
Under Milk Wood
A Play for Voices



by Dylan Thomas

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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 web-foot 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-before-dawn 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 nedding 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.

[Noise of money-tills and chapel bells]

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*)

...Oh, Waldo, Waldo!

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 Ogmore!

Mr Pritchard!

It is time to inhale your balsam.

MR OGMORE Oh, Mrs Ogmore!

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, bloomered, 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 foghorning, 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 psst! 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 white-washed 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.

One distant bell-note, faintly reverberating

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 'back-water 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 weekend 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 barefoot 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,

Clærwen, 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.

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 Ogmores Pritchard, 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 (*Softly*)

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

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 farm-boys 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 OGMORES-PRITCHARD Good morning, postman.

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

MRS OGMORES-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 OGMORES-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 OGMORES-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

That's Polly Garter. (Softly)

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 bread-winners 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 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
cobble 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), Linendraper, Haberdasher, Master Tailor, Costumier. For West End Neglige, Lingerie, Teagowns, Evening Dress, Trousseaux, Layettees. 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 outsize 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 ty-phooned 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.

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 climbing 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 JENKINS 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 unwashed 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.

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.

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 dug 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.

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 poker-backed 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, Shipping, 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 OGMORE 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 OGMORE-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 OGMORE-PRITCHARD I love you both.

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

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

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

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

MRS OGMORE-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 Llargyb 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.

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