the grass ho ho.

**FIRST VOICE** The Reverend Eli Jenkins inky in his cool front parlour or poem-  
room tells only the truth in his Lifework—the Population, Main Industry, Ship-  
ping, History, Topography, Flora and Fauna of the town he worships in—the

White Book of Llaregyb. Portraits of famous bards and preachers, all fur and wool from the squint to the kneecaps, hang over him heavy as sheep, next to faint lady watercolours of pale green Milk Wood like a lettuce salad dying. His mother, propped against a pot in a palm, with her wedding-ring waist and bust like a black-clothed dining-table suffers in her stays.

**REV ELI JENKINS** Oh angels be careful there with your knives and forks,

**FIRST VOICE**

He prays. There is no known likeness of his father Esau, who, undogcollared because of his little weakness, was scythed to the bone one harvest by mistake when sleeping with his weakness in the corn. He lost all ambition and died, with one leg.

**REV ELI JENKINS** Poor Dad,

**SECOND VOICE** grieves the Reverend Eli,

**REV ELI JENKINS** to die of drink and agriculture.

**SECOND VOICE** Farmer Watkins in Salt Lake Farm hates his cattle on the hill as he ho's them in to milking.

**UTAH JENKINS** (*In a fury*)

Damn you, you damned dairies!

**SECOND VOICE** A cow kisses him.

**UTAH JENKINS** Bite her to death!

**SECOND VOICE** he shouts to his deaf dog who smiles and licks his hands.

**UTAH JENKINS** Gore him, sit on him, Daisy!

**SECOND VOICE** he bawls to the cow who barbed him with her tongue, and she moos gentle words as he raves and dances among his summerbreathed slaves walking delicately to the farm. The coming of the end of the Spring day is already reflected in the lakes of their great eyes. Bessie Bighead greets them by the names she gave them when they were maidens.

**BESSIE BIGHEAD**

Peg, Meg, Buttercup, Moll, Fan from the Castle, Theodosia and Daisy.

**SECOND VOICE** They bow their heads.

**FIRST VOICE**

Look up Bessie Bighead in the White Book of Llaregyb and you will find the few haggard rags and the one poor glittering thread of her history laid out in pages there with as much love and care as the lock of hair of a first lost love. Conceived in Milk Wood, born in a barn, wrapped in paper, left on a doorstep, bigheaded and bass-voiced she grew in the dark until long-dead Gomer Owen kissed her when she wasn't looking because he was dared. Now in the light she'll work, sing, milk, say the cows' sweet names and sleep until the night sucks out her soul and spits it into the sky. In her life-long low light, holily Bessie milks the fond lake-eyed cows as dusk showers slowly down over byre, sea and town.

## Utah Watkins curses through the farmyard on a carthorse.

**UTAH JENKINS** Gallop, you bleeding cripple!

**FIRST VOICE** and the huge horse neighs softly as though he had given it a lump of sugar.

Now the town is disk. Each cobble, donkey, goose and gooseberry street is a thoroughfare of dusk; and dusk and ceremonial dust, and- night's first darkening snow, and the sleep of birds, drift under and through the live dusk of this place of love. Llaregyb is the capital of dusk.

Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard, at the first drop of the dusk-shower, seals all her sea-view doors, draws the germ-free blinds, sits, erect as a dry dream on a high-backed hygienic chair and wills herself to cold, quick sleep. At once, at twice, Mr Ogmores and Mr Pritchard, who all dead day long have been gossiping like ghosts in the woodshed, planning the loveless destruction of their glass widow, reluctantly sigh and sidle into her clean house.

**MR. PRITCHARD** You first, Mr Ogmores.

**MR OGMORES** After you, Mr Pritchard.

**MR PRITCHARD** No, no, Mr Ogmores. You widowed her first.

**FIRST VOICE**

And in through the keyhole, with tears where their eyes once were, they ooze and grumble.

**MRS OGMORES-PRITCHARD** Husbands,

**FIRST VOICE**

She says in her sleep.

There is acid love in her voice for one of the two shambling phantoms.

Mr Ogmores hopes that it is not for him.

So does Mr Pritchard.

**MRS OGMORES-PRITCHARD** I love you both.

**MR OGMORES** (*With terror*) Oh, Mrs Ogmores.

**MR PRITCHARD** (*With horror*) Oh, Mrs Pritchard.

**MRS OGMORES-PRITCHARD** Soon it will be time to go to bed. Tell me your tasks in order.

**MR OGMORES AND MR PRITCHARD** We must take our pyjamas from the drawer marked pyjamas.

**MRS OGMORES-PRITCHARD** (*Coldly*) And then you must take them off.

**SECOND VOICE**

Down in the dusking town, Mae Rose Cottage, still lying in clover, listens to the nannygoats chew, draws circles of lipstick round her nipples.

**MAE** Rose Cottage: I'm *fast*. I'm a bad lot. God will strike me dead. I'm seventeen. I'll go to hell,

**SECOND VOICE** she tells the goats.

**MAE** Rose Cottage: You just wait. I'll sin till I blow up!

**SECOND VOICE**

She lies deep, waiting for the worst to happen; the goats champ and sneer.

**FIRST VOICE**

And at the doorway of Bethesda House, the Reverend Jenkins recites to Llaregy Hill his sunset poem.

**REV ELI JENKINS**

Every morning when I wake, Dear Lord, a little prayer I make, O please to keep Thy lovely eye On all poor creatures born to die

And every evening at sun-down I ask a blessing on the town, For whether we last the night or no I'm sure is always touch-and-go.

We are not wholly bad or good Who live our lives under Milk Wood, And Thou, I know, wilt be the first To see our best side, not our worst.

O let us see another day! Bless us all this night, I pray, And to the sun we all will bow And say, good-bye—but just for now!

**FIRST VOICE**

Jack Black prepares once more to meet his Satan in the Wood. He grinds his night-teeth, closes his eyes, climbs into his religious trousers, their flies sewn up with cobbler's thread, and pads out, torched and bibles, grimly, joyfully, into the already sinning dusk.

**BLACK JACK** Off to Gomorrah!

**SECOND VOICE** And Lily Smalls is up to Nogood Boyo in the wash-house.

**FIRST VOICE**

And Cherry Owen, sober as Sunday as he is every day of the week, goes off happy as Saturday to get drunk as a deacon as he does every night.

**CHERRY OWEN** I always say she's got two husbands,

**FIRST VOICE** says Cherry Owen,

**CHERRY OWEN** one drunk and one sober.

**FIRST VOICE** And Mrs Cherry simply says

**MRS CHERRY OWEN** And aren't I a lucky Woman? Because I love them both.

**SINBAD** Evening, Cherry.

**CHERRY OWEN** Evening, Sinbad.

**SINBAD** What'll you have?

**CHERRY OWEN** Too much.

**SINBAD** The Sailors Arms is always open...

**FIRST VOICE** Sinbad suffers to himself, heartbroken,

**SINBAD** ...oh, Gossamer, open yours!

**FIRST VOICE**

Dusk is drowned for ever until to-morrow,

It is all at once night now,

The windy town is a hill of windows, and from the larrupped waves the lights of the lamps in the windows call back the day and the dead that have run away to sea.

All over the calling dark, babies and old men are bribed and lullabied to sleep.

**FIRST WOMAN'S VOICE** Hushabye, baby, the sandman is coming...

**SECOND WOMAN'S VOICE** (*Singing*)

Rockabye, grandpa, in the tree top,

When the wind blows the cradle will rock,

When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,

Down will come grandpa, whiskers and all.

**FIRST VOICE**

Or their daughters cover up the old unwinking men like parrots, and in their little dark in the lit and bustling young kitchen corners, all night long they watch, beady-eyed, the long night through in case death catches them asleep.

**SECOND VOICE** Unmarried girls, alone in their privately bridal bedrooms, powder and curl for the Dance of the World.

**Accordion music: dim.**

**They make, in front of their looking-glasses, haughty or come-hithering faces for the young men in the street outside, at the lamplit leaning corners, who wait in the all-at-once wind to wolve and whistle.**

**Accordion music louder, then fading under.**

**FIRST VOICE** The drinkers in the Sailors Arms drink to the failure of the dance.

**A DRINKER** Down with the waltzing and the skipping.

**CHERRY OWEN** Dancing isn't natural,

**First Voice righteously says Cherry Owen who has just downed seventeen pints of flat, warm, thin, Welsh, bitter beer.**

**SECOND VOICE** A farmer's lantern glimmers, a spark on Llaregyb hillside.

**Accordion music fades into silence.**

**VOICE FIRST** Llaregyb Hill, writes the Reverend Jenkins in his poem-room,

**REV.** Eli Jenkins:

Llaregyb Hill, that mystic tumulus, the memorial of peoples that dwelt in the region of Llaregyb before the Celts left the Land of Summer and where the old wizards made themselves a wife out of flowers.

**SECOND VOICE** Mr Waldo, in his corner of the Sailors Arms, sings

**MR WALDO**

In Pembroke City when I was young I lived by the Castle Keep Sixpence a week was my wages For working for the chimbley-sweep. Six cold pennies he gave me Not a farthing more or less And all the fare I could afford Was parsnip gin and watercress. I did not need a knife and fork Or a bib up to my chin To dine on a dish of watercress And a jug of parsnip gin. Did you ever hear a growing boy To live so cruel cheap On grub that has no flesh and bones And liquor that makes you weep? Sweep sweep chimbley sweep, I wept through Pembroke City Poor and barefoot in the snow Till a kind young Woman took pity. Poor little chimbley sweep she said Black as the ace of spades O nobody's swept my chimbley Since my husband went his ways Come and sweep my chimbley Come and sweep my chimbley She sighed to me with a blush Come and sweep my chimbley Come and sweep my chimbley Bring along your chimbley brush!

**FIRST VOICE**

Blind Captain Cat climbs into his bunk.  
Like a cat, he sees in the dark.  
Through the voyages of his tears he sails to see the dead.

**CAPTAIN CAT** Dancing Williams!

**FIRST DROWNED** Still dancing.

**CAPTAIN CAT** Jonah Jarvis

**THIRD DROWNED** Still.

**FIRST DROWNED** Curly Bevan's skull.

**ROSIE PROBERT** Rosie, with God. She has forgotten dying.

**FIRST VOICE** The dead come out in their Sunday best.

**SECOND VOICE** Listen to the night breaking.

**FIRST VOICE** Organ Morgan goes to chapel to play the organ. He sees Bach lying on a tombstone.

**ORGAN MORGAN** Johann Sebastian!

**CHERRY OWEN** (*Drunkenly*) Who?

**ORGAN MORGAN** Johann Sebastian mighty Bach. Oh, Bach fach

**CHERRY OWEN** To hell with you,

**FIRST VOICE** says Cherry Owen who is resting on the tombstone on his way home.

**Mr Mog Edwards and Miss Myfanwy Price happily apart from one another at the top and the sea end of the town write their everynight letters of love and desire. In the warm White Book of Llaregyb you will find the little maps of the islands of their contentment.**

**MYFANWY Price:** Oh, my Mog, I am yours for ever.

**FIRST VOICE**

And she looks around with pleasure at her own neat neverdull room which Mr Mog Edwards will never enter.

**MOG EDWARDS** Come to my arms, Myfanwy.

**FIRST VOICE** And he hugs his lovely money to his *own* heart.

**And Mr Waldo drunk in the dusky wood hugs his lovely Polly Garter under the eyes and rattling tongues of the neighbours and the birds, and he does not care. He smacks his live red lips.**

But it is not *his* name that Polly Garter whispers as she lies under the oak and loves him back. Six feet deep that name sings in the cold earth.

**POLLY GARTER** (Sings)

But I always think as we tumble into bed Of little Willy Wee who is dead, dead, dead.

**FIRST VOICE**

The thin night darkens. A breeze from the creased water sighs the streets close under Milk waking Wood. The Wood, whose every tree-foot's cloven in the black glad sight of the hunters of lovers, that is a God-built garden to Mary Ann Sailors who knows there is Heaven on earth and the chosen people of His kind fire in Llaregyb's land, that is the fairday farmhands' wantoning ignorant chapel of bridesbeds, and, to the Reverend Eli Jenkins, a greenleaved sermon on the innocence of men, the suddenly wind-shaken wood springs awake for the second dark time this one Spring day.

**THE END**